

# SPU Statement on Human Sexuality

November 14, 2005

As a community of men and women committed to following Christ, Seattle Pacific University recognizes the centrality of biblical teaching in all matters of life including human sexuality. We recognize, as well, the diversity of opinions within our community when it comes to the interpretation of Scripture regarding this subject and many others. Recognizing our commonalities as well as our diversity, therefore, we affirm the following:

Human beings are created in the image of God, male and female, and are of inestimable worth. Because we are created in God's image, people must be treated with respect and dignity by all institutions in society whether male or female, young or old, rich or poor, believer or unbeliever, homosexual or heterosexual. This priceless value constitutes the theological and anthropological foundation of our discussions regarding human sexuality. We, therefore, affirm the fundamental worth of all human persons, including those with whom we disagree.

Human beings are created in the image of God, male and female. The explicit relational dimension of human beings and the inherent differentiation of gender are foundational to our understanding of creation itself. Our discussions and considerations of human sexuality, therefore, take place within the context of these assumptions. Human sexuality is both a relational truth and it is gender differentiated.

Human sexuality is intended by God to include more than the contemporary cultural emphasis upon physical, sexual experience. Our sexuality is intended by God to reflect the whole of our sensual and relational createdness. We, therefore, renounce the equation of sexuality with genital sex alone and the false representation of sexuality found in pornography. We believe that such an emphasis results in the dehumanization of all people, especially women and children.

We recognize the need to affirm the Christian virtues of holiness and godliness in this very significant dimension of being human. We assert that holiness and godliness as they relate to human sexuality require more than the avoidance of evil. These dimensions of spirit-filled character involve the positive celebration of who we are as created beings. Therefore, we are to interact with one another with great responsibility, respect, and with unselfish love.

The delight we experience through our sexual experience requires of us a sense of stewardship, a trust that extends not only to ourselves but also to others. Therefore, we remind ourselves, as well as those beyond our community, of the responsibility not to engage in the sexual exploitation or the sexual harassment of others. This stewardship is particularly important in the human institutions of church, work, friendship, marriage, and family.

In particular, we affirm the institutions of marriage and family as central to the purposes of God. We believe it is in the context of the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman that the full expression of sexuality is to be experienced and celebrated and that such a commitment is part of God's plan for human flourishing. Within the teaching of our religious tradition, we affirm that sexual experience is intended between a man and a woman.

We believe this is the ancient and historic teaching of Christian scriptures and tradition, including the teaching of Seattle Pacific's founding denomination, the Free Methodist Church. We believe this

continues to be the teaching of the Christian Church around the world and remains the guiding light for our practice. We are also aware that this teaching is found in most other religious traditions as well. While we affirm the institution of marriage, we also recognize and affirm the call of some to singleness and celibacy.

Because the issues surrounding human sexuality are controversial, as a community of learning we recognize that our discussions and considerations regarding sexuality, whether in writing or in the classroom, must be treated with personal and spiritual sensitivity and with scholarly care. Therefore, we agree to evaluate our teaching and our pronouncements regarding sexuality in the light of the historic understanding of the Christian Church and the authority of the biblical witness. In this spirit we agree to submit our teachings and pronouncements to one another as followers of Christ.

Finally, recognizing the sinfulness and fallenness of our human nature, we acknowledge our need for God's grace and mercy in our actions, discussions, and considerations of human sexuality. We seek God's grace that we might rise above our human weaknesses and God's mercy that we might live in unity with one another in the midst of our brokenness and in response to the call of God upon our lives to love one another and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

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