

Dear Friend,

Thank you for taking the time to get to know our church and what we believe about humanity in regard to issues that are obviously very important to you. As you read our statement, we hope you understand that we believe these truths to be revealed to us through the Bible by a God whose love for people caused Him to sacrifice His very life for our souls. Hopefully, this same spirit of love and sacrifice is evident in the lives of the people of Church of the Open Door through the way we serve and give to our community.

Some of you will read this paper and find that it harmonizes quite well with your understanding of human nature. You probably read this material to either learn or confirm the church's stance on these sensitive, yet foundational issues. Others will disagree strongly with our perspective. While we may reject each other's position, that doesn't mean we reject the value and significance you have as a person created and loved by God.

Our commitment to the revealed truth of God requires us to be firm regarding issues of marriage, sexuality, and gender identity as we believe these issues greatly affect the joy and fulfillment that one may experience in this life. These beliefs are so important that we cannot shrink away from them, even when there are some who may be offended. It is not our desire to offend, but it is our desire to be honest.

Jesus had the reputation of being a friend to all. We want the same to be said of us, even by those with whom we disagree. So we will continue to keep open a door of dialogue and mutual respect with all people, desiring that everyone would encounter Jesus and the love, acceptance, grace, forgiveness and transformation that He holds out to us all.

With warmth and sincerity,

Church of the Open Door

**Biblical Propositions, Summations and Church of the Open Door's Response**  
**Regarding Marriage, Sexuality and Gender Identity**

One of the marvelous truths of Scripture is that God is desirous for each individual to walk with Him; that is, to rightly worship Him, to love Him, to obey Him, and exercise faith toward Him and His promises. Adam and Eve originally enjoyed this quality of relationship with God, but soon after their placement in Eden decided to no longer heed His ways, setting themselves (and all mankind) at odds with their creator. However, God, in His unrelenting pursuit to help mankind comprehend and experience His goodness and forgiveness, delivered His Son to death on a cross as payment for the sin of humanity. Those who embrace Christ's death as the only suitable solution for their sin are no longer at odds with God. They are instead now called His children and have the privilege of walking with God, that is: worshiping Him, loving Him, obeying Him, and exercising faith toward Him. Scripture teaches that one of the evidences of being His child is a growing, intentional aspiration to live in harmony with Him.

The unique love relationship between God and His children does not diminish God's love for all humanity. In His love and grace, God has clearly revealed in the Scriptures how all people can enjoy life as He, the Wise Creator, intended. Listed below are His eternal realities concerning marriage, sexuality and gender identity. Church of the Open Door is committed to these truths by (1) teaching them and (2) striving to have all who fellowship at COD integrate them into their lives. Additionally, the operations of COD are governed by the principles outlined below.

COD recognizes that living in a world yet to be restored from the curse of sin causes many people to suffer from sickness, disease, defects and abnormalities. When a person is born with intersexual<sup>i</sup> biology, we recognize that they have had no hand in this confusing and potentially painful situation. The treatment of these conditions is a medical decision that should not be united casually with discussions of marriage, sexuality, and gender identity and is thereby not addressed in this paper.

## Marriage<sup>ii</sup>

### **Biblical Propositions:**

- 1) Is of Divine origin (Genesis 2, Matthew 19:5-6).
- 2) Creates a new entity, and therefore is monogamous—that is one person at a time, as well as a lifelong commitment (Genesis 2:24, Malachi 2:14-16, Romans 7:2).
- 3) Is a union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:21-25).
- 4) Is a relationship of one man and one woman to be entered into by persons of like faith (II Corinthians 6:14).
- 5) Is a relationship between husband and wife reflecting the created order of man and woman (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- 6) Is only to be dissolved for reasons of death (Romans 7:2), sexual immorality (adultery; Matthew 19:3-9), or spiritual abandonment (I Corinthians 7:15).
- 7) Is a relationship that is intended for this present, physical age—not the coming, eternal age (Matthew 22:23-30).
- 8) Is “good”, and yet some are called to a life of singleness (Genesis 2:18, I Corinthians 7:32-40).

### **Summations and COD’s Response:**

Marriage is the first human relationship God established. It is a relationship that brought into union one man and one woman. This union is to be characterized by monogamy and mutual fidelity. The covenantal bond of marriage is held in such high regard by God that He uses marriage language to refer to His love for His redeemed people, both Israel (Hosea 1-3) and the Church (Revelation 21:2).

*For these reasons, COD will be a church that holds marriage in the highest regard. We will only endorse and approve marriages that are between one man and one woman. We will encourage the lifelong commitment between a husband and wife, recognizing that the only God given reasons for this commitment to be dissolved are death, infidelity, and spiritual abandonment. (Spiritual abandonment is defined as physical separation resulting from a conflict of faith, that is, one spouse is a believer in the Lord Jesus while the other is not a believer in the Lord Jesus. Spiritual abandonment applies only when the unbelieving spouse physically separates from the believing spouse.) We understand that if a marriage is dissolved for one of these three reasons, the individuals are not bound to their covenant and are free to remarry.*

Just as there is oneness and yet subordinate roles within the trinity, so it is in the relationship of marriage. Since man was first in the created order and woman made from man, therefore man is to be the loving leader in the marriage while the wife is to be respectfully submissive. These expressions in marriage—love and leading, submission and respect—are a mirror of some of the relational dynamics of the Trinity. In this way, the uniqueness of God’s character is made visible in a truly God “centered” marriage.

*For these reasons, COD will be a church that encourages strong, lasting, loving marriages. We will provide opportunities for strengthening marriages, counseling for struggling marriages, and teaching that encourages the biblical role of both husband and wife.*

Marriage is the foundation of the family, which enables the fulfillment of one of God’s creative purposes for mankind. That is, as God created man in His image, displaying many of His qualities (His glory) through man, so the procreation of children provides the opportunity to fill all the earth with His glory. Marriage is the relationship in which God intended the process of bearing and nurturing children for the ultimate purpose of filling the earth with His image (glory). Since in the heavenly state we will be with Him and see Him as He is, realizing an environment that is saturated

with the glory of God, there will be no union of men and women and no procreation in the eternal state.

*For these reasons, COD is committed to the ministry of strengthening the family. COD understands that God created male and female to be complementary genders for the sustainability of the family.*

The intended oneness in marriage is not only relational, emotional and physical, but also spiritual. Marital spiritual oneness can only be realized if both the husband and wife are new creatures in Christ (that is, born again).

*For this reason, COD is committed to the gospel and the life changing message of Jesus Christ, confident that He alone is the source of strong marriages. Also, the pastors of COD will officiate marriages on the campus of COD only upon the completion of the marriage consent procedures of COD by those desiring to wed. COD encourages pastoral liberty and discretion for all others who desire to wed at off campus venues.*

## Sexuality<sup>iii</sup> (sexual activity)

### **Biblical Propositions:**

- 1) Is to be enjoyed in the marriage relationship {see preceding section} (I Corinthians 7:1-5).
- 2) Is limited to the marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4). Sexual intercourse (whether heterosexual or homosexual) outside of a covenant marriage relationship is termed (1) adultery (one or both of the individuals in another marriage relationship; Leviticus 20:10) or (2) fornication ('extramarital' or illicit sexual activity; I Corinthians 5:1 (KJV)). Adultery and fornication are displeasing to God and therefore sin.
- 3) Every aspect of the believer's life is to be given to purity. God is completely holy and He calls His children to holiness in every area of life (Ephesians 5:1-3, I Peter 1:13-16).

### **Summations and COD's Response:**

The capacity for sexual feelings (as well as behavior) does not authorize an individual to act upon those feelings. Sexuality is a created capacity and as such must be realized within the contexts proscribed by God. Furthermore, sexuality can be expressed in and through our thoughts, speech, dress and actions. Followers of Christ are called to avoid lust, crassness and immodesty in addition to illicit sexual activity. The consumption of pornography, participation in explicit speech, and fueling sinful thoughts in others through revealing/suggestive clothing are just as destructive as committing an act of adultery and are all incompatible with a life of purity.

*For these reasons, COD seeks to teach personal purity in all aspects of one's sexuality.*

Homosexuality<sup>iv</sup> is a misdirection of the created capacity of humanity for sexual attraction and behavior. COD does not condone homosexual behavior in the same way it does not condone any sexual behavior outside of heterosexual marriage. COD also realizes that heterosexual feelings may not occur for all individuals. Individuals who struggle with homosexuality are expected to live under the authority of Christ and in a manner that glorifies God and exemplifies sexual purity and holiness.

*For these reasons, COD will teach that God instructs mankind to only engage in sexual activity in a heterosexual marriage. We will welcome in attendance those who are involved in sexual relationships beyond heterosexual marriage, with the goal that attendance would lead to a better understanding of God's perspective culminating in repentance to do His moral will.*

The church individually and collectively serves as the "Body of Christ" and is an ambassador for Him. Therefore, those who serve with and within the Body should reflect the moral purity of Christ's life and teaching.

*For this reason, for those who would be attending COD but who are involved in any unbiblical sexual relationship (sexual activity outside of marriage), until there is genuine repentance, COD will discourage participation in communion, will not extend the ordinance of baptism, and will withhold or remove the status of membership. Their participation in COD's ministries (that is, service within COD and service representing COD) will be determined on an individual basis, at the discretion of COD leadership.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The elected Elders and Pastors of Church of the Open Door

## Gender<sup>v</sup> Identity (uniqueness of male/female)

### Biblical Propositions:

- 1) Affirms that both man and woman are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27).
- 2) Affirms that men and women are of equal value and importance to God (Galatians. 3:27-28).
- 3) Affirms that God's design for man and woman is to live in complementary relationship to one another (II Corinthians 11: 11-12).
- 4) Affirms that there are creational differences between man and woman, and these differences should be embraced (I Corinthians 11:2-16).
- 5) Affirms that God is purposeful in the creation of each individual's gender, and individuals are therefor expected to appreciate and retain their gender (Psalm 139:14; Deuteronomy 22:5).

### Summations and COD's Response:

It is counter-intuitive to separate the sociocultural and biological differences of being male or female. While sociocultural norms have a degree of variation, these variations are not significant enough to warrant the exclusion/dismissal of biological differences between men and women as created by God.

The feelings of being "transgendered"<sup>vi</sup> are real feelings that have developed within an individual through a myriad of biological, psychological, and sociological causes. However, this orientation should not be embraced, but represents identity confusion that requires intervention, counsel, and prayer.

*Church of the Open Door welcomes individuals struggling with transgender feelings, but believes these individuals are called to a lifestyle that is in line with their biological composition and the required purity that God desires for all persons.*

When a person who feels transgendered seeks to undergo actions or procedures to become transsexual<sup>vii</sup>, that individual is denying the creative purposes and sovereignty of God.

*Church of the Open Door does not endorse transsexuality and believes that individuals should embrace their birth gender. It is the church's desire to help people restore themselves to an identity that accurately reflects God's creative design for their lives.*

*For people who choose to live as transvestites<sup>viii</sup> as a result of feelings of being transgendered, the Church of the Open Door would respond with a call to reclaim their God intended identity and return to the dress and behavior of their birth gender.*

*For people who choose to engage in transvestite behaviors in order to receive some measure of internal gratification that is not related to feelings of being transgendered, COD would call upon those individuals to cease participating in these behaviors just as we would for any pattern of sinful behavior.*

Gender identity is an extremely personal issue, but it is also fundamentally linked to our understanding of the person as created in the image of God. We desire for all people to come to know the blessing of living in submission to Christ. COD recognizes that we live in a secular society that will often differ greatly with its own values and beliefs. While we respect others' freedom to believe differently, we believe that true freedom comes through living in accord to the will of God as revealed in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit.

*For this reason, those who would be attending COD but participate in transgender, transsexual, or transvestite activities, until there is genuine repentance, COD will discourage participation in communion, will not extend the ordinance of baptism, and will withhold or remove the status of membership. Their participation in COD's ministries*

*(that is, service within COD and service representing COD) will be determined on an individual basis, at the discretion of COD leadership.<sup>2</sup>*

*Because of the sensitive natures of children and the need to raise them in an environment that correctly portrays gender as God's design, COD does not permit children who are being raised transgendered to participate in children's programming. We reserve the right to remove any child who is a distracting or dangerous influence from our children's programs. The presence of a transgendered child (transvestite, transsexual or otherwise) would be seen as a negative example and would place the church in an endorsing role that could eventually lead to others participating in sin.*

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<sup>2</sup> The elected Elders and Pastors of Church of the Open Door

## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> **Intersexuality:** a set of medical conditions that feature a congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system producing embryos and children with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or internal reproductive system that is not considered standard for either male or female.
- <sup>ii</sup> **Marriage:** The God-given institution under which one man and one woman commit to a lifelong covenant to live as one, as husband and wife.
- <sup>iii</sup> **Sexuality:** capacity for sexual feelings.
- <sup>iv</sup> **Homosexuality:** of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward another of the same sex.
- <sup>v</sup> **Gender:** the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones): traditional concepts of gender.
- <sup>vi</sup> **Transgender:** of, relating to, or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth.
- <sup>vii</sup> **Transsexual:** a person who psychologically identifies with the opposite sex and may seek to live as a member of this sex especially by undergoing surgery and hormone therapy to obtain the necessary physical appearance (as by changing the external sex organs).
- <sup>viii</sup> **Transvestite:** a person who adopts the dress, and often the behavior, typical of the opposite sex especially for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification.