

MULTNOMAH UNIVERSITY'S Human Sexuality and Purity Understanding

Preamble:

Multnomah University (MU) is a faith-based, higher education institution built upon the historic, Christian, protestant, evangelical tradition. Since our beginning in 1936, our mission has been to serve churches and society by providing biblically and spiritually formed clergy and leaders for the church and public arena. Our core religious convictions are central to our educational experience and learning community as demonstrated in the numerous ways that we saturate our curriculum with biblical and theological principles. The following institutional principles are longstanding: belief in the authority of the Bible; the care and compassion we want to characterize our community; and our understanding of the Bible's teaching on human sexuality.

From MU's Doctrinal Statement: *Article I. Revelation, Scripture, and Authority*

We believe that God is revealed in creation, in the Holy Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ, the apex of revelation. The Scriptures, all sixty-six Old and New Testament books, are divinely authoritative in all they affirm (Ps. 19:1-6; Heb. 1:1-2; John 17:17).

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. This means the Holy Spirit dynamically superintended the verbal expressions of the human authors of Scripture so that the very thoughts God intended were accurately penned in the wording of the original manuscripts (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 2:13).

We believe the Scripture is inerrant as to fact and infallibly trustworthy as to truth, and should be interpreted in context to ascertain each author's intended meaning. Our present Bible continues to bear the final authoritative instruction of God for the church and the world (John 10:35b; Ps. 19:7; Matt. 5:17-18).

General Policy & Guidelines

In keeping with Multnomah University's mission and commitment to evangelical Christianity, all members of the University community are expected to live by and support the teachings of Scripture. MU affirms that sexual relationships are designed by God to be expressed solely within a marriage between a man and a woman. This view of sexuality and marriage is rooted in the Genesis account of creation and is maintained consistently throughout Scripture and has been so understood by Christian churches throughout history. We provide more detailed explanation later in this document.

A Safe Place to Grow

MU believes that members of our learning community are best supported if they are able to share their questions, struggles, or their self-understanding with trusted others, including Student Services, Personnel, Faculty, and Administrators. Concerns about sexuality may be difficult to disclose, but struggling in silence is a far greater challenge. In all such personal issues, Multnomah personnel are committed to discretion, sensitivity, compassion, and redemption.

When members of our learning community approach us and communicate that they are struggling with inappropriate heterosexual behavior, same-sex behavior, same-sex attraction and/or gender identification issues, we aim to offer safety that promotes openness. We pledge to extend compassion and care, communicating personal acceptance while providing accountability and assistance supporting those who desire to live consistently with Christian teaching. In living consistently with Christian convictions, we recognize the difference between a person's attractions and a person's behaviors. While attraction itself may not be a sin issue, members of the Multnomah community will always be held accountable for their response to that attraction.

In regard to behavior, all members of our learning community are responsible for their actions, sexual and otherwise. At Multnomah, we are committed to helping our students develop toward Christ-like maturity in their daily practices. With this said, sexual behavior contrary to Scriptural principles and Multnomah's community standards will be addressed through a disciplinary process. As a matter of emphasis, in all disciplinary matters we seek to be redemptive in the lives of the individuals involved.

We do lament any insensitive and callous treatment that people working through these issues may have received from the Christian community. All members of the Multnomah Community are expected to treat one another with respect and Christ-like compassion. Insults, slurs and other forms of derogatory speech have no place in a Christian community.

Due to the complexity of issues related to human sexuality, we are committed to engaging this conversation with courage, humility, prayerfulness and care. We believe, in accordance with Scripture, that we are all broken. Therefore, a primary goal of Multnomah is to help each person find God in the midst of their unique history and struggles and discern how to walk with Him and others along the way.

Biblical Principles on Human Sexuality and Purity

Christian understanding of human identity is grounded in the Word of God. The significance of human sexuality is particularly evident in the account of creation. Human beings, fashioned by God in His own image, are created male and female (Gen. 1:27). This complementary nature of human sexuality is affirmed again in the

second chapter of Genesis. Woman is fashioned out of man (Gen. 3:18-24). Thus, from the beginning human sexual identity is reciprocal. That is, one's own human nature is properly understood in complementary relationship to another who is alike in nature, but opposite sexually. Like the rest of God's creation, the sexual differences between man and woman are pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31). We therefore affirm human sexuality to be a gift of God. By God's grace, human sexuality both enriches and fulfills our personhood.

Sexuality is an essential attribute of human nature. As a result of humanity's rebellion (Gen. 3), the complementary nature of human sexuality, like all other human relationships, has been distorted. Adam and Eve's disobedience not only led to death and separation from God, it also alienated human beings from one another. This alienation distorts sexual relationships between men and women.

The essential characteristics of humanness are found in those attributes endowed by God at creation and given by God's grace as a result of knowing Christ. Human sexuality is of secondary importance to an individual's relationship to God. That relationship is equally accessible to both sexes through one's faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This understanding of human sexuality is reflected in the teaching of Jesus Himself. Our Lord Jesus addressed matters of human sexuality and marriage on several occasions. Jesus clearly taught that love, rather than sex, is the primary bond in Christian relationships. Jesus said the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbor (Mark 12:28-30).

Humanity's failure to ground sexual identity in God's creative intent and holy character is inconsistent with biblical standards of sexual purity. Sexual intimacy expressed within a loving, faithful, heterosexual marriage relationship is a gift from God to be enjoyed. Sexual practices that take place outside of a loving, marital relationship between a man and a woman distort God's intentions. These practices rupture relationships between men and women, eroding the relationship between humans and their Creator.

In Matthew 15:19, Jesus teaches that immoral behavior starts first in the heart and mind. Self-indulgent thoughts of sexual fulfillment outside of God's creative designs constitute inward sins of lust. No sexual act can be proper if it is driven by desires that are contrary to the best interest of another human being.

Biblical Teaching on the Sacredness of Marriage

Heterosexual marriage is designed by God and rooted in the order of creation. It is not just a matter of tradition. In the New Testament, Jesus confirms the heterosexual creation of human beings: "God made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4). Throughout Scripture heterosexual families consisting of a father, mother, and their children (for those who have children) are the norm of society. The New Testament

reinforces the teaching of heterosexual love and sexual relations within marriage (Eph. 5:22-33; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:1-5).

Marriage is intended to be an enduring covenantal relationship that reflects Christ's own unconditional commitment to the Church (Eph. 5:25-27). God established marriage as a union of one man and one woman within which it is good, right, and proper to engage in sexual relations for mutual enjoyment and procreation. Matrimonial customs may differ from one culture to another but the fundamental divine intent for marriage may not be changed on the basis of mere preference, custom, or culture. The dictates of culture, tradition, or personal preference must be brought into submission to the Word of God. Marriage as designed by God cannot be redefined by public opinion and must not be allowed to shift with the changing tide of cultural mores or social practice.

Sexual Intimacy and Celibacy

The Bible bears witness to God's will regarding human sexuality. Sexual desire is rightfully fulfilled only within the union of a man and a woman in holy matrimony. Unmarried singles who abstain from sex can be whole, mature persons, as pleasing to God as persons who are faithful in marriage. Sexual celibacy is a worthy state for mature men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1, 8).

Biblical Boundaries on Sexual Practices

The Bible condemns all sexual relationships outside of marriage (Matt. 5:27-29; Gal. 5:19). All behavior promoting inappropriate sexual desires and actions outside of faithful heterosexual marriage should be avoided. God's blessing rests on sexual intimacy only when it occurs within the boundaries of marriage between a man and a woman (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Thess. 4:1-8).

Alongside clear biblical teachings on God's design for heterosexual marriage are found specific instructions that prohibit homosexual conduct. For example, the Old Testament says: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Lev. 18:22, 20:13). Homosexual conduct is prohibited because it is out of harmony with God's design for his created human beings. Further, the New Testament states: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator—who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:25-27; NAS). Worshipping the creation more than the Creator not only alienated human beings from God but also

distorted their sexuality as created by God. Homosexual conduct, like all forms of impure sexual behavior, is contrary to God's original design.

Transgender Concerns

We believe that God's intention is that human beings live according to the male or female identity given to them at birth (Gen. 1-2). We recognize that gender identity is formed through a complicated process involving both the brain and relationships, and that in a fallen world, where God's good creation is marred and corrupted, some suffer from gender confusion, often feeling betrayed by their own bodies, and sadly by their families, society, and culture.

The university is committed to upholding God's creation design for persons to identify as male or female from birth and to retain God's desire for gender distinctiveness. We also recognize that some persons who experience ongoing gender confusion may be fully committed to following Christ in a life of holiness and sexual purity. What will disqualify a potential or existing student/employee who is struggling with gender identity is not the presence of the struggle itself, but the lack of willingness to be faithful to God in that struggle as evidenced by a lack of consistent awareness, humility, teachableness, accountability and openness to others in the transformation process towards Christlikeness.

Multnomah University is committed to compassionate engagement with students who experience manifestations of transgender identity. The university will work with such students on a case-by-case basis to determine the best way for them to live in pursuit of a godly lifestyle as members of the Multnomah community. As needed, the University may consult with medical, mental health, and pastoral professionals as well as biblical ethicists.

A Redemptive Focus

Sexual misconduct, depending on the facts and circumstances of each case, may result in disciplinary action. In all disciplinary matters, we seek to be redemptive in the lives of the individuals involved. Consequently, the University offers counsel and assistance to support and strengthen the individual's resolve to live consistently with Christian teaching on sexuality.

Attention will be given both to the needs of the student and to the needs of the Multnomah community as a whole. In some cases, for example, where it would be more comfortable for the student and/or for the community, on-campus residency may be assigned in apartment style housing rather than in a communal male or female dorm. In some cases it may be determined that it is necessary for the student or potential student to work through issues of sexual identity and/or gender confusion apart from being a member of the Multnomah community.

In all of this, we recognize that our understanding of the dynamic of human sexuality is growing. The exploration and conversation needs to continue and we purpose to make Multnomah University a safe place for that conversation to take place.

The Hope of the Gospel

The New Testament states: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

The same passage of Scripture strongly affirms the liberating power of the Christian gospel. Sinful men and women may be freed from all former wrong patterns of life, including sexual sin, whether heterosexual or homosexual: “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Like all other sins, sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ’s atoning work.

Summary and Conclusion

As a point of emphasis, we restate that when a person within our community approaches us and communicates that he or she is struggling with sexual sin, we aim to offer safety that promotes openness. We pledge to extend compassion and care communicating personal acceptance while providing accountability and assistance supporting people in their desire to live consistently with Christian teaching.

In regard to behavior, all members of our learning community are responsible for their actions, sexual and otherwise. At Multnomah, we are committed to helping all members develop toward Christ-like maturity in their daily practices. With this said, sexual behavior contrary to Multnomah’s community standards will be addressed through a disciplinary process. As noted earlier, in all disciplinary matters we will seek to be redemptive in the lives of the individuals involved. At MU, we desire to provide a caring and compassionate environment for all persons as described earlier in this document. From these commitments to be a learning community of grace, love, and truth, and our core religious convictions, we reserve the right to not admit, not hire and to dismiss any persons who act inconsistently with or refuse to support these university policies.