

Stand Up Stand Out

“Biblical Sexuality”

September 28-29

Introduction & Recap

Hey everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This week we are continuing our series, *Stand Up Stand Out*. We're tackling some of the biggest issues of our day where Christians will have to make a choice to either bow down and blend in or stand up and stand out.

I want to encourage you, if you've missed any of this series, to go to our website at NHCOhawaii.org and watch/rewatch them because in Weeks 1 & 2 we laid a foundation for the weeks ahead. How do we navigate the fine line between God's truth and His grace?

This Will Offend Everybody

This week, we are going to tackle another massive issue, we're talking about Biblical Sexuality. Take it from someone who wore a purity ring all throughout High School — if you stand up for Biblical sexuality you will certainly stand out.

Please pray for me as I deliver this message, not because I think this message will offend anybody but because I think this message will offend everybody. Many people listening to this message will probably be offended by God's truth when it comes to this area and others are going to be offended by God's grace when it comes to this area. How many of us know, there were people who were offended by Jesus because of the truth and there were others who were offended because of His grace.

If we truly want to stand up and stand out for Jesus, our top priority cannot be to not offend anyone. The message of Jesus is, by nature, divisive. Why? Because it demands a choice. Any Pastor who preaches otherwise is lying to you. Jesus' own words were,

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.’ (Matthew 10:34-36).

What is Jesus talking about here? I thought Jesus came to bring peace on earth? Ultimately Jesus has come to establish peace on the earth. When God's Kingdom is established on the earth there will be peace. But in the meantime there is a separating taking place.

In scripture, God's Word is depicted as a sword. Jesus is saying that His message will cut through the crowd and demand a choice. You either live for yourself, take up your life, and follow your heart or you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. And Jesus warns us that we won't only see this separation in the workplace, or the office, or the classroom but in our own homes. This is true for all of God's truth but especially in the area of Biblical sexuality we are seeing this separation take place. Parents and children are at odds over these issues, friends are divided, and many Christians are asking themselves, “Is this right? Is this how it's supposed to be? Shouldn't Jesus bring everyone together?” Our heart is that this series would empower you to know the truth of God's Word that you might stand boldly for that truth while also demonstrating radical love and grace for those who do not hold to that truth.

God's Blueprint

Imagine you were going to build a house — but not just any house, this is going to be *the* house that you spend the rest of your life. Your children will grow up in this house, you and your spouse will grow old in this house, it will be your legacy to future generations. For something this important, wouldn't you want to follow a solid blueprint? Wouldn't you consult the best minds and bring the most skilled builders to ensure that it stands strong through every season for generations to come?

Yet today, so many people approach relationships and sexuality more like a DIY project. Instead of following a proven design, they build according to their own ideas, picking up inspiration here and there, relying on fleeting trends and popular advice. We would never take this approach with a home but when it comes to relationships and sexuality we just trust our feelings and instincts to get it right. And the results? The walls crack, the foundation shifts, and when the storms of life come — challenges, hardships, unmet expectations — the whole structure begins to fall apart. The way we build our relationships will have a significant impact on the rest of our lives, not just for us but for future generations yet so many people approach sexuality and relationships haphazardly.

The message of the world is that true happiness and fulfillment comes from sexual freedom — doing what feels right in the moment, pursuing self-fulfillment, and living your own truth. But when we look at the actual results, the picture is far from satisfying. Divorce rates still hover around 40-50% (even within the Church) with many citing lack of intimacy, infidelity, or dissatisfaction as the cause. Fewer people are getting married than ever before, and even those who do often find themselves disillusioned with the idea of a lifelong commitment. Young adults today are more skeptical about marriage than at any point in recent history. On top of that, we are seeing rising rates of loneliness, depression, and anxiety linked to the breakdown of relationships.

If sexual freedom is the key to happiness, why is so much pain and dissatisfaction tied to this area of life?

The truth is, relationships and sexuality aren't just about momentary pleasure or personal fulfillment, they are foundational to the kind of lives we live and the futures we build. And when we reject God's design, it's like building a house on shaky ground. When the storms come, the house begins to crumble.

But what if the problem isn't with our desire for intimacy, but with how we're pursuing it? What if God, the One who created us, designed sexuality for something far more beautiful—far more fulfilling—than what the world offers?

Today, we'll explore what the Bible says about sexuality—not to bring condemnation, but to offer a vision of something better. We'll see that God's boundaries around sexuality aren't restrictions meant to steal joy, but safeguards meant to protect and enhance intimacy with Him and with others. And though we've all fallen short, we'll also see that God's grace offers us healing and hope.

Created for Intimacy

Regardless of age, ethnicity, or background, there is a universal trait that all of us share — a powerful innate desire to connect. Every single one of us desires to belong. We're all looking for our people. And this isn't just an inherited genetic trait in order to perpetuate the human race, it is a powerful spiritual reality hardwired into us from the beginning.

²⁶ *“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground,” (Genesis 1:26).*

Before the creation of mankind, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit existed for all of eternity. One of the great mysteries of the Christian faith is that God exists as three distinct persons who are, in essence, one being. We do not worship three distinct Gods, we worship One God who is comprised of three distinct persons. There is a lot to this reality that remains a mystery to us but one thing we do know is that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have existed in perfect oneness for all of eternity. These three persons exist in perfect unity, intimacy, and love. So the God of the Christian faith is not merely a relational God; He is, by definition, a relationship. Now this God (who is a perfect relationship) is going to create beings who will image Him (reflect His nature and authority) to the rest of creation. These beings won't be God but they will possess certain characteristics and even authority to take part in what God is doing on the earth.

²⁷

*“So God created mankind in His own image,
in the image of God He created them;
male and female He created them,” (Genesis 1:27).*

So God (the One who is a perfect relationship) creates mankind in His own image. You and I were created in the image of a God who is a perfect relationship. God created you, not just with a desire to relate, not just with a desire to be in a relationship, but with a deep innate longing to experience perfect oneness with another being.

Jesus affirms this desire in His prayer to the Father before going to the cross. Jesus is about to die for the sins of humanity so that any separation between us and God can be removed and we can be made one with Him.

²⁰ *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. ²² I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one— ²³ I in them and You in Me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me,” (John 17:20-23).*

You see, this was God's heart from the very beginning! We were created to be one with God and one with each other but then sin entered the world and separated us from God and from one another. As soon as sin enters the world Adam and Eve hide from God (there is shame and guilt), man and woman begin to play the blame game (they turn on each other).

But here's the point — You and I were created for perfect oneness. That longing that you have in your heart to belong, to be in love is not a sinful desire, it is a God-given desire. God created every one of us with a deep innate desire to connect and belong. We don't just want to relate, and we don't just want to be in relationships, we want to know and be deeply known. We want to be able to be completely unveiled before another person and be loved and accepted completely. Especially to any young people here today — If you look around at the state of relationships and dating and you feel fed up or disenchanted with what you see around you, GOOD! You were created for so, so, much more! Your desire to connect and belong and be loved is not an evil thing, it is a beautiful God-give desire but because God is the one who gave

you that desire, He is the only one who can fulfill it. You will never be able to satisfy a God-given desire with anything this world has to offer. Many of us have tried.

God's Plan for Love

Jesus said that our greatest pursuit in all of life will be to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and also to love our neighbor as ourselves. So the most important thing in this life will be to love God and love others. It's all about relationships. Listen, if you get to the end of your life and you achieved every metric of worldly success but your relationships are in shambles, your life will be miserable. Sadly, too many people reach the end of their lives having attained many of the successes life has to offer but they're so unhappy because their relationships are in shambles.

Now I pray that you would listen very carefully because this is where faith comes into play. We've seen that God created us for perfect intimacy and oneness. Jesus died so that we could experience this perfect oneness. Jesus said our life's greatest pursuit is oneness with God and oneness with others. You ready? Any time God commands us to do something it is because it will lead us into greater intimacy with Him and with others. Any time God commands us not to do something it is because it will cause greater separation with Him and with others. All of God's commandments are motivated by love. None of God's commandments exist to restrict, limit, or enslave. Here is a definition of Biblical sexuality that is based in scripture.

God's Boundaries

Biblical sexuality is the expression of sexual intimacy that takes place exclusively within the covenant marriage relationship between one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:2). It reflects God's design for human flourishing, rooted in the complementary nature of male and female as created in His image. This sacred union is intended to foster deep intimacy, reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church, and provide the foundation for procreation and family. (Genesis 1:27-28; Ephesians 5:31-32; Hebrews 13:4).

The Bible is clear on God's boundaries for sexual intimacy (One man and one woman who are in a covenant marriage relationship.) But God's Word is also clear on everything that exists outside of His boundaries.

Adultery/Fornication/Promiscuity

Definition: Sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse.

(Extramarital affairs, emotional affairs, casual sex, "hook-up" culture, and cohabitation without marriage).

Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 13:4

Homosexuality

Definition: Sexual relations between people of the same sex.

Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27

Lust

Definition: Strong, sinful desires or thoughts, especially regarding sexual matters.

Matthew 5:28

(Pornography, sexual fantasies, objectification of others)

Divorce (except for specific reasons)

Definition: Dissolution of marriage outside of biblical grounds.

Matthew 19:6-9

(Modern Application: Divorce for reasons other than sexual immorality or abandonment).

Polygamy

Definition: Having more than one spouse.

Deuteronomy 17:17; 1 Timothy 3:2

Incest

Definition: Sexual relations with a close family member.

Leviticus 18:6; 1 Corinthians 5:1

Rape

Definition: Forcing someone into sexual relations without consent.

Deuteronomy 22:25-27

(Modern Application: Sexual assault, harassment, coercion).

Bestiality

Definition: Sexual relations with animals.

Leviticus 18:23

(Modern Application: Any sexual activity involving animals).

Prostitution

Definition: Selling sexual services.

1 Corinthians 6:15-16

(Modern Application: Sex work, human trafficking, online solicitation).

Sexual Exploitation

Definition: Using someone else for sexual gain.

Deuteronomy 22:13-19

(Modern Application: Sex trafficking, abuse of power for sexual favors, manipulating others for sexual purposes).

Transgenderism (rejecting God's design for male and female)

Definition: Altering or rejecting one's biological sex as designed by God.

Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5

(Modern Application: Gender reassignment, rejecting biological sex).

Group Sex

Definition: Engaging in sexual acts with multiple partners.

Galatians 5:19-21

Modern Application: Group sex, swingers, open relationships.

The thing about sexuality is that you can make it into whatever you want it to be. But there are many forms of sexuality that exist outside of God's boundaries for what He says will lead to a secure, loving, committed relationship and ultimately to true oneness.

Grace and Truth

So we know God's standard, we know His heart, but all of us have lived outside of God's boundaries. Stand to your feet if you have *not* sinned in any of these ways. There was a woman in Jesus' day who was like us — living outside of God's boundaries. And one day they caught this woman in the act of adultery and brought her before Jesus to be punished. God's law was clear that her sentence was to be death by stoning. So Jesus said, "Stone her. But let the one who is without sin cast the first stone." He doesn't dismiss the fact that the woman had broken God's law. But could it be that the heart of God is less about immediate punishment and more

about restoration and transformation? Jesus is highlighting our universal need for grace and that none of us is in a position to judge. But there was someone there who was in a position to judge this woman. There was one who was without sin in the crowd. And when all of the others had gone, this woman was left standing with the only one in the position to judge her — Jesus Himself. But Jesus looks at the woman and says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus extends grace to this woman by refusing to condemn her and yet He doesn’t leave her in her sin. God’s grace is not a license to continue sinning but an invitation to change. Although Jesus was sinless, and in a place of moral superiority, He did not condemn her. But not only would Jesus not condemn her, He would also die the death that was meant for her. That same crowd that dragged her into the streets demanding her death would be the same crowds who could crucify Jesus in her place, in my place, in your place.

³ *Some Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”*

⁴ *“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*

⁷ *“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”*

⁸ *Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery,” (Matthew 19:3-9).*

When questioned about divorce, Jesus affirms the holiness of marriage and God’s unchanging design. Divorce is not part of God’s perfect plan but a reflection of human sinfulness and brokenness. However, God’s grace accommodated human weakness by providing a legal structure for divorce to prevent greater harm or injustice (such as abandonment or abuse). It shows that God’s law sometimes makes allowances for human brokenness without compromising His ultimate standards. God’s justice is rooted in His perfect will, but His grace allows for human imperfection. He recognizes that we live in a broken world and that we all fall short of His ideal, but He also calls us back to His original design. For believers, this story offers a compassionate view of justice, one that seeks restoration but also understands the complexity of human sin. It reminds us to strive for God’s ideal while extending grace to those who have fallen short, including ourselves.

Discussion Questions:

1. Evaluate your approach to relationships. Are your relationships built on self-fulfillment and pleasure or Godly intimacy and holiness?
2. Why do you think God places such clear boundaries around sexuality? How do these boundaries reflect His love for us and His desire for intimacy?
3. Are there past mistakes or wounds that you need to receive healing from? Do you believe that Jesus does not condemn you but invites you to grow with Him?