

Statement on BelPres Understanding of Scripture, Sexuality and Christian Leadership

At BelPres, our leadership believes all Christians are bound by scripture so that whatever scripture teaches, we must teach as best we understand it even if it challenges our predominant non-Christian culture or contemporary American church culture.

We believe Scripture teaches that we are saved by faith in Jesus and not by our own obedience.

Therefore, we teach the gospel of grace which saves sinners and invite people to trust Jesus as Leader and Forgiver and become Christians. We welcome all people as part of our community of faith regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey or of any behaviors they are engaged in.

We believe Scripture teaches that all sin destroys life. Jesus showed mercy toward acknowledged sinners and judgment toward the self-righteous, whose sins were more culturally accepted or somewhat less visible such as pride, greed, envy, apathy, hatred, dissention, gluttony, and so on.

Therefore we teach Christians to recognize and renounce sin in all its forms, without prejudice or emphasis on sexual sins as worse than other sins before God. And we teach Christians to humbly accept Christ's mercy given through the cross and pursue holiness in all of life through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

We believe Scripture teaches that sexual holiness is expressed through faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established at creation by God or through embracing a celibate life as established in the new covenant by Jesus, who experienced human desires but without sin.

Therefore we teach Christians to submit their sexual desires (whether hetero- or homosexual) to God and pursue holiness and wholeness as defined by scripture and demonstrated by Jesus and the apostles. A Forum on this topic is [here](#). Our pastors perform Christian weddings which marry a man and a woman.

We believe Scripture teaches that God's people are to demonstrate love to all people: other Christians, family members, neighbors, strangers, immigrants, and even enemies regardless of other people's age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, economic resources, nationality, and moral choices. Indeed, scripture teaches that Christians are citizens of Christ's Kingdom, salt and light and a blessing to the world, and to imitate Jesus as he demonstrated love to the poor, the sinful and the outsiders of his culture, rejecting prejudice and bigotry, as He was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we teach Christians to demonstrate love to the poor, the sinful and the outsiders in our culture rejecting prejudice and bigotry, as we are guided by the Holy Spirit. We teach that Christians may be led by the Holy Spirit to quite different ways of living out Christ's call to love their neighbor in our fallen world which does not affirm Christian beliefs.

We believe Scripture teaches that all believers will not always agree so are called to be completely humble, gentle, patient, and to bear with one another in love as we all mature in faith and wait upon God to make clear what isn't yet clear or clear to some. Indeed scripture teaches that members of Christ's Body are to honor the other members in their different gifts and specific calling.

Therefore we teach Christians to seek unity, disagree respectfully, and in all things seek to submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture. Scripture, not our own opinions or culture's dictates, is to be our rule.

We believe Scripture teaches that leaders of the church are called to maintain a higher standard of faith and obedience and that leaders who sin and repent are to be forgiven and may be removed from leadership until a restoration process is complete.

Therefore, we teach Christian leaders to confess their sins to God and a trusted counselor, and to be forgiven, restored, and made whole through the power of the Holy Spirit. Any ordained leaders (deacons, elders, pastors) who do not acknowledge as sin any behavior that scripture calls sin shall not serve in an ordained leadership role.