

# Gender and Sexuality

A Position Paper of Legacy Church

## Introduction

Questions surrounding gender and sexuality are some of the most pressing and confusing issues in our cultural moment. What was once widely assumed is now debated, and what Scripture speaks clearly about is often challenged or redefined.

Because of this, it is important for the church to speak with clarity, conviction, and compassion. Our goal is not to win arguments or respond harshly, but to faithfully articulate what Scripture teaches and help people understand God's design for humanity.

This paper seeks to outline a biblical understanding of gender and sexuality, rooted in creation, affirmed throughout Scripture, and applied in the life of the church today.

## Old Testament Foundations and the Created Order

The foundation for understanding gender and sexuality is found in creation itself. In Genesis 1:27, we read, "So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them." From the beginning, humanity is created as male and female. This distinction is not accidental or secondary, but intentional and good.

In Genesis 2, this distinction is further developed. The woman is created as a fitting counterpart to the man, and the two are brought together in union. Genesis 2:24 establishes the pattern for human relationships, a man leaves his parents, holds fast to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

This establishes both gender distinction and sexual union within covenantal marriage. Male and female are equal in dignity, both bearing the image of God, yet they are distinct and designed in a way that fits together according to God's design.

Throughout the Old Testament, sexual boundaries are consistently defined within this framework. Sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman is treated as sin, not because of cultural preference, but because it departs from God's created order.

## New Testament Scriptures

The New Testament does not redefine gender or sexuality, it reinforces what was established in creation.

Jesus Himself points back to Genesis when speaking about marriage. In Matthew 19:4-6, He says, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female... therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Jesus affirms both the reality of two genders and the design of marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

The apostle Paul also speaks clearly about sexual ethics. In Romans 1:24-27, he describes same-sex relations as a departure from the created order. His language is rooted in creation, not culture. He describes these relationships as "against nature," pointing back to God's original design of male and female.

It is often argued today that Paul was only condemning exploitative or promiscuous forms of homosexuality, not loving, monogamous relationships. However, the text itself does not support that limitation. Paul does not ground his argument in the excess or abuse of relationships, but in the nature of the relationships themselves. His concern is that they depart from the created order established by God.

This same clarity appears in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, where Paul lists various sins that characterize life apart from Christ, including sexual immorality. He then reminds believers, "such were some of you," pointing to the transforming power of the gospel.

### Clarity on "Effeminate" in Scripture

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, older translations include the word "effeminate," which has often been misunderstood. The original Greek uses two terms, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.

The word *malakoi* literally means "soft," and in this context referred to men who took on a passive role in same-sex relationships or who blurred sexual distinctions in ways tied to sexual immorality. It does not refer broadly to personality traits, interests, or temperament. Scripture is not condemning men for being gentle, expressive, or soft-spoken.

The word *arsenokoitai* refers more broadly to men engaging in same-sex relations. Together, these terms address sexual behavior that departs from God's design, not cultural expressions of masculinity or femininity.

The focus of Scripture is not enforcing personality stereotypes, but calling people to holiness and alignment with God's design.

## Early Church (First 300 Years)

The early church maintained a clear and consistent commitment to the biblical understanding of gender and sexuality, even while living in a culture that often held very different values.

The Greco-Roman world in which Christianity spread was not sexually conservative. Practices such as prostitution, adultery, concubinage, and various forms of same-sex relationships were widely accepted. Sexual expression was often detached from covenant, and power dynamics frequently shaped relationships, especially between men and younger males or slaves.

Against this backdrop, the early Christians stood out in a noticeable and often costly way. Their sexual ethic was not shaped by culture, but by their commitment to the teachings of Jesus and the authority of Scripture. They upheld marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman and called believers to sexual purity both inside and outside of marriage. This is seen clearly in early Christian writings.

The Didache, likely written in the late first or early second century, gives a simple but direct command:

*"You shall not commit sexual immorality... you shall not commit adultery... you shall not corrupt boys"*  
Didache 2.2

This instruction places sexual purity at the center of the Christian life and explicitly rejects common practices of the surrounding culture.

Justin Martyr, writing in the mid-second century, describes the transformation that takes place in believers:

*"We who once delighted in fornication now embrace chastity alone"*  
First Apology 14

Justin is not describing a minor behavioral shift, but a complete reorientation of life. Sexual ethics were seen as evidence of genuine conversion.

Clement of Alexandria also speaks to this, emphasizing that sexual expression is not to be driven by desire but ordered according to God's design:

*"To have coitus other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature"*  
Paedagogus 2.10

While his language reflects the philosophical tone of his time, the underlying conviction is clear. Sexual activity is not self-defined, but governed by God's created purpose.

Tertullian similarly calls believers to holiness and separation from the sexual practices of the world:

*"The Christian husband has nothing to do with any woman but his own wife"*  
Apology 46

This reflects the early church's strong emphasis on covenantal faithfulness and sexual exclusivity within marriage.

Importantly, the early church did not treat these teachings as optional or culturally flexible. **Their sexual ethic was grounded in creation and affirmed by the teaching of the apostles.** They did not reinterpret Scripture to align with cultural norms, even when those norms were widespread and socially accepted.

At the same time, the early church held together truth and grace. Sexual sin was not treated as uniquely disqualifying, but as part of the broader reality of human brokenness. Many believers had come out of these very lifestyles. The message of the church was not simply restriction, but transformation.

This is reflected in their consistent emphasis on repentance, new life, and holiness. The call was not merely to conform outwardly, but to be inwardly transformed by the power of Christ. Sexual ethics were not isolated rules, but part of a larger vision of becoming a new kind of people shaped by the gospel.

Taken together, the early church presents a unified witness. In the midst of a sexually permissive culture, they remained anchored in the biblical vision of gender and sexuality, holding fast to both the goodness of God's design and the transforming power of the gospel.

## The Reformers

During the Reformation, questions of authority, doctrine, and Christian life were brought back under the authority of Scripture. The Reformers did not seek to create something new, but to recover what had been clearly taught in the Bible and affirmed throughout the history of the church.

This included a reaffirmation of the biblical vision of gender, marriage, and sexuality. Martin Luther spoke plainly about marriage as part of God's created order. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, he writes:

*"The woman is created for the sake of the man, to be a helper... not only for procreation, but for companionship and life together"*  
Lectures on Genesis, on Genesis 2

Luther consistently affirmed that marriage between a man and a woman was established by God in creation and was the proper context for sexual expression. He also rejected the idea that celibacy was spiritually superior, restoring dignity to marriage as a God-ordained institution.

John Calvin similarly grounded his understanding of sexuality in creation and Scripture. Commenting on Genesis 2:24, he writes:

*"God has joined the man to the woman, that the two might be one flesh... therefore all other connections are accursed before God"*  
Commentary on Genesis 2:24

Calvin is clear that sexual union is not open to human redefinition. It is established by God and confined to the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

He also speaks directly against same-sex relations in his commentary on Romans 1:

*"Men have given themselves over to shameful lusts... departing from the order of nature, they burn in their own lust toward one another"*  
Commentary on Romans 1:26-27

For Calvin, as for Paul, the issue is not merely excess or exploitation, but a departure from the created order itself.

Other Reformers echoed this same conviction. Heinrich Bullinger, in the *Second Helvetic Confession*, affirms that marriage is "a lawful joining together of a man and a woman," and that sexual purity is to be maintained within that covenant.

Across the Reformation, there is remarkable consistency. Sexual ethics are not treated as culturally flexible or open to reinterpretation. They are rooted in creation, affirmed by Scripture, and upheld as part of a faithful Christian life. At the same time, the Reformers, like the early church, held together truth and grace. They emphasized repentance, forgiveness, and transformation through Christ. Sexual sin was not treated as uniquely unforgivable, but as part of the broader human condition that the gospel addresses.

The Reformers did not soften the biblical standard, but they also did not remove the hope of redemption. Their message was clear. God's design is good, sin is real, and grace is available.

## Mainstream Western Christianity

In recent decades, Western culture has undergone a dramatic shift in its understanding of gender and sexuality. What was once widely assumed, that gender is rooted in biological reality and that sexual expression belongs within marriage between a man and a woman, has increasingly been replaced by views that treat gender as fluid and sexuality as self-defined.

This cultural shift has not remained outside the church. It has pressed directly into Christian institutions, leading to significant disagreement, division, and, in many cases, formal separation.

Some churches and denominations have chosen to reinterpret Scripture in light of modern cultural assumptions. These reinterpretations often argue that biblical prohibitions on same-sex relationships were limited to exploitative or culturally specific contexts, and therefore do not apply to modern, monogamous same-sex relationships. Others have embraced broader views of gender identity, affirming that individuals may define their own gender apart from biological sex.

At the same time, many churches have remained committed to the historic Christian understanding of gender and sexuality, affirming that God created humanity as male and female and that sexual expression is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman.

These differences have led to real division. The United Methodist Church has experienced a major split, and parts of the Anglican Communion have fractured over these issues. Similar tensions exist across many denominations and church networks.

At the center of this divide is not simply a disagreement over sexuality, but over the authority and interpretation of Scripture. Whether Scripture is to be received as it has been historically understood, or reinterpreted in light of cultural developments.

At Legacy Church, we believe that Scripture is clear and consistent on these matters, and that the historic Christian witness has never unified in its understanding of gender and sexuality. **For this reason, we do not view affirming or revisionist positions as a secondary disagreement, but as outside the bounds of Scripture and the historic Christian faith. As such, we do not consider these positions to be compatible with Christianity.**

At the same time, we seek to engage with humility and compassion. These are not abstract issues, but deeply personal ones. Our aim is to hold firmly to the truth of God's Word while extending grace, patience, and care to all.

## Key Scriptures for Interpretation and Application

Genesis 1:27  
*"So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them."*

Genesis 2:24  
*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

Matthew 19:4-6  
*"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female..."*

Romans 1:24-27  
*"God gave them up... to dishonorable passions..."*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11  
*"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God... and such were some of you..."*

## Legacy Church Position

At Legacy Church, we believe that God created humanity as male and female. These two genders are equal in dignity, both bearing the image of God, yet they are distinct and not interchangeable. **Gender is not self-defined, but given by God and rooted in biological reality.**

We believe that human sexuality is a gift from God, designed to be expressed within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. This covenant provides the context of commitment, protection, and care in which sexual intimacy is intended to flourish.

All sexual activity outside of this covenant is outside of God's design. This includes sexual relationships before marriage, adultery, and same-sex relationships. At the same time, we recognize that all people are broken by sin in various ways, and the gospel offers forgiveness, transformation, and hope to all.

We reject the idea that identity is determined by internal feelings or cultural definitions. Instead, we believe that true identity is found in Christ. While feelings and experiences are real, they are not ultimate. Scripture calls us to submit every part of our lives, including our desires, to the authority of God.

Our aim is to hold these convictions with both clarity and compassion. We believe truth and love are not opposed to one another. We are committed to walking with people, speaking honestly, and pointing to the hope of the gospel, which calls all of us to surrender, transformation, and new life in Christ.