



Introduction

We at Rolla Church have felt it necessary to include a statement on Human Life, Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality because of our desire to continually follow the standards of loving God and loving one another as laid out within Scripture. As the values of the World have changed over time, what was once taken for granted can no longer be so. We desire to make the standard clear that we are to live a life of repentance, denying ourselves the gratifications of the flesh. As followers of Christ, Jesus also set the standard for loving those who are still on a journey towards repentance. This statement aims to make clear those standards for following Jesus and participating with the Church at a deeper level. All are welcome to attend Rolla Church and all will be loved as Jesus has loved us.

Statement on Human Life, Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality

Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the elderly, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from fertilization through natural death. It is our responsibility *as followers of Jesus to defend, protect, and value all human life* (Psalm 139).

Gender

We believe that God wonderfully and wisely created each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Since marriage is to be exclusive to the union between a man and a woman, our God-given gender does matter. Males and females are given distinct, complementary characteristics that reflect the image and nature of the God who made them.

Because all people are loved by God and made in His image, *every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity* (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31) regardless of their gender, race, background, or sexual orientation. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual do not reflect a biblical standard or the culture of Rolla Church. They will not be tolerated in our community of faith.

Marriage and Sexuality

We value relationships at Rolla Bible Baptist Church. We desire to build bridges of relationship which bear the weight of God's truth. We live in a time when it is quite likely that someone will want to know the way in which we support relationships at our church, especially as they impact marriage, sexuality, and gender. Because of the immense importance the Bible places upon marriage, Rolla Church has a passion for the sanctity and permanence of marriage. It was God's idea from the beginning of time for a man and woman to unite their lives as one. And God very wisely warns couples not to unite if they do not share spiritual values, such as a personal relationship with Him.

Basic to this is our understanding from Colossians 1:16, "Everything was created through [Jesus] and for Him." Consequently, Christians are not called to the hyper-autonomy of our age. Rather, we are told, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Practically, we believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that God is the originator and designer of marriage, that He has communicated His design through the Bible, and that His design is binding on how we define and practice marriage. We are aware that such marriage relationships are being challenged by our culture. However, in our family of Baptist churches across Canada we believe marriage is reserved for the formalized, covenant relationship between one man and one woman who commit themselves through legal declaration to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence.

Conclusion

This means that if someone in our church family was actively *living* contrary to any of these beliefs in what Scripture refers to as unrepentant sin, we would not affirm that person for church leadership. Our goal is to live according to II Corinthians 5:15 (NLT), "[Jesus] died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them."

All people are loved by God and made in His image, and regardless of their gender, race, background, or sexual orientation, every person will be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31) by our church. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual do not reflect a biblical standard or the culture of Rolla Church. Again, they will not be tolerated in our community of faith.