

Maple Ridge Baptist Church Statement on Gender, Human Sexuality, and Marriage

Introduction

Maple Ridge Baptist Church is a confessional community based on Christian values and the teachings of the Bible. We believe the Bible is not only authoritative but also useful for living out our Christian convictions. This position paper will serve to outline what we believe the Bible teaches us about how we, as a community, are to conduct ourselves with regard to gender, human sexuality, and marriage.

Gender

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27).

Since marriage is to be exclusive to the union between a man and a woman (see below), our God-given gender matters. Males and females are given distinct, complementary characteristics that together reflect the image and nature of the God who made them (Gen. 1:26-27). We believe that the rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

Human Life and Sexuality

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image (Gen. 1:27). Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the elderly, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. It is our responsibility as Christians to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps 139).

Because all people are loved by God and made in his image, every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31).

This is to be the standard at Maple Ridge Baptist Church, regardless of a person's gender, race, background, or sexual orientation. Hateful and harassing behaviour or attitudes directed toward any individual are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Maple Ridge Baptist Church. They will not be tolerated in our community.

We understand that God made human beings with a tremendous drive to express themselves sexually. We stand with the historical Christian church, believing that sex is a gift from God. It is a gift, however, to be enjoyed within the boundaries God provides. The Bible teaches that these boundaries are within the context of Christian marriage, between a husband and a wife (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

Marriage

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen. 2:18-25) We believe this because we are committed to the truth that God has created this world with certain societal structures which enable us to thrive as human beings.

We believe that God in His love for humanity intends marriage to be a life-long covenant between a man and a woman, for their own well-being, the well-being of children, and for the benefit of the whole human race.¹

God created and sanctioned marriage to bring together men and women, the

¹ Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Maple Ridge Baptist Church will recognize only marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastors and staff of Maple Ridge Baptist Church will participate only in weddings that solemnize marriage between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Maple Ridge Baptist Church will host only weddings between one man and one woman.

complementary halves of humanity, by joining them in “one-flesh” unions. (Gen. 2:18-25.) Marriage between one man and one woman for life uniquely reflects Christ’s relationship with His Church. (Eph. 5:21-33.) Marriage also serves as the foundational unit of a stable society.

Commitment and Conviction

We desire all families who call Maple Ridge Baptist home to be committed to this vision. As a church we will courageously uphold the Christian definition of marriage. Our church leadership will work diligently to ensure that our families are equipped to become healthy and flourishing. In this broken world in which we live, we understand that this is very difficult to achieve. There is an enemy who seeks to steal, kill and destroy the abundant life that Jesus wants to give us (John 10:10). For all those who struggle with sin, we believe that God offers hope. In Jesus Christ there is the offer of help, redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness (see Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

In light of the positions stated above, we need to delineate how our leaders, staff, and volunteers will be accountable to each other and to God for how they live out this conviction and fulfill these commitments. We also need to say something about how MRBC will deal with those who may be struggling with these issues. We must always keep the gospel of grace uppermost in dealing with those Jesus loves.

- **Accountable Leadership**

We believe that, in order to preserve the function and integrity of Maple Ridge Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Maple Ridge Baptist Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Maple Ridge Baptist Church in any capacity, as well as those who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by the positions outlined above. (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1Thess. 5:22).

- **On Temptation**

Maple Ridge Baptist Church seeks to be a community that shows love to those who struggle with sin. Jesus came to heal the broken and the broken-hearted. He heals us from addictions and strongholds that the enemy uses to steal, kill and destroy the life that God has prepared for us (John 10:10). We seek to be a community that welcomes anyone struggling with any kind of sin. We will work diligently to help them find freedom, wholeness and peace, as they encounter the Lord Jesus and experience the love and grace of his people, the church.

- **The Gospel of Grace**

We believe that because of Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross there is grace available to everyone who asks (1 John 1:9). God wants all to come to him to experience the cleansing power of his grace and, in response, to live a holy life that pleases him. This means renouncing sin and being zealous to do good works for him (Titus 2:11-14).

Conclusion

The above will serve as the policy of Maple Ridge Baptist Church regarding gender, human sexuality, and marriage. This document provides boundaries and will be used for teaching, accountability, and upholding the integrity of our community in a membership, volunteer, and staffing context.

Thanks to *Protecting Your Ministry from Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Lawsuits*
courtesy of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.