

Rooftop Community Church
Elder Statement on Gender and Sexuality
Updated and approved by the Rooftop Elders - Feb. 2, 2024

The purpose of this Elder Statement is to explain the official opinion of Rooftop Church's leadership in regards to controversial matters of doctrinal importance. Rooftop has an official nine-point Statement of Faith that comprises our theology as a Christian congregation. We choose to focus on these nine essential matters of faith, and agree to disagree over and discuss other non-essential issues, in a spirit of grace and charity. However, because the work of the church requires us to take de-facto theological positions on other practical matters of faith, and because people ask us what the official church position is on additional issues, we have chosen to articulate our official teaching on these matters in these "Elder Statements." Complete adherence to each of these opinions is not required for participation in the life of Rooftop. However, these positions have been voted on by the Elders and are taught and presented as the official theological positions of Rooftop Church. Consequently, disagreement with these opinions may affect a member or leader's ability to serve in certain roles at Rooftop. These opinions are not infallible and are offered with great humility to the people of Rooftop, but are a reflection of the Elders' convictions and study of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

Gender and Sexuality

God's Love for All People. One of the most fundamental teachings of the Christian Scriptures is that God loves all people regardless of who they are and what lifestyle they live. The Apostle John writes clearly that "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:16). The Psalmist sings that "You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Ps. 86:14). While on earth, Jesus demonstrated God's love for all people by spending time with those rejected by society and risking his own reputation in doing so (Mk. 2:17). God's deep and incomprehensible love for the earth and its citizens led him to great sacrifice on our behalf. John explains that "God so loved the world that he gave his only son" as a sacrifice for our sins (Jn. 3:16), and Paul celebrates the fact that "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The sacrificial and indiscriminate nature of God's love extends towards all people, including LGBTQ+ persons. It is true that, in Scripture, God's attitude towards people changes based on their behavior, and that He is even said to "hate" people who disobey Him (Mal. 1:3; Ps. 5:5). However, such hatred should be understood within the larger context of God's pervasive and enduring love for the people He created.

Loving All People as God Does. Given God's love for all people regardless of any defining aspect of their character or lifestyle, God's people should likewise love all people as He does—including LGBTQ+ people. As far back as the book of Leviticus, the author writes that Israel should welcome and accept strangers as Israel was once a stranger in Egypt (Lev. 19:34). As the Apostle Paul makes clear, "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7). Jesus also commands that because of God's love for us, we who know God's love should love our neighbors (Mt. 22:39), which includes our enemies (Lk. 10:25-27). To love our neighbor as Christ loves us means many things. It means to show them Christian hospitality, serve them, sacrifice ourselves for them, respect them, befriend them, not judge them as lesser human beings (Mt. 7:1), and not discriminate against them because of differences or disagreements, backgrounds or behaviors (James 2:1).

The Bible's Teaching on Sexuality. The Bible's frequent command to love and accept other people regardless of who they are does not negate the fact that Scripture also communicates God's design for the sexual behavior of the people He created. In fact, it is God's love for His

people that compels Him to reveal His moral will for our lives and confront us boldly when we are straying from His path of righteousness. In the book of Genesis, the author explains the manner in which God designed people to be joined together as husband and wife: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). This monogamous ideal of a man and woman committing themselves to one another as husband and wife is repeated frequently throughout Scripture, and affirmed by Jesus (Mt. 19:5). Furthermore, homosexuality and homosexual acts are seen as sinful deviations from God’s intended ideal (Lev. 18:22; Romans 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Scholars disagree on many aspects of these texts and their proper application to a modern setting. However, it is the opinion of the Rooftop Elders that they reflect God’s original design and purpose for male and female sexuality, and still stand as His intended ideal for sex and marriage. Anything else requires confession, repentance, and God’s forgiveness, which is freely and repeatedly available.

The Bible’s Teaching on Gender. The book of Genesis also describes God’s ideal for gender. Humanity is created biologically “male and female” to both reflect relational difference and allow people to be joined together as one flesh for the purpose of pleasure, intimacy, and the creation of life (Gen. 1:27). Jesus affirms this moral vision (Mt. 19:4-5). The Bible teaches that God’s people should understand, respect, and live out the gender differences between men and women—differences that are both divinely ordained and culturally practiced (Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor. 11:2-16). We acknowledge that in our imperfect and fallen world, many experience psychological dysphoria and possess anatomies that do not reflect God’s ideal (Rom. 8:18-21). Knowing this, the Son of God modeled a love and acceptance for those living with imperfect minds and bodies on this earth (Mt. 19:12), and we strive to, as well. While the Bible challenges many of the assumptions our culture makes about what is stereotypically masculine or feminine, we believe Scripture also teaches that a person’s biological sex is a sacred gift from God, and one that the Holy Spirit can help us accept and embrace (Rom. 12:1-2). Salvation is found as all people find their true identity in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:2).

LGBTQ+ People in the Church. While the Bible teaches the sinfulness of sexual desires and gender identities that miss the mark of God’s intended ideal, it also distinguishes between sinners within and outside the church. As people corrupted by but forgiven of sin, Christians themselves have no grounds to condemn other sinners—especially those who make no claim to our faith and its standards. For this reason, the Apostle Paul argues that Christians should refrain from alienating themselves from the world by judging those outside the church and the will of God: “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?” (1 Cor. 5:12). At the same time, God has also given church leaders the responsibility of leading and shepherding His people. In this regard, sexual variance within the church is a sin that must be addressed by the members of a church in obedience to Jesus’ instructions (Mt. 18:15-17). This must take place so that sinners have the opportunity to repent prior to God’s judgment, and also so that the purity and standards of the congregation may be maintained (1 Cor. 5:6). While all are welcome to worship at Rooftop regardless of sexual identity, practice, and gender identity, members and volunteers at Rooftop are held to a higher standard that should reflect the holiness and purity of God (1 Pet. 1:16). The people of Rooftop should be committed to helping one another live lives of sexual purity and faithfulness to their biological gender, as we all seek to avoid the sin that so easily entangles (Heb. 12:1), drawing on God’s grace and power to do so.