

Marriage and Sexual Morality

*A biblical and pastoral position paper adopted by the
International Pentecostal Holiness Church Council of Bishops
October 19, 2016*

Preface

On June 26, 2013 the United States Supreme Court in *United States v Windsor* struck down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in a split 5-4 ruling. The Defense of Marriage Act was enacted by the United States Congress on September 21, 1996, and stated that the federal government would only recognize marriage as between one man and one woman. The *Windsor* decision paved the way for the United States Supreme Court, in another 5-4 decision, to rule exactly two years later on June 26, 2015 in *Obergefell v Hodges* that same sex marriage is legal in all fifty states of the United States of America.¹ In both decisions, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church rejected the legal and moral grounds of the Court's decision.

In light of the widespread media, political, social, and educational promotion and celebration of sexual activity contrary to the Word of God; and for the sake of our marriages, our children and grandchildren, and our witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, the IPHC Council of Bishops adopted this statement on July 24, 2015. Our views are consistent with the [IPHC Manual](#) and are based on the Word of God--the Bible, historic Christian teaching, and our desire to witness in truth, love, and grace to our lost world.

Introduction

Since its beginnings in 1898, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) has held to the historic Christian interpretation regarding sexual morality as described and prescribed in the Bible. Through most of the first sixty years of our denominational existence, Western society as a whole supported the public consensus regarding sexual morality and immorality.² That consensus remained strong in the media, churches, government, and education in the United States until the 1960s.

By the end of the 1960s, the systematic undermining of a moral consensus in the United States was in full force. It was advanced through media, moral relativism and secularism, court decisions removing the Ten Commandments and the Bible from public education, medical and psychological changes regarding the categorization of sexual behaviors, court decisions separated from religious revelation, the public moral failures of leading Christians, the loss of church discipline in local congregations, and the devastating results of compromise in the church.³

Now, in the second decade of the 21st Century, we are experiencing the rising tide of the public rejection of biblically based sexual morality. It has even advanced to the previously unheard redefinition of marriage to include people of the same sex. Where this will lead remains to be seen.

It is the conviction of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Council of Bishops that we must, in Holy Spirit love and anointing, speak the truth of God's Word to our members, constituency, and the world.⁴ We believe that the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, is sufficient to bring spiritual, emotional, and physical healing to every person. It is the love of God that motivates us (2 Corinthians 5:14).⁵

We pray that the Holy Spirit will renew "holiness to the Lord" among us. We pray that an emerging generation will recognize the evil of this day and commit to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. We pray that our congregations will become places of hope for people whose lives have been broken and destroyed by the sexual license of our day. We pray that the lost and wounded of this world will discover the same mercy, grace, and love that we have experienced in Jesus Christ. We pray that this present darkness will awaken us to the return of the Lord and that we will live in His truth and love. Amen.

The Stance of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church

The IPHC is clear regarding our stance on various issues related to human sexuality. We hold to the historic primary interpretations of both Old and New Testaments in these matters. For two thousand years of church history Christianity has consistently held these beliefs. This stance is consistent with our Protestant and Wesleyan heritage, as well as with the historic positions of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Our position is stated in a series of statements in the [IPHC Manual, 2013-2017](#), Article VII - The Covenant of Commitment:

"Because our Lord taught that immorality is first a condition of the heart, we affirm that profane and pornographic materials will have no place in our lives" (page 70).

"We reject the loose moral values of our culture and encourage our young people as well as our adults to choose clothing that will honor their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit" (page 71).

"We recognize the destructive and dehumanizing effects of pornography on society and oppose both its production and distribution. We also maintain a strong biblical position against premarital, extramarital, and deviant sex, including homosexual and lesbian relationships, and all forms of child molestation and/or exploitation. Yet we rejoice that people bound by these sins can find hope and deliverance in the gospel. (Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9)" (page 71).

"The family is the basic unit of society. Its divine origin, as expressed in the Bible, makes it of vital concern to the church. Growing out of our commitment as a people to a biblical lifestyle, we recognize the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman until death parts them, including the biblical pattern of relationships in the home. While the husband is the head of the home, he is also commanded to love and cherish his wife as his own body. Wives are to respect and honor their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-28)" (page 72).

Based on these affirmations and other clear teachings of Scripture, we believe that God created human beings as male and female (Genesis 1:27; 2:7, 21-25). God established and sanctified marriage as the covenant relationship between a man and woman in which the full measure of love is meant to be expressed (Mark 10:6-9).

We are spiritual beings created in the spiritual and moral image of God. We are physical beings, created by God from the dust of the earth, and empowered to enjoy the blessings and joys of our physical and spiritual existence. What God created He deemed “very good” (Genesis 1:31), and God’s intention for human fulfillment within the parameters of His revealed will remains true for every person since creation.

Single Christians should not enter into casual or cohabitational sexual relationships. Such relationships constitute fornication and as such are manifestly not in God’s will (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Besides hindering the relationship of the believer with Christ, they leave the person vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and often damaged emotions and relationships. Such relationships are void of the emotional, physical, and spiritual strength that comes from covenants formed in holy matrimony.

We believe that the marriage relationship between a man and a woman truthfully illustrates the love that our Lord Jesus Christ has for His Bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Governments may declare their view of marriage (as did the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* on June 26, 2015), but “holy matrimony” is decreed by God and revealed in His Word and human history.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

God’s Will and Call for His Children

God’s call to Israel remains true for His call to the Body of Christ, “You shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). Jesus instructed his followers to be “salt and light” in the world (Matthew 5:13, 14). The Apostle Paul confessed that Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

This is because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin is the antithesis of holiness and godliness. It was out of His great love that God sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (John 3:16) and redeem us (Ephesians 2:4, 5). This redemptive work of Christ liberates us “from every lawless deed” and purifies us “for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).

Due to our fallen condition, Jesus preached that we must “Repent, and believe the gospel,” because “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Furthermore, Jesus clearly warned that it is “out of the heart” that “proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21, 22).

Ministering in the Greco-Roman culture of the First Century, a time eerily similar to our time in regards to moral depravity, the Apostle Paul affirmed that it is God’s will that we should “abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 6:13; 10:8).

The Apostle Peter made it clear that followers of Christ do not live as the unbelieving world lives, even though the world mocks and ridicules us, “For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness,

revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*” (1 Peter 4:3, 4).

The Apostle Jude clearly warned against the kinds of sexual immorality manifested in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:4-11), that those who live in the immorality of “strange flesh . . . suffer the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 6, 7).

Thus, as faithful followers of Jesus Christ, members of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church are called to live in holiness. We live “in” but not “of” the world. We share our faith with love and compassion to the lost. We speak the truth in love. Love demands that we live the truth and tell the truth, calling those outside and inside the church to repentance. Love demands that we live as citizens of a holy kingdom, demonstrating the blessings of obedience to the law and love of God.

The Word of God is clear regarding life in the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is entered by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5). This kingdom has clearly defined parameters of behavior and attitudes (Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:14).

In light of the clear scriptural teachings regarding sexual morality, the IPHC Council of Bishops calls for its members and attendees to prayerfully and gracefully adhere to these standards. The biblical view of morality is unchangeable regardless of contemporary social constructs of truth. God’s law transcends human opinions, even if those opinions are codified into law.

Furthermore, we call for our attitudes, words, and actions to be filled with love and truth as we relate with those ensnared by the lusts of the flesh. Our lives are meant to show the power of redeeming grace and give hope to those enslaved by Satan’s snares. We call for IPHC members to faithfully stand by the truth of God’s Word, even if it means our civil rights, liberties, and even our livelihood are threatened or removed.

The Impact of Sin

Sin has marred the condition of all humanity. In Adam’s sin, spiritual and physical death entered human experience (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Because of this, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The whole creation, including our personal existence, has been affected by sin. Sin has affected the creation and every aspect of human life. Disease, dysfunction, mental and emotional illness, broken relationships, and death, are all related to the catastrophic consequences of Adam’s fall in Genesis 3.

Satan has consistently attacked men and women with distortions and violations of God’s purpose, because the gift and blessing of sexual intimacy between a man and woman was designed by God, produces offspring, and provides a complimentary dimension that fulfills the life of the other. We see this manifested in human history through fornication, adultery, rape, abuse, incest, pedophilia, sexual slavery, pornography, gender disorders and confusion, and sexual addictions. Satan’s distortions have also been manifested throughout history through homosexual relationships.

All sin(s) and transgressions are manifestations of our falling short of God’s glory. We sin when we “miss the mark” (hamartia), and fail to live according to God’s revealed will. We

transgress when we intentionally break God's commandments. The commandments are holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12, 16, 22; 1 Timothy 1:8).

We may be "good" people (as the world generally accepts it), we may make significant contributions that enhance humanity; but by our rejection and disobedience to God, we nonetheless miss the blessings God has promised in His Word. In turn, we place ourselves outside the blessings of His hand and come under the righteous manifestations of His wrath (Romans 1:18-32).

This is true of all sexual sins. The apostle Paul warned that sexual immorality is connected to idolatry (Romans 1:24, 25). He later warned that sexual sins have an adverse effect on us personally: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). The wisdom of the ages regarding sexual immorality is vividly described in Proverbs 5:1 through 7:27:

"His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray," (Proverbs 5:22, 23).

"Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away," (Proverbs 6:32, 33).

"Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life," (Proverbs 7:22, 23).

This orientation towards idolatry, which often manifests itself in the selfishness of sexual immorality, extends beyond male/female relationships to the distortion of sexuality found in homosexual relationships.

In fact, the Apostle Paul moves directly from idolatry to the manifestation of that idolatry in homosexuality. Those who are determined to live in the spirit of idolatry of the self, find themselves with God "giving them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due," (Romans 1:26, 27).

God's Purposes for His People

Paul's teaching is based on his analysis of Greco-Roman culture and is informed by the clear teachings of the Law of Moses. The context of the Torah, the revelation of God's divine moral order, is found in God fulfilling His promise to Abraham that He "will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing . . . in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:2, 3). God found in Abraham a person through whom He could form a community of people on the earth who in faith would walk in His covenant promises.

The story of Abraham's descendants and the promises of God extended over a four hundred year period, primarily in Egypt. Serving for generations in bondage, the children of the covenant promise cried out for deliverance. Exodus 2:24 sets God's response within the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant."

Thus, God began shaping a people for His glory who live differently in the world. They were to be a people who would receive and believe His Word, and conform their lives to that Word. The purpose of this call was to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 51:4). Israel's existence, and that of the church, is to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" to God (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9).

From the beginning of the Exodus, God made it clear that Israel, as a covenant community called into existence through His promise, was to live differently in the world. Exodus 15:26 promised that if Israel would obey the Lord, He would not bring upon Israel the diseases of Egypt.⁶ The Torah in the form of the Ten Commandments was given to Israel to mark them as separate from the world (Exodus 20:1-17).

Most importantly, Israel was chosen not because of her national righteousness but because of God's love and the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 9:4; 7:7, 8). Israel was called to be "a holy people to the Lord" and the Lord God chose them "to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:7).

Israel was warned not to live as the nations of the earth. She was warned not to adopt the customs of Egypt or the nations that were dispossessed when she entered the land promised to the descendants of Abraham (Leviticus 18:3, 24-29; 20:23, 24; Deuteronomy 12:29-32).

These warnings included idolatry and a wide range of sexual abominations and perversions, including the practice of homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:13, 15, 18; Deuteronomy 17:3; 12:31; 18:10-12; 29:17).⁷

These warnings to Israel remain warnings to God's people in every generation. God's "chosen people" are no longer confined to one race or geography; rather, we are of every race, tongue, culture, and nation, called to be "a holy nation" of redeemed men and women who live by God's truth and love. Therefore, followers of Jesus live in the world in such a way that the world is blessed by our faithfulness to God.

The Warning to Nations

The Bible is clear that the reason Israel displaced the nations who had lived in Canaan was because "of the wickedness of these nations" (Deuteronomy 9:4, 5). The nations were defiled by their abominations (Leviticus 18:24); actions so perverse that "the land vomits out its inhabitants" (Leviticus 18:25, 27, 28).

The immoral condition of Sodom and Gomorrah is well attested (Genesis 18:16 though 19:29). By analogy, Ezekiel 16:44-59 compares Israel and Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah and further reveals the deplorable condition of the cities ("pride, fullness of food [at the expense of others], abundance of idleness, failure to help the poor, haughty, and abominations" vs. 49, 50).

We therefore conclude from this overview of Old Testament Scriptures, that nations which advocate and advance these clearly defined abominations fall under the judgment and wrath of God.

The IPHC believes that acts of divine judgment are always God's acts, and not our own. And, we must remember that God's judgment begins in His own household (1 Peter 4:17). Therefore, we deplore, renounce, and condemn any acts of violence against homosexuals or anyone else. Christians are called to respond as Abraham did in relation to Sodom and Gomorrah, interceding in prayer for mercy and salvation (Genesis 18:16-33). We know that God is longsuffering, not desiring that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9, 15).

These Old Testament Scriptures are the foundation for Holy Spirit revelation in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul clearly applies these Old Testament passages to the era of the church in Romans 1:18-32, particularly 1:24-27. The "wrath of God" is a reality of divine judgment upon injustice and unrighteousness. Modern humanity not only rejects the reality of God but also rejects the reality of His judgment. That is in itself a sign of our fallen condition. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians clearly reveals the truth: The world is under judgment, "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2:3).

The Teaching of Jesus

Earlier reference was made to Jesus' listing of the kinds of sinful actions and attitudes that flow from hearts not redeemed by His grace (Mark 7:21, 22).

In recent years advocates of sexual immorality, particularly the immorality of homosexuality, have claimed that Jesus did not address this particular sin. It is a profound error to interpret the teaching of Jesus as if this particular action and lifestyle is no longer sinful.

The reasons why this is an error in interpretation are many, but include the following:

1. The effort to understand Jesus as approving loving homosexual relationships is at best based on arguments from silence and at worst based on sheer ignorance and rejection of the Word of God. Arguments from silence are always weak arguments and an exegetical, interpretative model that uses this argument in relation to Jesus can find excuse for any action and attitude. The failure to interpret Jesus' teachings in light of His Jewishness and commitment to the Torah is akin to Marcion and Gnostic heresies which the church has consistently rejected.
2. Jesus never rejected the moral law of the Torah. He fulfilled the ceremonial law in His death and resurrection. But Jesus never rejected the Commandments and the moral law. Thus, Jesus had no reason to specifically mention homosexuality because every Jew in His day would have known that such actions were contrary to the divine will and were perversions of God's design.
3. In relation to number 2, Jesus had no reservations "challenging moral turpitude in His society. He challenged social, religious, and even political mores, for example, in his view of women and his challenge to political and religious power. In this light, if Jesus had meant to overturn millennia of Jewish understanding of marriage, He would have not been afraid to do so."⁸

4. Jesus' commands to love were never commands to violate the intention and spirit of the Torah. Love was and is always defined in relation to God's revealed truth. This is because "love fulfills the law" (Galatians 5:14, 18).
5. When Jesus confronted people ensnared in sin, He not only offered grace but called them to repent and follow Him in a new way of living (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:1-8; 7:36-50; John 8:11).
6. When Jesus spoke of marriage, He clearly, without a hint of exceptions, spoke of the Father's will as marriage between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:5, 6; Mark 10:6-9). Only a man and a woman can become "one flesh" because God created us with the unique physical qualities that make that union possible. Jesus made this absolutely clear.

Ministry and Pastoral Responses

The IPHC View of Holy Matrimony

We believe and practice that *holy matrimony* is the God-ordained and blessed union between a man and a woman "till death" parts them. Though governments may recognize different forms of "marriage," we only recognize *holy matrimony* as described above. Therefore, the IPHC does not recognize same-sex "married" couples as married in the sight of God.

This position is consistent with our view in that we reject as legitimate marriage other forms of marriage arrangements such as polygamy, incest, "spiritual" marriages, etc. Historically, Christian ministers have exercised the right to not perform marriages which fail to meet the theological and pastoral criteria of their particular denomination or movement. It is our view that while there is an interplay between human government and divine government in recognizing marriage, that only marriages between a man and woman fulfill the divine mandate which human government should rightfully recognize.

The Whole Counsel of God

We call on IPHC ministers to preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We call for our congregations to receive the Word like the Bereans, "with all readiness," searching "the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

We call our ministers to renewed prayerful study of the Word and preparation of preaching and teaching. We believe "the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

We call for preaching, teaching, and witnessing that leads sinners to repentance. We trust the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of the Word in reaching all rebelling against God's Kingdom. We commit ourselves to "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). We reject the use of slang or derogatory words or expressions in relation to any person.

Strengthening Christian Marriage

We call Christian men and women to a renewed commitment to love one another in their marriages (Ephesians 5:22-33). The marriage bed should be undefiled and honorable

(Hebrews 13:4). The pervasive spirit of adultery should be confronted and guarded against by husbands and wives.

We call for pastors to counsel with renewed seriousness those preparing to marry. We believe that marriage vows should contain numerous and clear references to Scripture and that those entering into marriage must understand the life-long covenant they are making with each other.

Renewed Call to Local Church Membership

We believe that congregational attendees should be made aware of what it means to belong to the Body of Christ and to the IPHC. Those living in open sin, including people who attend our congregations and are “married” homosexuals, are prohibited from being a member of the IPHC unless they repent of their sinful behavior with the dissolution of such a marriage.

We affirm that everyone is welcomed to attend our services; how else will they hear the gospel or see godly patterns of living? Our membership is not designed to exclude people from fellowship and ministry. Rather, membership affirms conviction and commitment to biblical standards.

In light of potential litigation against local congregations regarding the use of their facilities and actions of clergy related to congregational life, we encourage church leaders and congregants to prayerfully, willingly, and joyfully, enter into deeper covenant relationship through local church membership.

On Divine and Human Love

We do not question the sincerity of expressions of love that humans exchange with one another, whether male to female, male to male or female to female. Such human love is subjective, and real to the parties involved, but it is only an expression of human love. Though a same-sex married couple may experience deep and abiding personal love in their relationship, that love misses the mark of God’s divine purpose for humanity. An appeal to such love is not sufficient to abridge the clear truth of God’s Word regarding God’s love and the expression of that love.

Christian love, even between a husband and wife, is rooted in the *agape* love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. This is why Christian love is a form of witness to the love that Christ has for His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The Church and the State

The New Testament calls us to be subject to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7). We are called to pray for those in authority over us (1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:17). At the same time, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). There are times when human government transgresses its divine lines of authority. In those instances it is described in the New Testament as a “beast” (Revelation 13:1-18).

In light of this, IPHC ministers and congregants must prayerfully seek the Lord’s guidance regarding our response to the dictates of government in these matters of changing sexual mores. We must be willing to suffer for righteousness sake, if need be, in order to be faithful witnesses to the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:10; Acts 14:22).

When confronted with potential legal threats, IPHC ministers and congregations should consult with their Conference Bishop for guidance on how best to respond in a peaceable manner using the legal means available.

Living as Christians in the World

The Apostle Paul instructed followers of Jesus in Corinth on how to live in the world. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 he advised believers that it was acceptable to have normal relationships with sexually immoral people in the normal course of daily living. One “would need to go out of the world” to avoid that (5:10). While we may often disagree with the lifestyles of those with whom we work, live near as neighbors, or with whom we attend school, God will judge those on the outside (5:12, 13).

The Holy Spirit will grant us wisdom to know how to speak and live as we witness to the kingdom of Christ through our daily living.

The IPHC Manual

Legal counsel consistently advises that if local congregations, ministers, and conferences follow the guidelines and policies of the [IPHC Manual](#), there is at a minimum an established standard which often provides a court with critical information for making decisions that favor the church.

The Dedication of Children

It is advisable that pastors only dedicate children to the Lord whose parent(s) are members of the local congregation.

Ministry to Families in the Congregation who Have Children/Grandchildren in Same-Sex Relationships

Families with same-sex attraction children/grandchildren or other family members should be welcomed, loved, and encouraged through the life of the congregation. Our commitment to truth for all should be matched by our commitment to love for all.

Ministry to Same-Sex Couples and Persons with Sexual/Gender Orientation Issues

We welcome any person to attend an IPHC congregation. This extends to same-sex couples, persons whose sexual orientation is toward a member of the same sex, and those questioning or seeking guidance regarding gender, or having had surgical sexual changes. We believe the truth of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit can offer hope, love and redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Our welcome to all is not an endorsement or approval of sinful behavior, or contradictory ideologies and theological interpretations inconsistent with that of the IPHC and the broader evangelical/pentecostal community. Rather, we welcome all because we ourselves have experienced Christ’s redeeming love and seek to bear witness to that love to all who will listen.

We recognize that each congregation will discover how to best manifest Christ’s love to all. Some members will be more comfortable than others in reaching out to those whose lives do not conform to the Word of God. Maintaining commitment to God’s written Word as

interpreted and understood by the IPHC, we pray for patience and grace among ourselves as we show Christ's love to those living in ways contrary to His kingdom. Christian love compels us to live and witness to all according to God's revealed truth (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Conclusion

IPHC congregations and congregants are called to live with love and truth, faithful to Jesus Christ, in all we do. Our congregational life manifests the presence of the Living God, where the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, assurance of redemption, and deliverance from the dominion of sin. Our lives are living testimonies of Christ's love and hope. Therefore, we commit ourselves to love everyone with compassion, truth-telling, and fellowship that provides opportunities for "edifying the body (of Christ) in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Appendix A: Transgender Statement

In light of the issues facing IPHC members, congregations, children, educational and benevolent institutions, as well as youth and family ministries, the IPHC Council of Bishops declares, confesses and affirms the following as statements and beliefs we hold according to the Word of God:

1. We declare that the Word of God clearly affirms that God created two sexes (male and female), without confusion and without additional human sex/gender categories (Genesis 1:26, 27; Matthew 19:4).
2. We declare that male and female reflect different aspects of God's image and glory, and complement each other (Genesis 1:27; 2:18).
3. We declare that humanity is created by God and that personhood (soul, mind, spirit) also includes the reality of the physical body (Job 10:8-12; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).
4. We declare that God forms us in the womb. Therefore, it is God's design for those developing and born as males to mature into manhood and those developing and born as females to mature into womanhood (Psalm 139:13).
5. We declare that efforts to change, alter, or present oneself in a manner intended to change society's perception of one's biological gender is a violation of God's order and should not be encouraged or pursued (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13).
6. We declare that self-identities and actions contrary to God's revealed will in His Word, and in nature, are manifestations of our fallen, broken, fragmented and sinful condition (Romans 1:18 through 2:24).
7. We declare that Satan continues to sow disorder, chaos and manifestations of sexual/gender confusion that may lead to spiritual and physical death (Matthew 13:39; Luke 8:12; John 8:44; Ephesians 6:11; Romans 8:13; 2 Timothy 2:26).
8. We declare that sin has corrupted humanity's nature and self-understanding. Therefore, all have fallen short of the glory of God designed in creation (Romans 1:18 through 2:24; 3:23).
9. We confess that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and restore us to fellowship with God and fulfill the glory of God in our lives (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32, 19:10; Romans 5:2, 8; 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:18).
10. We confess that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate hope for all humanity as we seek healing, reconciliation and eternal life (Romans 1:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
11. We confess that born again followers of Jesus, who still struggle with self-identity issues, can find peace, hope, and fulfillment of God's will as they walk in obedience to His revealed Word (Psalm 1:1-6; 94:12; 112:1; 119:2; Matthew 5:6; Romans 6:13).
12. We confess that as followers of Jesus, we should minister with love and truth to those who have suffered developmental crises that have hindered their God-ordained development and maturity (John 1:16, 17; Galatians 6:1-5).

13. We confess that the body of Christ, the church, is a place of hope, healing and restoration for persons struggling with sexual/gender identity (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

SOURCES

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¹ For an excellent analysis of the legal trail leading to these decisions, refer to Robert R. Reilly, Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2014). Particularly notice Part 2: Marching through the Institutions of Reilly's book.

² Western society usually includes Western Europe, the United States, Canada, parts of Latin America, Australia and New Zealand.

³ The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life, edited by Christian Smith (The University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles. 2003). Ten essays covering education, science and religious knowledge, religious moral reform, psychology, civil liberties, and modern journalism show how the modern expression of secularism in the United States emerged in the 1870s and 80s. By the first quarter of the twentieth century the roots of secularism were firmly planted in most major American institutions. Thus, the changes around us in the 21st century did not just emerge, but are the result of often intentional efforts to undermine a Christian world view in the United States.

It should also be noted that the modern and post-modern moral situation is rooted historically in the Enlightenment, a period of thought and experience usually dated from 1650 forward. Some historians go further back to the Renaissance (1300-1700).

⁴ The Council of Bishops is composed of the conference superintendents from the United States plus the four members of the denominational Executive Committee. While this paper reflects values held by the IPHC in the one hundred plus nations where we serve, it primarily addresses the particular situation of the United States in terms of legal responses.

⁵ All Scripture reference are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

⁶These “diseases” may be a reference to the plagues and effects brought upon the Egyptians or may include references to diseases which were part of Egyptian life.

⁷ IPHC believes that these Old Testament passages can rightfully be applied to the modern situation. We believe this because a) Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament law, not to destroy or repeal it (Matthew 3:15; 5:17); b) Ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic law are fulfilled in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see the Book of Hebrews); c) The moral aspects of the law, especially related to sexual immorality, care for the poor, and other aspects of righteousness, remain applicable in the New Covenant since they are affirmed in the New Testament itself.

⁸ Comments by Dr. Ryan Jackson, Ph.D., New Testament, Cambridge University.