

**Study Committee
On Human Sexuality
Report to Synod Escondido 2024**

Mandate and Composition of the Study Committee

At its meeting in Buffalo, New York, in October 2022, Synod Niagara adopted the following recommendation:

That Synod accede to Overture 16 to “establish a study committee to address the biblical teaching concerning human sexuality, with a particular attention to same-sex attraction and transgenderism, providing biblical response to these matters as well as pastoral advice for both office-bearers and members on how to minister the Word of God to these matters,” with its grounds (adding to the first ground the words: “including the need for legal protection”).

In addition to the decision to appoint a study committee, Synod Niagara also adopted the following motions:

That Synod mandate the committee to address the biblical teaching concerning human sexuality, with particular attention to same-sex attraction and transgenderism, providing biblical response to these matters, as well as pastoral advice for both office-bearers and members on how to minister the Word of God to these matters.

That Synod instruct the committee to focus its attention on the nature of sin, temptation, and repentance, especially as it concerns sexual sins (for example, the use of the term “gay Christian,” the question of same-sex orientation, and how to minister to same-sex attracted members and those struggling with “transgenderism,” gender dysphoria, pornography, and other sexual sins).

That Synod instruct the committee to make appropriate use, where possible, of such reports issued by other NAPARC churches.

That Synod instruct the committee to include in its report a statement of affirmations and denials serviceable for legal protection for the churches.

Acts of Synod Niagara 2022, Article 37.

Synod Niagara also appointed seven members to the study committee:

Rev. Bill Boekestein (Michigan)
Rev. Greg Bylsma (Southwestern Ontario)
Rev. Joel Dykstra (Ontario-East)
Rev. Chris Gordon (Southwest U.S.)
Rev. Andrew Compton (Central U.S.)
Dr. Jeff Doll (Michigan)*
Elder Mark Van Der Molen (Central U.S.)

*Note: Dr. Jeff Doll requested not to take part in the committee’s deliberations or the preparation of this report.

The Committee’s Work and Approach to Its Mandate

In order to fulfill the mandate of Synod Niagara, the Committee deliberated in numerous Zoom meetings, and then in person in Escondido, CA in February 2024. The initial meetings were devoted to discussing the committee’s mandate and to determining the categories necessary for a report that would serve the churches well in addressing the sexual revolution. The remainder of our meetings were spent

discussing each section of the report and refining its contents with the goal of providing better clarity in the face of the culture's current confusion on human sexuality.

We took into consideration that there are at present many helpful NAPARC church reports that address the core doctrinal issues regarding human sexuality. The Committee agreed that our report would make grateful use of the study reports of other confessional Reformed churches in North America. A consensus was reached, however, that the aim of our report would be to address the issues given in the mandate in a more practical manner, with the goal of providing a guide for the churches, especially office bearers, in shepherding our people through the core issues of the movement.

The committee decided first to provide a brief sketch of the emergence and the challenges of the sexual revolution. Second, to provide summary statements that more fully explain the biblical and confessional issues that are germane for a proper, biblical, and creational sexual ethic. Third, to provide a list of the core affirmations and denials that would serve to address confessional issues, as determined from the Three Forms of Unity, and provide clarity for the churches in determining what is within and outside the boundaries of what we confess together on issues of human sexuality. These affirmations and denials are also serviceable for legal purposes should the churches need concise summaries of our foundational beliefs on these issues. And fourth, to provide a practical guide addressing the questions raised in the mandate with the goal of helping our churches through the more complex issues of the movement. This is followed with a glossary of terms and definitions that is designed to help bring clarity to key terms of common, conventional use so that the churches would speak clearly to the issues that often face purposeful confusion. Finally, the appendix commends the New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality, along with other helpful resources for further study and growth in helping our churches through these issues.

The committee offers the following report to the churches with earnest prayer to the Lord of the church that he will preserve us in the way of truth, and that our testimony regarding a biblical and creational sexual ethic will bring clarity in our time.

A Brief Sketch of the Emergence and Challenges of the Sexual Revolution

Over the past century, Western culture has experienced a radical change in its understanding of what it means to be human and how that is expressed in our sexual ethics. Our post-Freudian, Neo-Marxist Western culture has championed sexual identity as the most important truth for any individual pursuing happiness. While many of the current perversions of God's good creational norms and sexual ethic received societal restraint until the later part of the twentieth century, the past ten years have witnessed the escalation of practices that are against nature, as the apostle Paul describes in Romans 1.

The redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions in the U.S. Supreme Court's Obergefell decision of 2015 has provided legal sanction and even encouraged unrestrained behaviors that are offensive in the eyes of our God and harmful to the good of our neighbor and to a well-functioning society. Rulings against Trinity Western and conversion therapy have had a similar effect in Canada. Most importantly, these perversions of God's good design in marriage, family, and human sexuality evidence a society given over to lawlessness in its hatred of God. Organized under the banners of LGBTQ+, homosexuality, transgenderism, gay "marriage," along with the obliteration of God-assigned biological sex in creating us as either male or female, these perversions are normalized and celebrated by mainstream culture.

At present, with the accelerated unraveling of creational norms and the embrace of what is contrary to nature, Christians find themselves living in a world that demands the acceptance, defense, and celebration of every tenet of the sexual revolution. Refusing the demand for acceptance may come at the pain of exclusion from the benefits of being good citizens of society. Full participation in the workplace and in wider society increasingly requires submission to the prevailing ideals of the moral revolution and the reset of all creation norms.

The church must help God's people address these issues both biblically and confessionally, even as Christians are daily being catechized by the culture to embrace the new sexuality. In an attempt to gain cultural acceptance, some quarters of the Christian church in the West have accepted many of our culture's ideologies. Other movements within the Christian church in the West have attempted to forge a middle way by adopting an identity in unnatural desire, such as being a "gay Christian," so long as the desires are not

acted upon. If the current trajectory continues, the church will witness a much wider acceptance of sexual perversions as permissible “Christian” identity and behavior, championed in the name of love.

For these reasons, the church must be clear and bold in addressing the sexual revolution, providing a positive view of God’s creational ethic and the power of the gospel to set people free to pursue sexual purity. Our churches cannot afford to remain silent in the face of these challenges. Great attention must be given to helping the most vulnerable among us, especially our children, in exposing the lies of the evil one. The church must provide constant and sound teaching, telling people the truth, in love, about creation, anthropology, and the goodness of God’s created order. In short, the church must do what she has always been called to do: train God’s people in the truths that we confess together, using wisdom to apply these truths to the challenges posed by the current sexual revolution.

Our testimony to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is richly set forth in our Three Forms of Unity, demands that we carefully examine the claims of the sexual revolution in the light of God’s Word. This is our obligation to our King and the head of the church, Jesus Christ. And in so doing, we will proclaim the only way to live as a holy people, set apart and pleasing to the Lord.

Biblical and Confessional Statements on Human Sexuality

Article 1: Creation

At creation God made two sexes, “in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). The purpose of our creation in the image of God is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, as male and female (Deut. 6:5). God commanded that we use the excellent qualities with which he made us in true righteousness and holiness, in body and soul, as male and female, for his own glory, as we exercise dominion over the earth. We were created to find fulfilment in the will of God as he determines how we are to live for his glory (Belgic Confession Articles 12 & 14).

Article 2: Biological Sex

God commands all people to glorify and enjoy him forever as he created them, either as male or female (1 Cor. 6:20). It is contrary to nature and to the will of God for anyone to attempt to change his or her biological sex. God designated his creation of male and female as good and as something that belongs to the natural order (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 100:3). To introduce gender as a new category of personhood, wholly unrelated to the biological category of sex, in pursuit of a different sexual identity, is unnatural to the created order and harmful to the purpose for which God made humanity. Any attempt to reverse God’s creation of male and female due to fallen thoughts or self-perceptions is an act of rebellion and a gross distortion of God’s creative handiwork in specifically forming us for his own glory (Rom. 1:21-27; Belgic Confession Article 14).

Article 3: Marriage

God established the institution of marriage at creation, bringing together the man and the woman and blessing marriage as a state honorable to all (Gen. 2:18). Marriage is designed to be a lifelong, covenantal union between one man and one woman (Mark 10:6-9). Co-habitation, being unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14), same-sex unions, etc., are contrary to what God instituted at creation and a direct violation of his will. From creation, the purpose of marriage is that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, living together for life in mutual harmony and love (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:21-25). In marriage, God provides a proper setting for a husband and wife to enjoy each other in the physical and relational desires he gave to them (Heb. 13:4). Further, through marriage God increases the human race through the institution of the family, enriches society by providing an orderly function, provides training of children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and generally advances his kingdom (Gen. 1:26-28). Marriage also is designed to represent the mystery of Christ and his church. Husbands and wives are called to honor the union of marriage as God has ordained, and therefore man has no right to change or unbiblically separate this union (Matt. 19:6; Eph. 5:25; Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 41).

Article 4: Sin

In the fall of man into sin, we rebelled against God's creation order through the instigation of the devil, plunging ourselves into ruin through the obeying of sinful desires contrary to God's law (Genesis 3). The fall has so affected humanity that even the desires of our hearts have become distorted and fallen so that not even our hearts can be trusted, as we are prone to be carried away by various passions (2 Tim. 3:6). We sin when we entertain and practice the sinful desires of our hearts (Jas. 1:14). All impure thoughts and desires, prior to our acting upon them, are considered to be sin in God's eyes (Matt. 15:18-20). God is angry with the sinful desires we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit, and he has declared that he will punish with a just judgment, both now and in eternity, all sin against his holy law (Rom. 1:18ff; Belgic Confession Article 15).

Article 5: Redemption

Jesus Christ has announced in the gospel that all who repent and believe the gospel are freely granted the forgiveness of all sins, including sexual trespasses, as he cancels the record of our debt, covers our guilt, and grants and credits to us the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if we had never sinned nor been a sinner (Col. 2:13-14; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 23). Christ's death, burial, and resurrection has set us free from slavery to any form of sexual sin (Rom. 6:1-14; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 8). As new creatures in Christ, we are called to live with a renewed desire to reckon ourselves as dead to our old ways of sexual immorality and alive to God in pursuing a sexually pure life for his glory (1 Thess. 4:3; Belgic Confession Articles 17 & 24; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 5, 6, 7, 32, 33).

Article 6: Identity

In our redemption God recreates us into the image of Jesus Christ through union with him (Rom. 8:29), giving us a new identity in Christ. We are salt and light in this world, separated from identifying with the desires, passions, and practices of the old man. Our sinful desires no longer define us or constitute our identity. Any pursuit in establishing an identity through sinful desires is expressly forbidden by God's law. In union with Jesus Christ, we are to be satisfied in God's love as his adopted children. To invite that which is profane into our holy union with Christ is incompatible with a new life in Christ, and therefore we are called to flee all forms of sexual immorality in the Christian life (1 Cor. 6:15-20; Rom. 6:15-20; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 33; Canons of Dort II, Article 8).

Article 7: Repentance and Sexual Purity

As new creatures in Christ, we are called to confess our sins and eagerly turn away from all forms of sexual sin, and we are to seek to walk in the newness of life. God has promised that he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness, and He will forgive all of our sexual trespasses when we come to him with a broken and contrite heart (Psalms 32 and 55; 1 John 1:8-2:2). Believers who continue to struggle against sexual sins should trust in Christ's forgiving mercies, and by the strength of the Holy Spirit given through the means of grace, strive to walk in the newness of life. Genuine repentance involves the dying-away of the old self by hating and fleeing all forms of sexual immorality, and the rising-to-life of the new self by finding delight in leading a sexually pure life (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 33). Since fleeing sexual immorality is the will of God for our sanctification, the Christian should pursue a life of sexual purity to show that he is thankful to God for his salvation. The Holy Spirit is committed to strengthening the Christian's walk as one battles against the sinful nature (1 Thess. 4:3; Gal. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:13; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 41).

Article 8: Pornography and Self-Gratification

Pornography seeks to stimulate the lustful desires of the sinful flesh, through the bodily senses, by the use or distribution of images, videos, or other media representations. Pornography use is often associated with

masturbation. Pornography use and solo sex are sins against one's own body and the will of God. Pornography ruins the sexual intimacy intended for marriage (1 Cor. 6:16, 17); it strips sex of its significance (Gen. 2:24), habituates sexual selfishness (1 Cor. 7:3-4), & encourages and rewards lust (Matt. 5:28). Pornography also dehumanizes men and women, promotes abuse especially of women, advances other forms of sexual immorality, creates idols in society to the harm of our neighbors, and degrades the mind into darkness. Coupled with pornography use, habitual self-stimulation impedes proper sexual performance. The use of pornography is expressly condemned as a way of serving the lusts and passions of the old man and is incompatible with the new life in Christ (Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 7:9). God's children must reject "all unchaste actions ... thoughts, [and] desires" (Heidelberg Catechism QA. 109; cf. Eph. 5:3,4) and control our bodies in holiness and honor (1 Thess. 4:4).

Article 9: Husbands and Wives

Husbands and wives are to model in marriage the love that Christ has for his church. Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies, nourishing and cherishing them (Eph. 5:25, 28-29); practicing headship modeled on that of Christ (Eph. 5:23); not being harsh with their wives (Col. 3:19); living with their wives in an understanding way; and showing honor to them as a fellow heirs of Christ (1 Pet. 3:7). Wives are to submit to their husbands in everything as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22, 24) and as is fitting in the Lord (Col. 3:18). Both husbands and wives are to treat each other according to the "one another" passages of Scripture (e.g., Eph. 4:1-2, Col. 3:12-13), including showing loyalty, kindness, understanding, tenderness, humility, self-control, sexual purity, love, patience, encouragement, self-denial, contentment, seeking the other's good, and avoiding abusive and manipulative behavior. In this way, husbands and wives model before all the love and purity that is intended to be enjoyed in marriage (Eph. 5:22-33; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 39 and 41).

Article 10: The Family

Christians testify to our culture when the family is maintained to the glory of God. In our families, Christ should be made the center of our homes through love, humility, and patience toward one another, godly discipline of children, the regular reading of Scripture, heartfelt prayer, and family worship, removing all things spiritually harmful from our homes, and making Lord's Day worship a priority together (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39).

Article 11: Singles

Singles are called to honor the Lord in the situation that God has called them. Singles who desire marriage are called to holiness, contentment, and prayer, trusting the Lord in every circumstance of his providence, waiting upon his provision of a spouse (while using godly means to pursue marriage), and finding delight in the Lord who makes us fulfilled whether as single or married. Christians who believe they are gifted with singleness are called to holiness and contentment, giving undivided devotion to the Lord, while remaining open to God's will to provide a spouse and change one's desire for marriage (1 Cor. 7:17).

Article 12: Training Children and Young Adults

In the training of children, parents should model before their children a loving relationship, holding marriage in high honor as God designed it. Parents are called to speak to their children, in a way appropriate and sufficient to their maturity, about biblical sexuality and proper sexual conduct as designed for marriage. Parents should be active in guarding their children from all forms of sexual immorality and pornography, since they promote a different sexual ethic than what God made good in creation. This duty includes overseeing their use of technology and social media. Both children and young adults honor their parents by maintaining sexual purity and chastity and refraining from pushing their parents to accept the ungodly sexual norms of the culture (Eph. 6:1-4; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39).

Article 13: Christian Witness

As Christians find themselves living in a world where sexual sin is normalized, maintaining sexual purity is a crucial part of their Christian witness. Believers should respond by speaking the truth in love about sexual sin, repentance, and faith in Christ, giving witness to the deliverance God has given us from our own sins, and performing acts of kindness. Christians should not neglect those mastered by sin outside of the church (1 Cor. 5:9-10). The body of Christ should similarly not avoid those who struggle in the pursuit of repentance of sexual sin. Instead, with a spirit of compassion, they should “bear each other’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2). By our godly living, we should seek to win our neighbors over to Christ (Heidelberg Catechism QA. 86; John 13:35; Belgic Confession Article 24; Canons of Dort II, Article 5).

Affirmations and Denials on Human Sexuality

A. Honoring God’s Supreme Authority Over Human Sexuality

We affirm:

1. That the Word of God is God’s revelation of his infallible rule for faith and life (Belgic Confession Article 5).
2. That the Word of God is true, perfect, and complete in everything it teaches, including on matters of human sexuality. All things taught contrary to the Bible must be rejected (2 Tim. 3:16; Jas. 1:21-24; Belgic Confession Article 7).
3. That the Word of God teaches as godly and right the disobedience of earthly authority when this authority demands others to violate the revealed will of God (Acts 4:19-20; Acts 5:29; Belgic Confession Article 36).

We deny:

1. That any person, group of people, organization, or governmental entity has the authority to redefine God’s created institution of marriage or his created order of human sexuality, or to declare sinful desires and attractions as good, or to bind the consciences of Christians, or to compel actions contrary to the Bible, our Reformed Confessions, and the following Affirmations and Denials (Rom. 13:1-7; Belgic Confession Article 36; URC Doctrinal Affirmations on Marriage #15).

B. Male & Female Sexual Identity

We affirm:

1. That God made two biological sexes at creation: male and female, created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18).
2. That attempts to change or identify as having a sex other than the biological sex God created is a sinful act of rebellion against God’s creative handiwork (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 100:3).
3. That knowingly using pronouns or language that identifies an individual as having a sex other than the biological sex God created is condoning such sinful rebellion and is not speaking the truth in love to our neighbor (Eph. 4:15; Ex. 20:16).

4. That the fall has impacted the biological creation such that some people may be biologically indeterminate as that sex (e.g., “intersex”); nevertheless, these deficiencies do not negate the objective categories of persons being created male or female.

We deny:

1. That gender is a legitimate category wholly unrelated to the two distinct biological sexes which God created.
2. That physiological sexual anomalies or psychological distortion of sexual identity can change the God-ordained order of the two biological sexes made at creation.
3. That sexual identity is mutable and that we have the prerogative to identify ourselves as something other than how God made us as either male or female.

C. Marriage & Sexual Relations

We affirm:

1. That marriage is designed to be a lifelong, monogamous, covenantal union between one biological man and one biological woman (Prov. 2:17; Mark 10:6-9; Eph. 5:22-33; Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6; Church Order of the URCNA, Ninth Edition, Article 48; URC Doctrinal Affirmations on Marriage #10).
2. That sexual relations are reserved for the marriage bond between one biological man and one biological woman (Prov. 5:18-19, URC Doctrinal Affirmations on Marriage #5).

We deny:

1. That any sexual desires in or outside of marriage which are contrary to the moral law of God are acceptable (Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 5:1).

D. Original Sin, Desire, & Temptation

We affirm:

1. That God made us holy and happy, but – accepting the lie of the devil – we have robbed ourselves of these blessings by obeying sinful desires (Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 14; Rom. 3:10-18).
2. That when temptations come from without, being tempted is not sin, unless we enter into the temptation. But when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called sin (Gen. 39:6-12; Matt. 4:1-10; Jas. 1:14).
3. That Christians have the duty to increasingly put sin to death in their lives, which includes the sinful lusts and desires of the heart. Although one may not formally engage in a sinful outward act, even entertaining any desire contrary to God’s law is sin itself. The new man in Christ is to pursue righteousness and holiness, having been set free by the grace of Christ (Col. 3:5-17; Eph. 5:3ff; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 88-90; cf. Westminster Larger Catechism QA. 99:5,6).
4. That sinful thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, or predispositions arising in us prior to and apart from a conscious act of the will are still sin, since they proceed from a corrupt nature (Matt. 15:19; Jas. 1:15; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 6-8).

5. That such sinful thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, or predispositions that arise from our corrupt nature, as well as our actual sins, are deserving of God's condemnation and require our repentance (Rom. 7:14-25; Gen. 3:16; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 10).
6. That proper sexual thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, or predispositions for the other sex are natural and good, but are sinful when these are exercised outside the bonds of marriage (Matt. 5:28; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 10).
7. That sexual thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, or predispositions for the same sex are unnatural and heinously sinful, even if not entertained or acted upon (Rom. 1:24-26; cf. Westminster Larger Catechism QA. 151).
8. That identifying oneself according to the sinful sexual ideologies of the sexual revolution (e.g., "gay Christian," "trans-Christian/transgender-Christian") is contrary to God's command to repent of sexual sin and believe the gospel (Rom. 1:24-26; Rom. 12:2).

We deny:

1. That impure, though unchosen, sexual thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, or predispositions are acceptable.

E. Gospel Witness and Restoration

We affirm:

1. That through repentance and faith in Christ we are granted forgiveness of all our sexual sin, whether arising from our original corruption, thoughts, words, or deeds (Rom. 1:16,17; Heb. 10:10).
2. That the gospel promises to free us from slavery to any form of sexual sin and makes us new creatures in Christ with a desire to pursue a sexually pure life to the glory of God (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 1:7-14).
3. That Christ by his Spirit enables Christians to begin to live according to all the commandments of God, including the command for sexual purity (1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 114).
4. That the church is called to rejoice in the repentance of those who have been guilty of committing sexual immorality. When they turn to faith in Jesus Christ, we are to embrace them in the household of God as loved and forgiven fellow believers (Luke 15:11-32; John 21:15-19).
5. That the church is to show the love of Christ in a deliberate and discerning manner to any and all people. As Christ our Lord applied the truth to differing people in different contexts, applying the moral law to the sins practiced in his time, so the church must follow his example (John 8:1-11; John 4:16-17; Matt. 23:27).
6. That Christian compassion does not mean justifying any sin or ignoring potential dangers posed by those who commit heinous sins against God's created order (1 Cor. 5:1-8). Additionally, a repentant sinner must accept reasonable consequences to ensure the protection of the vulnerable, especially when past sin has put the vulnerable at risk.

We deny:

1. That sinful thoughts, desires, attractions, orientations, and predispositions are immutable characteristics constituting a person's identity.
2. That sinful thoughts, desires, attractions, and predispositions will be totally eradicated in this life, since we remain sinners saved by grace (Gal. 5:16-17; 1 John 1:8-2:2; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 62, 114-115).
3. That impure thoughts and disordered desires arising in us prior to and apart from a conscious act of the will, which some have called consupiscence, are innocent and an excuse to not fight against sin or to yield to it.
4. That repentance and healing negates ongoing accountability intended to protect the vulnerable.

Frequently Asked Questions on Human Sexuality

1. How Can I Stay Sexually Pure Before Marriage?

Marriage provides a proper setting for Christians to address sexual temptation (1 Cor. 7:9), but marriage may not be possible. There are several things one can do to promote sexual purity in the condition in which one is called (1 Cor. 7:24).

First, understand the uniquely destructive threat of sexual sin (1 Cor. 6:18). An unrelenting commitment to fornication will exclude a person from heaven (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

Second, become an active member of a faithful church. In our sexually permissive culture, God has provided the local church to help the believer stand against sexual sin and to provide hope for those struggling with sexual sin.

Third, take responsibility for sexual purity. Repent of sexual failures, and develop friendships with people who value purity and who are willing and able to hold you accountable. Resist sin, use wisdom in avoiding temptation, and pursue marriage if applicable.

Finally, embrace your new identity in Christ. Believers are washed, sanctified, justified, and bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:9–20). Believers are provided the resources they need to honor God's will for their sexuality.

2. How Can I Prepare for Marriage Honorably?

Marriage is a creational institution given by God to provide companionship, protect children, preserve sexual purity, and encourage sanctification. Marriage symbolizes the union between Christ and the church. Believers who desire marriage should prepare in the following ways:

First, become a suitable partner. Believers in Christ should bring to marriage a strong commitment to Christ and a delight to do God's will. Ideal spouses are those set apart to Christ beforehand, and the pursuit of holiness will be a blessing to their future partners. Develop those qualities that benefit a marriage like self-control, selflessness, and servanthood.

Second, be selective. A Christian is not permitted to pursue any romantic relationship with someone who is an unbeliever that could result in an unequally yoked marriage (2 Cor. 6:14). Believers must marry – and therefore also date – only in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39).

Third, have clear intentions. Scripture has no detailed code for dating. Yet, all romantic relationships should be intentional and aimed toward marriage.

Fourth, pursue wisdom. Counsel should be sought from parents, pastors, elders, or other spiritual friends in every stage of a romantic relationship.

Finally, practice biblical courage. Commitments can be intimidating, and rejection is often feared. But loving commitments should not scare us or cause undue anxiety as we choose to walk in the way of obedience by marrying only in the Lord.

3. How Should I Love My Neighbor Who Identifies as LGBTQ+?

God calls us to love our neighbors (Matt. 22:39), regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. We must accept our responsibility to love fellow image-bearers without approving their lifestyles.

To love others well requires holiness in your own walk with God. We should remember that the Lord has declared, “I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, so turn and live” (Ezek. 18:32). Those who sin with indifference are disqualified from judging others (Matt. 7:5).

Yet Christians are called to judge righteously (John 7:24). Homosexuality is a sin (e.g., Rom. 1:26–27). People who love any sin more than God will not inherit his kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9–10). Believers love their neighbors by warning them of the cost of living in sin.

Believers should speak the truth in love with the goal of setting people free in the gospel. The Bible’s condemnation of sin frames the good news that whoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Our message to those who identify as LGBTQ+ neighbors should be: “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11), and those who confess and repent of their sin, turning to Jesus Christ in true faith, receive his righteousness credited to them. We should be willing to tell our neighbors that God has a plan for our sexuality that is more satisfying and fulfilling than the values shaped by our culture and the desires of our sinful hearts.

4. Which Pronouns Should I Use?

Pronoun use is being used by the world to support the individual expression of someone’s identity contrary to his or her biological sex. Christians should not knowingly use pronouns or misleading proper names that contradict the biological sex of someone made in the image of God, for the following reasons:

First, names are significant. God gave Adam the privilege of naming the animals (Gen. 2:19–20) and his wife (Gen. 3:20). The role of Adam in creational naming forbids us to use inaccurate titles.

Second, gender is binary and assigned by God. God created male and female (Gen. 1:27). To compromise on gender through false designations rejects God’s sovereignty in designating our sex, and this undermines an essential component of our image bearing.

Third, unlike many names (cf. Gen. 10:2 and Hos. 1:3), pronouns are inherently gendered. Traditional pronouns reflect God’s good creational order.

Fourth, kindness does not permit lying. Scripture demands kindness (Col. 4:6). But kindness cannot cancel the truth about someone as an image-bearer of God (Col. 4:4). Christians must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), no matter how unpopular with the world.

Finally, pronouns can often be avoided by using proper names or fitting titles (server, police officer, etc.).

5. If I Become a Christian, Will I Be Free of Same-Sex Attraction?

A Christian who is delivered from the dominion of sin in this life may continue to face ongoing temptation to perverse sexual sin and may not immediately have a romantic desire for the opposite sex after conversion. However, the reordering of our affections as we walk by the Spirit (i.e., to joyfully pursue holy sexuality) is something Christians should humbly and hopefully expect. Christians should not believe this temptation will always be their burden; God will begin to set them free in this life and will fully perfect them in the next. This freedom is experienced as God gives believers a hatred for past sin and a delight in holy love as they walk daily in faith and repentance.

Regardless of our progress in sanctification, Christians should never identify themselves by temptations they face. Even if we still struggle, we should not identify ourselves as “gay Christians,” but as saints chosen in Christ, holy and beloved of God (Col. 3:12).

6. How Should We Respond to Family Members Who Identify as LGBTQ+?

Gross sin that is practiced in our families can create great pain and brokenness. As we strive to honor God and love unbelievers in our families, there are important ways to address this challenge.

First, embrace the gospel promise: no matter how far someone has progressed in sin, God’s power can restore them through repentance and faith in Christ. Prayer for our family members is one of the most important ways we can help them.

Second, protect the vulnerable. Be aware of how the introduction of ungodly ideas and technology may tempt other children in the home. Do not allow “love” to lead others into sin.

Third, maintain beneficial contact where possible. Set boundaries to allow for contact without embracing a sinful lifestyle. This will vary based on the situation. Flagrant, aggressive sin, or sin held alongside a claim of being a Christian, will require greater degrees of separation.

Fourth, use wisdom when addressing sin; lifestyle choices do not need to be confronted at every visit. A word fitly spoken and in due season should be considered (Prov. 15:23). Pray for opportunities to boldly witness of Christ, and for ways to positively influence family members.

Finally, Christians or Christian organizations should never participate in functions that celebrate sin (e.g., weddings, baptisms). In promoting God-centered schooling, parents must be vigilant in resisting the LGBTQ+ agenda. Loving sinners may never lead us to support their lifestyles or to suggest God’s blessing upon sinful behavior.

7. How Should We Honor Our Bodies?

Christians in first-century Corinth failed to see how their Christian faith (a *spiritual* commitment) impacted the use of their *physical* bodies. They excused illicit sexual acts under the assumption that it wouldn’t damage their *spiritual* walk with God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14-20). Today we face a similar challenge.

The church must reemphasize the inherent value God has placed on our physical bodies, both as bodies created in God’s image (Gen. 9:6) and as bodies united to Christ through his redemptive work (1 Cor. 6:18-20; Heidelberg Catechism QA. 1). This must impact the way we view and use both our bodies and the bodies of others around us. Marriage is to “be held in honor among all,” and “the marriage bed be undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). Our homes and church cultures must reject worldly trends such as nudity and promiscuity in entertainment, coarse jesting regarding sexuality and purity, and objectifying the human body (either male or female). These lead us away from the purity to which God calls us.

We must teach a standard of modesty and honor that safeguards purity in others as well as ourselves. We must positively teach the inherent value of our physical bodies in the eyes of our holy God, encourage a commitment to honor that value for Christ and his glory, and warn that departing from God’s standard brings judgment (Heb. 13:4). As those made in his image, we must honor his will regarding the goodness of our bodies.

8. How Are We to Handle Sexual Offenders Who Seek to Join the Church?

The Lord may bring into his church, through repentance and faith, someone who has been guilty of sexual crimes against others. This situation can be a challenge for the body of Christ. Welcoming repentant sinners does not mean all consequences of sin are erased, even while we rejoice in the deliverance God has provided. There are a few principles churches should remember:

First, we always praise the Lord for repentance and restoration by the gospel. A hardened criminal (like the apostle Paul) can become a redeemed and trustworthy child of God through the power of God’s word and Spirit.

Second, we recognize that spiritual restoration does not remove ongoing consequences of sin. A repentant criminal may continue to suffer legal consequences for his actions, and church elders should be aware that ingrained patterns may not change overnight. Where those patterns seriously threaten the flock of Jesus (Matt. 18:6), elders must be loving and wise.

In certain circumstances, it may be wise to communicate the nature of the crime to the congregation or to require convicted sexual offenders to be accompanied by a responsible person while attending church. Further, great caution should be used before integrating the person into a position which would suggest trustworthiness to vulnerable members. Where the sin affected others in church, local elders may encourage the offender, even after repentance, to worship in another faithful church so that the victim is not displaced from his or her home church. Elders should shepherd the offender to find a church and speak openly with the leadership of the new church to maintain awareness and accountability for Christ’s flock.

A Glossary of Terms

The following glossary defines its theological and ethical terms with particular application to matters of human sexuality. A quality theological dictionary should be consulted for a more fulsome definition of some of these terms.

Term	
Adultery	Unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires and whatever may incite someone to them.
Affirm/Affirmation	The societal expectation that sinful sexual choices and desires must be affirmed – i.e., celebrated, encouraged, and declared to be normal. This is based on the belief that expressive individualism is fundamental for humanity's flourishing.
Agender	A term for people who claim that they are without a gender.
Asexual	A term for people who claim they are not sexually attracted to anyone.
Attraction	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God which enables us to find the beauty of God's creation appealing. In sexual matters attraction refers to sexual appeal.

Authentic/Authenticity	The belief that being true to yourself, however that self is defined, is a moral and virtuous act. In LGBTQ+ settings, it refers to embracing, affirming, and living out one's sexual attractions or gender identity, whether or not these reflect God's revealed will.
Bestiality	A sin committed by sexual activity with an animal.
Binary	A term which refers to God's creation of only two genders: the male and female sex. See Non-Binary.
Chaste, Chastity	The willing acceptance of the Lord's call to his people in their sexuality, as it is expressed in words, dress, and relationships.
Cisgender	A term used in LGBTQ+ discourse to refer to people whose gender identity is the same as their biological sex. It is used to suggest that cisgender and transgender are equally normal.
Concupiscence	That innate or instinctive powerful sexual desire or lust that is sinful. There is a belief, especially promoted by the Roman Catholic Church and Side B Christianity, that disordered desires which afflict humans due to the Fall do not become sin without a consenting act of the will.
Contentment	As relates to sexuality, contentment is an emotional, mental, and spiritual state wherein an individual joyfully accepts the Lord's will for his or her sexual life.
Covenant (marriage, sex, divorce, etc.)	The bond that unites husband and wife in love and fidelity, including both promises and obligations. It is the exclusive setting within which sex is to be enjoyed. This covenant can only be ended by death or by a radical violation of the bond through adultery or abandonment.
Cross-dressing	See Transvestite.
Desire, Sexual	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God whereby we entertain thoughts about and/or actively work to enjoy sexual intimacy with another image-bearer of God.
Desire, Sinful	That aspect of our fallen identity as sinners whereby we entertain thoughts about or work to obtain that which is contrary to God's will.
Divorce (Sexual Focus)	That grievous consequence of unfaithfulness in a marriage covenant which results in the ending of that relationship. Scripture indicates two legitimate reasons for divorce: sexual immorality and abandonment.
Drag	See Transvestite.
Expressive Individualism	The belief that one must have unhindered opportunity to share and live out one's personal feelings and desires in order to be realized and authentic as a human being.
Fall, the	Man's rebellion against his Creator by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All disordered sexual attractions, desires, development, and anatomy, as well as all sexual perversions and rebellion against our Creator, originate in and are a result of the Fall.
Family	The social unit created by God for the purpose of advancing a healthy society and the kingdom of God through the distinctive roles of husband and wife – through their biological and anatomical sexual complementarity – and through the raising of children.

Female (sex / gender)	Those image-bearers of God of the biological and anatomical female sex, who are typically able to bear children.
Fornication	Any sexual immorality committed by persons who are not yet married.
Gay	Historically the word “gay” refers to men who are attracted sexually to other men. Currently the word can be used to describe all members of the LGBTQ+ movement (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, etc.). Similar to Queer.
Gay Christian	The mistaken identification of Christians who struggle with sinful same-sex-attracted desires which fails to acknowledge the radical nature of redemption in Christ. Though it should be rejected, some Christians use this language to help others understand the particular spiritual challenge of homosexual attraction and temptation.
Gender	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God that expresses the biological maleness or femaleness of our sex. The LGBTQ+ movement views this as the aspect of our identity as autonomous individuals that expresses how we experience our sexuality.
Gender Identity	A term used to refer to an individual's personal gender expression. It is often used to suggest that gender exists on a continuum that is not related to biological and anatomical sex. See Gender.
Genderqueer	See Non-Binary.
Gender Affirming Care	A euphemism for surgical and pharmacological interventions which attempt to make an individual's physical appearance match his or her claimed gender identity.
Headship	That biblical teaching which refers to husbands as the leading authority in the marriage. Though prone to abuse in fallen man, godly headship reflects the leadership of Christ in this world.
Heteronormative	A term for the expression of the heterosexuality of God's created order within law, culture, business, etc. This term is used pejoratively for the residual expression of a previous cultural imagining which enforced heterosexuality as normative.
Heterosexual	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God whereby we are sexually intended/designed for and attracted to the opposite sex.
Homosexual	A term that refers to individuals attracted to the same sex. In LGBTQ+ discourse, the term has been labeled offensive, and the term "gay" is suggested as a less offensive term.
Hormone Treatment	A medical treatment that can address deficiencies in ordinary human hormonal balance, but in LGBTQ+ settings refers to a treatment taken by people attempting to transition to their claimed genders; it is intended to align their hormonal balance with their desired genders by suppressing and/or supplementing the hormones that ordinarily accompany their biological and anatomical sexes.
Identity	That aspect of our being image-bearers of God that distinguishes us from all other creatures. In modern parlance identity refers to our self-perception or self-definition, freeing us from the imposition of an identity by God or others.

Idle Thoughts	Thoughts that are useless or yield no advantage or edification; those lustful thoughts or fantasies that we may dismiss as harmless but are under the judgment of God.
Image of God	That aspect of humanity's creation which, especially before the Fall into sin, revealed itself in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The image of God distinguishes and exalts humanity above all other creatures and according to Genesis 1:27 (cf. Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6) is expressed as male and female.
Intersectionality	The belief that the intersection of social identities (race, gender, class, etc.) contributes to oppression, privilege, or both.
Intersex	A general term for different physical conditions in which a person is born with reproductive and/or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the ordinary anatomical features of the female or male sex. This may include chromosomes, gonads, or genitals that do not allow an individual to be physically or medically identified as male or female.
Intimacy (sexual)	The state of closeness of body and soul between two people. The most intimate relationship is marriage, and in marriage intimacy is uniquely expressed in sexual union.
LGBTQ+ etc.	An initialism which is sometimes longer (e.g., LGBTQIA etc.), sometimes shorter (LGB or LGBT), used to collectively refer to anyone who either rejects heterosexuality as normative or rejects the biblical distinction between man and woman, male and female.
Love	According to our culture, love is that emotion one feels towards another person or object. Biblical love is a heartfelt commitment to others patterned after the love of God.
Male (sex / gender)	Those image-bearers of God of the biological and anatomical male sex, who are never able to bear children.
Marriage	The union of one biological/anatomical man and one biological/anatomical woman in a lifelong covenant of love and faithfulness.
Masturbation/Solo Sex	That perversion of our sexuality which seeks personal sexual pleasure outside of the marriage relationship through self-gratification.
Monogamy, Monogamous	The type of marriage commitment intended by God in the beginning, whereby one man and one woman covenant to live in an exclusive bond of love and faithfulness all the days of their lives.
Non-Binary	A term used to deny that there are only male and female genders which can neither be combined nor broken down into rejectable aspects. Cf. genderfluid; gender spectrum; a gender.
Orientation	A term used to describe an instinctive attraction to one gender or the other.
Paraphilia	A fallen condition which expresses itself as intense and recurring sexual desire involving things, actions, or situations that are abnormal or atypical according to God's revealed will.
Pedophilia	A fallen condition which expresses itself in a perverse sexual sin against children.

Person, Personhood	That identity which belongs uniquely to human beings by virtue of being made in the image of God, created body and soul, male and female. Persons are not merely defined by their abilities, their significance, or even their consciousness, but by their relationship to their Creator God.
Polyamory	An expression of our fallen condition which rejects the unique, monogamous, and exclusive nature of a marital/sexual relationship and instead affirms the virtue of multiple sexual partners.
Porneia	A biblical term for sexual immorality.
Pornography	Images, videos, or other media representations of a sexual nature intended to satisfy a sexual desire outside of the boundaries of marriage.
Progressive Sanctification	The work of the Spirit in the lives of the redeemed whereby disordered sexual attractions, desires, and perversions are increasingly overcome, and proper sexual desires are given greater expression.
Pronouns	The use of personal pronouns expresses our gender identity to those around us. For those who identify as non-binary or gender fluid, pronouns indicate where on the gender spectrum they identify and how they prefer to be referred to by others.
Repentance (sexual sin)	That work of the Spirit whereby the sinner begins to hate more and more his or her sexual sin, disordered sexual attractions, and desires, and to run away from them to the Lord, delighting to walk in the way of purity.
Sex (noun)	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God that distinguishes men and women biologically and anatomically from each other, i.e., biological sex or anatomical sex.
Sex (verb)	The tender and loving expression of the sexual desires God gives humans to enjoy in the context of marriage.
Sex Work	A euphemism for stripping, prostitution, and other forms of sexual acts done in exchange for pay. The term is used in place of these traditional terms as an attempt to make them sound like normal and acceptable forms of sexual expression.
Sexuality (noun)	That aspect of our identity as image-bearers of God which expresses our desire for physical intimacy.
Sexually Indeterminate	Those persons born without clearly identifiable male or female anatomy and/or genitalia. See Intersex.
Side A Christianity	A view that supports unnatural forms of sexuality as normative to Christianity and allows for the sanctioning of same-sex marriage.
Side B Christianity	A view that supports identifying a person or group of people as Christian according to their LGBTQ+ classifications, such as being a “gay-Christian,” even though the person remains celibate.
Sin, Actual	Any thought, word, or deed which by its commission or omission violates the law of God, especially as revealed in the Seventh Commandment.

Sin, Original	The imputed guilt and corruption from Adam which is the source of all disordered sexual attractions, desires, development, and anatomy, as well as all sexual perversions and rebellion against our Creator.
Single, Singleness	To be single refers to those who are unmarried. Singleness can be a permissible and a blessed condition in the kingdom of Christ.
Straight	A term used to describe those who have natural sexual desires for members of the opposite sex.
Submission	The calling of all believers to acknowledge the place and priority of God's Word and will in their lives, acting according to that rather than according to their desires or attractions. This comes to expression in many relationships, including the submission of believers to one another, of citizens to the state, and of wives to their husbands. Christ is the paradigm of submission in Scripture.
Temptation	The internal or external invitation or desire which arises from sin to rebel against God.
Tolerance	Historically tolerance has meant the acknowledgment that all men are image-bearers of God and therefore worthy of respect and honor. Currently tolerance has come to mean the affirmation of the rightness and normalcy of a person's chosen actions or claimed identity.
Transgender	A term for one who identifies or expresses one's gender identity in a way that does not match one's biological/anatomical and genetic sex of man or woman. This is independent of sexual orientation (e.g., a transgender woman – i.e., a man who identifies himself as a woman – may be attracted to other men or still be attracted to women).
Transgender Man	A woman who identifies and expresses herself as though she was a man.
Transgender Woman	A man who identifies and expresses himself as though he was a woman.
Transvestite	A person who cross-dresses, i.e., who dresses in the traditional and cultural clothing and adornment of the opposite sex. While those who cross-dress may be transgender and/or same-sex attracted, that is not necessarily the case.
Victimhood	In contemporary critical and Neo-Marxist frameworks, a victim is anyone who believes he or she has been mistreated by someone in a position of greater power. The goal of such victim identification is to restore the power balance.
Woke	To be alert to discrimination, injustice, and oppression toward sexual minorities as such categories and persons are identified and defined according to contemporary critical and Neo-Marxist social-justice theories.

Appendix 1: Recommended Resources

Though not an exhaustive list, the following books, articles, and resources provide faithful and wise counsel on the issue of human sexuality in our current cultural context.

Books on Understanding Our Current Cultural Climate

1. *Strange New World*, Carl Trueman
2. *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*, Rosaria Butterfield

Books on Homosexuality

1. *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality*, Kevin DeYoung
2. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, Robert Gagnon
3. *Is The Church Pro-Gay? How to Respond to a Moral Crisis with God's Love*, Shawn Mathis

Books on Biography

1. *Out of a Far Country*, Christopher Yuan and Angela Yuan
2. *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, Rosaria Butterfield

Books on Sexuality Generally

1. *Love Thy Body*, Nancy Pearcy
2. *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*, Christopher Yuan
3. *One Man, One Woman*, Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley

Books on Transgenderism

1. *Gender Ideology: What Do Christians Need to Know*, Sharon James
2. *Affirming God's Image*, Alan Branch

Digital Resources

Articles

“How Can We Fight Sexual Sin,” Bill Boekestein,
<https://corechristianity.com/resources/articles/how-can-we-fight-sexual-sin>

“How to Not Have Sex Before Marriage,” Bill Boekestein,
<https://corechristianity.com/resources/articles/how-to-not-have-sex-before-marriage>

“Same Sex Attraction as Sin,” Mark Jones, <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/same-sex-attraction-as-sin>

“Anthropology and the Sexual Ethic,” Chris Gordon,
<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2023/06/anthropology-and-the-sexual-ethic/>

Videos

Holy Sexuality Project (12 Episodes) Christopher Yuan

Other Ecclesiastical Reports

PCA: [AIC-Report-to-48th-GA-5-28-20-1.pdf](#) (pcaga.org)

RPCNA: https://www.pcahistory.org/topical/sexuality/RPCNA_Study.pdf

THE
NEW REFORMATION CATECHISM
ON
HUMAN SEXUALITY

*A Catechism Based on
The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563*

Christopher J. Gordon



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Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Preface	7
Introduction Questions 1–2	11
Part One: Creation Questions 3–15	12
Part Two: Fall Questions 16–22	17
Part Three: Redemption Questions 23–26	20
Part Four: Restoration Questions 27–41	22

Foreword

“I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful savior Jesus Christ.” So begins the Heidelberg Catechism. Written by Zacharius Ursinus and published in 1563, The Heidelberg Catechism quickly became a manual for Christian living and religious instruction during the Reformation. A catechism focused on helping Christians lay hold of the deepest truths in the best ways was dearly needed during the tumultuous time of the Reformation.

Today’s revolution in theology is not over the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but over sexual identity. Our post-Freudian world maintains without any substantial pushback that sexual identity is the most important truth about a person. Organized under the banner of LGBTQ+, authentic personhood depends on placing yourself under one of these letters, or joyfully and without reservation applauding people who do. The American Medical Association tells us that mental health depends on practicing what you desire, and enthusiastically supporting others who do what feels right in their own eyes is a suicide-prevention strategy. The biblical creation mandate seems a quaint ancient narrative with no binding force when in the United States today there are hundreds of pediatric gender clinics and testosterone is administered to adolescents from Planned Parenthood on a first visit and without parental consent or a therapist’s note.

In contrast to the world’s anthropology, a biblical anthropology understands that after Adam’s transgression (Genesis 3), we, his posterity, have a sin nature that compels each person to love something that God hates. If nothing checks our will, our sinful desires will plunge us headfirst into all manner of spiritual, moral, and sometimes physical danger. No one is exempt from original sin and its consequence. Neither

good nor malicious intentions can rewrite God's call for men and women. Scripture is clear that we are responsible for our inborn as well as our actual sins (Psalm 5:5, Romans 1:18, Deuteronomy 27:15, Hebrews 9:27). Taking responsibility for our own sin is hard and necessary, but because of the way that the world, the flesh, and the devil conspire, it is difficult to know where to start.

And this is where Christopher Gordon's *The New Reformation Catechism* offers to the church such a timely and pastoral guide. I have no doubt that this means of discipleship will give glory to God and be used of the Lord to liberate many who are held captive by sexual sin. Twenty-three years ago, when I was in a lesbian relationship and at the same time reading the Bible, I would have greatly benefited from *The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality*. I know that I am not alone in needing this catechism.

May God bless you richly as you grow in Christian liberty. May this catechism help you hold fast to the truth and better understand how the full counsel of God speaks to the godly priority of human sexuality.

Rosaria Butterfield

Preface

The historic creeds and confessions of Protestant churches have served to preserve Christians in the truth of the gospel for centuries. We are deeply indebted to those who took the time to formulate, with great accuracy and clarity, the precious truths of our faith. We are faced with a unique challenge in our times, however, with regard to new movements that are harming the integrity of what we believe.

Of particular interest is how the current sexual revolution has completely overturned what God established at creation as good. This is a unique challenge that has been answered by many helpful writers on the topic. The problem is that not enough Christians are taking the time to read current books that address this issue. Further, few resources are available that are intended to bring families, study groups, and churchgoers together around confessional-like statements that address the challenges of our day.

Creeds and confessions were originally written to provide summary truths of the Christian faith in the face of great theological error. Catechisms in particular provided short, concise summary statements, in question-and-answer format, on some particular doctrine of the Christian faith. These documents are intended to help Christians, especially children and those new to the faith, to have their minds trained in what Scripture teaches on a given point of Christian doctrine. To this day, catechizing is one of the most effective methods of preserving Christians from error.

The culture is daily catechizing us and our children in the ideas they want impressed upon minds. It has been to our own demise that Christians have not taken seriously enough the call to combat this vicious assault on our faith through catechizing God's people in his

truth. The great need of the moment is a robust recovery in training Christians in the truths of what we confess.

Many of our older confessional statements do not address our current challenges with any amount of specificity. Sadly, due to the fear that any new confession or catechism will challenge the integrity of the confessional statements that we already have, or compromise our present unity, we have avoided the writing of new confessions or catechisms that address current issues.

What is not appreciated, however, is that catechisms in particular were regularly written by Reformed pastors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Richard Greenham, the great Elizabethan Puritan preacher, second only in influence to William Perkins, wrote a well-known short form of catechizing on the basic principles of the Christian faith. Greenham produced a masterful catechism that helped to provide further clarity on issues that were not specified in ecclesiastically approved Reformed creeds and confessions.

This is precisely the purpose of the present catechism that is being presented to you. There are official, ecclesiastically approved creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the church, that have official authority and serve the churches in the preservation of the truth. This catechism is not an official, ecclesiastical document and does not have the same authority. As a Reformed minister, I have written a pastoral catechism based on the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 to help Christians have their minds catechized in the truth of biblical human sexuality.

This catechism is intended to be used devotionally around the table, providing an opportunity for parents to talk with their children about these issues. This catechism is also intended to provide opportunities for Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and sermon series for pastors in addressing the current challenges surrounding human sexuality.

I have submitted this catechism to many well-respected scholars and pastors to receive feedback and correction where needed. In particular,

I would like to thank Rosaria Butterfield, Christopher Yuan, R. Scott Clark, W. Robert Godfrey, Carl Trueman, David VanDrunen, Michael Brown, Doug Barnes, Wes Bredenhof, Chad Vegas, Jonathan Cruse, and Jon Payne for their excellent help in producing this catechism.

I hope you will receive this, dear reader, as a humble attempt to help Christians enjoy the creational, sexual ethic that God established from the beginning for our good.

Christopher J. Gordon
Escondido, CA

INTRODUCTION

1. Q. Why is it comforting that we have a new identity in Jesus Christ?

A. I am being remade into the image of Christ, to have a true identity—¹
in body and soul,
throughout the whole course of my life,
to enjoy God and glorify him forever.²
He redeemed my life with the precious blood of his Son,³
and has delivered me from the lie of Satan in the Garden.⁴
He also watches over me in such a way
that he might free me from all sexual impurity
as the temple of his indwelling;⁵
in fact, all things must work together
to remake me into the image of his Son.⁶
Because I have this new identity,⁷
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
also assures me of God's steadfast love,⁸
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready

¹ Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10

² Ps. 146; 1 Cor. 10:31

³ 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

⁴ Gen. 3:4-5; John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

⁵ 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:15-20

⁶ Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18

⁷ 2 Cor. 5:17

⁸ Ps. 103:8-10; John 16:25-27

from now on to enjoy true freedom as a new creation.¹

2. Q. What must I know about human sexuality and my new identity in Christ?

A. Three things: first, how great my unholy desires and sexual sins are;²
second, how I am set free from bondage to my unholy desires and sexual sins;³
third, how I am to lead a thankful life of sexual purity in union with Christ.⁴

Part I: CREATION

3. Q. How many sexes did God make at creation?

A. God made two sexes at creation;
“in the image of God, he created them,
male and female, he created them.”⁵

4. Q. What does God require of us in making us in his image?

A. God requires that we love him
as he created us, male or
female,
with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength,
and our neighbor as ourselves.⁶

¹ John 8:32; Gal. 5:13

² Ex. 20:14, 17; 2 Sam. 11:2-4; Gal. 5:16; 1 John 2:16

³ 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51; 1 Cor. 6:14-7:5; Col. 2:13-15

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:15-20

⁵ Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18, 21-23; 5:2; Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-7

⁶ Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-40

5. Q. Why did God make us male and female in his own image?

A. That we might use all of the excellent qualities¹ with which he made us,² in true righteousness and holiness,³ in body and soul,⁴ as male and female, for his glory as we exercise dominion over the earth.⁵

6. Q. But aren't we able to make a distinction between biological sex and gender in search of our identity?

A. No. God established a natural order in the creation of male and female, that is good for us as image bearers of God.⁶ To introduce gender as a new category of personhood, separate from the biological category of sex, in pursuit of a different sexual identity, is unnatural to the creation order, and harmful to the purpose for which God made us.⁷

7. Q. But aren't some people born sexually indeterminate?

A. A small percentage of people are indeed born sexually

1 Ps. 8:3-9

2 Ps. 100:3

3 Eph. 4:23-24

4 1 Thess. 5:23

5 Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 8:3-9

6 Gen. 1:26-31; 9:6; Ps. 8:3-8; James 3:9

7 Gen. 1:31; Ps. 100:3; Rom. 1:21-27

indeterminate due to the fall,
but such are, by definition,
anomalies, and in medicine
anomalies never negate objective categories of personhood.
We may not use the existence of
anomalies to change or redefine
the creational order
that God has established as good.¹

8. Q. Does God permit us to change our sex?

A. Certainly not.²

To reverse how God created us as male or female,
due to fallen, unchosen thoughts and self-perceptions
would be an act of rebellion,³
and a gross distortion of God's creative handiwork
in specifically forming us for his own glory.⁴
Further, in the new Jerusalem,
any genital mutilation,
or confusion over sexual orientation identity,
will be restored in our new resurrection bodies.
Therefore, we should not change our sex
since God promises to glorify our bodies,
in everlasting happiness,
as he created us male and female,
in the final resurrection.⁵

1 Gen. 1:26-27

2 Deut. 22:5; Deut. 23:1; Ps. 51:3-6

3 Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:5

4 Gen. 2:7, 22; Ps. 100:3

5 Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:35-56; Rev. 21:1-8

9. Q. When was marriage instituted?
- A. The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God at the very beginning of history in creation.¹
10. Q. What is marriage?
- A. God created marriage to be a lifelong, monogamous covenantal union between one man and one woman.²
11. Q. Why did God institute marriage?
- A. Six reasons:
First, a husband and wife are meant to live together in sincere love and holiness, helping each other faithfully in all things.³
Second, marriage provides husbands and wives with a proper setting to enjoy each other with the physical and relational desires God gave to them.⁴
Third, by marriage the human race is to be continued and increased through the institution of the family.⁵

¹ Questions 9-13 are adapted from the URCNA Statement of Affirmations Regarding Marriage: www.urnca.org/file_retrieve/63166; Gen. 2:18

² Prov. 2:17; Mark 10:6-9; Eph. 5:25-32

³ Eph. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-25

⁴ Gen. 2:23; Heb. 13:4

⁵ Gen. 1:22, 28; 8:17

Fourth, a structure is provided
that enriches society
and contributes to its orderly function.¹
Fifth, by marriage God advances his kingdom
through the loving devotion of a husband and wife,
as children are nurtured
in the true knowledge and fear of the Lord.²
Sixth, marriage is designed to represent
the mystery of Christ and the church
that he loves.³

12. Q. Does the Lord permit sexual intimacy outside of marriage?

A. No. Scripture teaches that marriage
is the only acceptable context for sexual union.
Further, God calls us to live decent and chaste lives
within or outside the holy state of marriage.⁴

13. Q. What is the Christian position on divorce?

A. Since husbands and wives
are united by the Lord's hand,
nothing should separate them in this life.⁵

14. Q. But aren't there any biblical grounds for divorce?

1 Gen. 1:26-28

2 Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127:3; Mal. 2:15-16; Eph. 5:22-6:4

3 Eph. 5:25

4 Gen. 2:21-24; Ex. 20:14; 1 Cor. 7:1-2; Eph. 5:3-5; Heb. 13:4

5 Gen. 2:21-14; Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:7-9

- A. The Scriptures permit divorce
in the irreconcilable circumstances
of adultery or abandonment.¹
But these are exceptions
to the general rule not to divorce.

15. Q. Does God permit same-sex marriage?

- A. Absolutely not.
God ordained marriage
only between a man and a woman
for life.²
Governments do not have the authority
to change marriage
into something contrary
to what God instituted at creation.³

Part II: FALL

16. Q. With what lie did Satan tempt our first parents in the garden?

- A. Satan lied about the
goodness of God's creation
order.
He presented God
as restrictive and oppressive,
and our first parents chose to sin
through the desire to become their own gods

¹ Matt. 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-17

² Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; Matt. 19:5; Mark 7:21; Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:31

³ Acts 5:28-29; Rom. 13:1-2

and define their own way.¹

17. Q. What happened to our desires in the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in paradise?

A. All the desires of the human heart,
even though they may be
unchosen, have become distorted
and fallen
in the sin of our first parents.²
These desires cannot be trusted,³
since we have a natural tendency to be
led away by various passions.⁴

18. Q. But didn't God create us to be happy in following the desires of our hearts?

A. God made us holy and
happy;⁵ we, however,
accepting the lie of the devil,⁶
have robbed ourselves of this happiness
by obeying sinful desires.⁷

19. Q. But isn't there a difference between temptation and the practice of evil desires?

¹ Gen. 3:1-7; John 8:44; 1 John 2:22

² Gen. 3:16; Jer. 17:9; 1 John 2:16

³ Rom. 7:14-25

⁴ 2 Tim. 3:6; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 2:3

⁵ Gen. 1:31; Ps. 8:6-9

⁶ Gen. 3:6

⁷ Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 14; Rom. 3:10-18

A. God requires that we avoid
entering into all forms of temptation.¹
Temptation is not sin
when it originates outside of us.²
Temptation becomes sin
when we entertain and welcome
the sinful desires of our hearts and act upon them.³

20. Q. Are we able to make a distinction between entertaining a
sinful desire and choosing to live in that desire?

A. God condemns desires that are contrary to his
law, as well as our actual sins.⁴
These contrary desires are sinful
even if they are unchosen,
since they proceed from a corrupt heart.⁵
All impure thoughts and desires,
prior to the conscious act of the will,
are considered sin in God's eyes.⁶

21. Q. What kinds of sinful desires and deeds does God's law
condemn?

1 Matt. 6:13

2 Gen. 39:6-12; Matt. 4:1-10

3 Gen. 3:6; 4:6-8; 2 Kings 5:20-27

4 Prov. 6:25; 7; Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 10:6; Gal. 5:16

5 Matt. 15:19; James 1:15

6 Rom. 2:15-16; 8:5; Eph. 4:17-19; Rev. 2:23

- A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 15:18-20:
“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person.”
22. Q. Will God permit our sinful desires to go unpunished?
- A. Certainly not.
He is terribly angry with our sinful desires,
as well as our actual sins,
God will punish every idle thought,
careless word,
or wicked action
by a just judgment both now and in eternity.¹
As the Bible declares,
“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”²

Part III: REDEMPTION

23. Q. What has Jesus accomplished for me in the gospel with regard to all forms of sexual sin?

- A. Through true faith in the promise of God’s Word,³ and wholehearted trust in Christ,⁴
by the gospel,
God has freely granted—

¹ Matt. 12:35-37; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:16; Rev. 20:11-15

² 2 Cor. 5:10

³ John 17:3,17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19

⁴ Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16

not only to others but to me also—
the forgiveness of all my sexual trespasses,¹
canceling all my guilt²
and meriting for me eternal righteousness and salvation.³

24. Q. How does the truth of the gospel set us free with regard to sexual sin?

A. Since I died, was buried, and have been raised with Christ⁴ through his death and resurrection, I am set free from slavery to any form of sexual sin. Christ has broken its dominion over me,⁵ and I now live with a renewed desire⁶ to reckon myself dead to my old way of sexual immorality,⁷ but alive to God in pursuing a sexually pure life for his glory.⁸

25. Q. Since I am no longer my own but have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, what new identity has Christ achieved for me?

A. By faith I am joined to Christ as a new creature,⁹

1 Col. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 6:13-14

2 Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:14

3 Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 10:10

4 Rom. 6:1-4

5 Rom. 6:5-14

6 Heb. 8:10-12; Col. 3:1-5

7 Rom. 6:21; Eph. 5:1-17

8 Rom. 6:11

9 Eph. 1:7-14

and so I share in his identity.¹
In my new identity,
I am satisfied in God's love as his adopted child;²
I am to think of myself as purchased, accepted, valued, and
protected;³
and I am to find it a great delight to be remade in the image
of Christ
in true righteousness and holiness.⁴

26. Q. Why are all forms of sexual immorality incompatible with
my union with Jesus Christ?

- A. Since I have become one with Christ in body and
spirit, any form of sexual immorality
invites that which is profane
into my holy union with Christ.⁵
Therefore, I am called to be one with Christ
by fleeing all forms of sexual immorality.⁶

Part IV: RESTORATION

27. Q. What does God call us to do when we fall to sexual sin?

- A. When I commit any form of sexual
sin— even the slightest desire or
thought

1 Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:9-11; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:17

2 Rom. 8:16-17; 9:26; Eph. 2:19; 5:1

3 Rom. 8:32; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

4 Eph. 4:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:8

5 1 Cor. 6:15-20

6 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3

contrary to any of God's commandments—
I should confess my sins to him,¹
eagerly turn away from all sexual sin,²
and seek to walk in the newness of life.³

28. Q. Is God angry with his children who still struggle in their striving to put away sexual immorality?

A. God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness.⁴ When we come to God with a broken and contrite heart,⁵ confessing and turning away from our sins, God promises to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁶ He has declared, “a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.”⁷

29. Q. What about believers who fight against same-sex attraction but continue to experience shame and guilt for these desires?

A. God, in the gospel of his Son, has announced that there is no condemnation

1 Ps. 1; 32:5; 2 Sam 12:13; 1 John 1:9

2 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3

3 Rom. 6:4; 7:6; Col. 3:1-5

4 Ps. 103:1-14

5 Ps. 34:18; 51:17

6 Rom. 4:6-8; 1 John 1:9

7 Isa. 42:3

for those who are in Christ Jesus.¹
Any unholy desire, even if unchosen,
such as same-sex attraction,
is covered by the blood of Christ.²
Believers who continue to struggle
against same-sex attraction,
should trust in God's forgiving mercies,³
and with earnest purpose,
by the strength of the Holy Spirit,
strive to live in the newness of life.⁴
Further, the body of Christ
should not avoid or shun
those who struggle against any sexual sin.⁵
Instead, believers, with a spirit of compassion,⁶
should "bear each other's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ."⁷

30. Q. Since we have been delivered from all sexual sin, why should we pursue a life of sexual purity?

A. Five reasons:

First, because our sinful desires do not define us
or constitute our identity

1 Rom. 8:1

2 Col. 2:13

3 1 John 1:9

4 Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-5

5 2 Sam. 12:1-13; Luke 15:1-2

6 Jude 22; 1 Pet. 3:8

7 Gal. 6:2

as those purchased by the blood of Christ.¹

Second, because sexual purity
is the will of God for our sanctification,²
as we are being renewed
by the power of the Holy Spirit
into the image of God's Son.³

Third, by pursuing a life of sexual purity,
we show that we are thankful
to God for his salvation.⁴

Fourth, we also stand as witnesses,
that those living in sexual immorality
might see in us the holy purity that God loves.⁵

Fifth, as we battle against our sinful nature,
the Holy Spirit strengthens our Christian walk
and we give glory to God.⁶

31. Q. What is pornography?

- A. Pornography is sexually explicit material
produced to serve lustful desires of the
flesh, activated through the channel of the
eye,⁷ through the looking upon of naked
images

1 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:17-18

2 1 Thess. 4:3

3 Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19

4 Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10

5 Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

6 1 Cor. 10:31; Gal. 5:17

7 Job 31:1; 1 John 2:16

of males and females
for the purpose of sexual arousal.¹

32. Q. Why is pornography so destructive?

- A. Because the use of such images
ruins the sexual intimacy intended for marriage,²
supports idolatry in the worship of the creature,³
dehumanizes men and women promoting abuse,
especially of women,⁴
advances other forms of sexual impurity,⁵
creates idleness in society to the harm of our neighbors,⁶
and degrades the mind into darkness.⁷

33. Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their
unholy desires and unrepentant of their sexual ways?

- A. By no means.
Scripture tells us that
no sexually immoral person,
no adulterer,
no fornicator,
no homosexual,
no abuser of women,
or the like

1 Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 7:9

2 Eph. 5:25; Heb. 13:4

3 Rom. 1:24-25

4 Gen. 1:26-27

5 Rom. 1:18-27; James 1:14-15; 2 Pet. 2:14

6 2 Thess. 3:6-12

7 Rom. 1:28-32; Eph. 4:18-19

will inherit the kingdom of God.¹

34. Q. What is involved in genuine repentance of all sexual sin?

A. Two things:

The dying-away of the old self,
by hating all forms of sexual immorality
and fleeing from it;²

And the rising-to-life of the new self,
by finding great joy in leading a sexually pure life
and, if married, by properly loving our spouses.³

35. Q. How should husbands seek to love and honor their wives?

A. Husbands should demonstrate sincere love to their
wives, in reverence for Christ,⁴

through the exercise of:

loyalty, kindness, understanding, tenderness, self-control,
sexual purity,

by all means avoiding
verbal, emotional, and physical abuse
or controlling behavior,

and by providing godly leadership.⁵

Men ought to be a good example to their wives

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

² 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Cor. 6:15-20

³ Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa. 57:15; Rom. 6:1-11; Eph. 5:22-33

⁴ Eph. 5:21

⁵ Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7

of the love that Christ has for his church.¹

36. Q. How should wives seek to love and honor their husbands?

- A. Wives should demonstrate sincere love to their husbands, in reverence for Christ,² through the exercise of respect, patience, honor, encouragement, self-denial, contentment and by finding delight in godly submission that pleases the Lord.³ Women ought to be a good example to their husbands of the responsive love that the church has for Christ.⁴

37. Q. How should singles honor the Lord in the situation that God has called them?

- A. Singles who desire marriage are called to contentment and prayer,⁵ trusting the Lord in every circumstance⁶ as he knows best for us, yet realizing that only Christ makes us fulfilled, and that ultimate joy is found in Christ whether as single or married.⁷

1 Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19

2 Eph. 5:21

3 Prov. 31:10-31; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-4

4 Eph. 5:28-30

5 Phil. 4:11

6 Prov. 3:5-7

7 Prov. 18:22

Singles who do not desire marriage,
are called to holiness in body and spirit,¹
in the special opportunities they have
to give “undivided devotion to the Lord,”²
yet, should remain open to God’s will to provide a spouse
and change one’s desire for marriage.

38. Q. How should the family be maintained to the glory of God?

A. By making Christ the center of our homes
through: love, humility, and patience toward one
another;³ godly discipline,⁴
the regular reading of the Scriptures,⁵
heartfelt prayer,⁶
removing all things spiritually harmful from our homes,⁷
and making Lord’s Day worship a priority together.⁸

39. Q. What is God’s will for parents in training children in
proper sexuality?

A. Three things:
First, that parents model before their children
a loving relationship,
and also hold marriage in honor

1 1 Cor. 7:6-9

2 1 Cor. 7:35

3 Eph. 4:25-32

4 Eph. 6:1-4

5 Deut. 6:6-9; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:13

6 1 Thess. 5:17

7 Josh. 24:15; 2 Kings 23-24; Eph. 4:31

8 Heb. 10:25

as it was designed by God.¹
Second, that parents speak to their children
appropriately and sufficiently
about biblical sexuality,
and proper sexual conduct,
as designed for marriage;²
realizing that our children are facing
daily misinformation on sexuality.
Third, that parents guard their children from
all forms of sexual immorality and pornography,³
and overseeing the use of technology, social media,
and other mediums that promote,
through cultural peer pressure,
a different sexual ethic⁴
than what God made as good in creation.⁵

**40. Q. What is God's will for young adults in honoring their
parents in sexual conduct?**

A. Three things:

First, that young adults honor their parents by
maintaining sexual purity and chastity.⁶

Second, that young adults refrain

1 Eph. 5:21-25

2 Prov. 5; 7; 22:6, 15; Heb. 13:4

3 Job 31:1

4 1 Thess. 4:3

5 Deut. 6:6-9

6 Ex. 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; 7; Heb. 13:4

from pushing upon their parents
and adopting the ungodly sexual norms
of the culture.¹

Third, that young adults take delight in the Lord
and in their identity in Christ as singles,
waiting patiently for the spouse
that God prepares for them.²

41. Q. How do we love those who live in sexual sin?

- A. We should not avoid or shun
those who are mastered by sexual sin.³
Instead, we should speak the truth in love⁴
about sexual sin, repentance, and faith in Christ;
give witness to the deliverance God gave us
from our own sins;⁵
and perform acts of kindness.⁶
By our godly living,
we should seek to win over our neighbors to Christ.⁷

¹ Deut. 21:18-21; Prov. 29:15; 30:17; Col. 3:20; 1 Tim. 3:1-4

² Gen. 2:22-23; Prov. 18:22

³ Luke 15:1-2; Matt. 9:13

⁴ Eph. 4:15

⁵ Mark 5:19; 1 Pet. 3:15

⁶ Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 14:12-14; Rom. 12:13; Heb 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:9

⁷ Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

Study Committee Recommendations:

1. Grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Christopher Gordon (chairman) and Rev. Joel Dykstra (secretary) as well as any other members of the study committee present during the discussion of the report.

Ground:

- a. *The officers and members of the study committee should be able to answer delegate questions and give their insight to assist Synod's deliberation of the report.*

2. Commend the Study Committee Report to the churches for study.

Grounds:

- a. *The report as a whole provides valuable background, explanation, wisdom, and resources to the churches on the issue of human sexuality.*
- b. *Commending a study committee report to the churches is contemplated in Regulations for Synodical Procedure Appendix D, Section 3.2*

3. Adopt the "Biblical and Confessional Statements on Human Sexuality" and the "Affirmations and Denials on Human Sexuality" in the study report as Pastoral Advice pursuant to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix D, Section 2.

Grounds:

- a. *Both sections provide concise confessional & biblical guidance to the churches in their pastoral care on the issues of human sexuality.*
- b. *The "Biblical and Confessional Statements on Human Sexuality" and the "Affirmations and Denials on Human Sexuality" together are serviceable for legal protection for the churches, and as such, should have the imprimatur of formal adoption by the federation.*

4. Publish the adopted Pastoral Advice on the federation website.

Ground:

- a. *Such publication will make the Pastoral Advice readily accessible by the churches and is consistent with prior Synodical action after the adoption of Pastoral Advice.*

5. Dismiss the Study Committee with thanks.

Ground:

- a. *The Study Committee has fulfilled its mandate and completed its work.*