

“A Pastoral Overview of the Briarwood Statement on a  
Biblically Effective Ministry to Homosexuals with Theological Clarity”  
Selected Texts

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June 23, 2019 • Evening Sermon

This is not a regular sermon and I have been assigned by our session to unfold our statement as a church on a Biblical effective ministry to homosexuals. It will have some sermonic elements to it and this is not a tract. This is a treatise that has been developed under the oversight of our session specifically to equip men, women, boys and girls in our ministries and disciple them on how to deal with this issue in the context of this culture with theological clarity and a Gospel heart. Over a period of a couple of years we've been trying to work through this issue but in the last few months we have brought a focus to develop this treatise because of so many questions. I'm grateful for this because now I can put this in people's hands and then give some explanation with it which is what I'll be doing in this study on this matter. This treatise was passed by a unanimous vote and I am so grateful for our unity and for the three session members who really brought this together.

When someone gets this treatise it is designed that the 'A Pastoral Note' section be read first. In the first paragraph of this note I want to point out something I have already affirmed and that is this treatise is of Biblical truth focused upon equipping the Lord's people to speak truth in love. You don't sacrifice truth for love and you don't sacrifice love for truth. It is how to speak the truth of God's Word in a loving way. This is designed for those particularly in ministry to those engaged in or addressing and struggling with what seems to be the unbreakable bondage of homosexuality.

Of course there are other sexual sins and you may be like me where there seemed to be things in your life that seemed unbreakable when you came to Christ, some entangling sins that get embedded in your life. These sins get embedded two ways. They get embedded in your soul, particularly the longer they are practiced and they get embedded in your body. When I deal with men who are handling and addressing pornography I know that there have actually been chemical reactions that have gone on in their brain that pornography stimulates that become habitually addictive. There is nothing more addictive than the sexual sins of life. I know many times sin seems unbreakable in its bondage but we have a message, not that it's always easy but breaks the power of sin, eradicates the penalty of sin, the shame and condemnation of sin. It is that which provides the double cure and no sin can overcome God's grace which is always greater than any and all of our sin. So we want to equip people with that message so they will understand it.

The reality is we are engaged with people in our congregation who have come to Christ and who are dealing with this entangling sin. Some we are engaged with are dealing with alcohol, others are dealing with the destruction of their bodies with other things like gluttony and other things. There are multiple entangling sins and contrary to what the world may be saying to you we do not have to be victims of these sins. Secondly, we have a Savior who is an overcomer and makes you an overcomer but He has multiple dynamics in how He uses the means of grace and the Gospel truth to deliver us from our sins. Our answer to this issue is found like any and all other sins and that is Jesus Christ the Friend to sinners but the enemy of sin. So how should we approach this to understand it?

This Briarwood statement is taken from Hebrews 4:15–16 which says [15] *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* [16] *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Jesus did not have a sin nature but He had the onslaughts and temptations of Satan with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, trying to awaken that and came to Him from the wilderness and on throughout everything. So He, who these external temptations came to also had human appetites. He understands and is able to deliver us. We can draw near to Him with confidence in the throne of grace that we may find grace and help in the time of need.

Before we go through the ten affirmations and denials in this statement/treatise I want to mention where we are culturally. I deal with much of this on our ten minute podcast that airs Monday through Friday but some of you have not heard any of this. We are in the midst of a secular, humanist revolution in our culture today. One of the battlefields and key strategies in this is to declare that there is only one Messiah that can deliver you. One of the things done in a revolution is chaos is created, as we see with identity politics, polarization, etc. No one wants to live in chaos so we want a deliverer, a savior. In a secular humanist revolution the savior will be the government, the state.

The founding fathers of this country says the state has a very important Biblical role but it is not the savior because it cannot deliver. So they developed the Bill of Rights with the free practice of religion because then people can hear the message freely of a savior. The government protects that glorious privilege to hear the truth of God's Word in our society. So it's a secular humanist that says the state is going to be your savior and one of the strategies that creates chaos, confusion and is a statement of idolatrous rebellion against God is always available and it's the sexual revolution within the overall revolution.

A revolution has as its objective that you will celebrate what you once condemned and you will condemn what you once celebrated. So in the area of sexuality we used to celebrate that sex was a gift from God to be satisfied as an appetite given by God in the context of a marriage between a man and a woman. The sexual act initiated the marriage after the covenant had been established and that's why the Bible talks about the one flesh relationship. The sexual act recreates the marriage as well. It is a blessing within marriage of ministry to one another, of selfless giving to one another. Then thirdly, by God's providence it is used to procreate the marriage.

As Christianity spread it met paganism. Paganism was a statement of rebellion against that Biblical, sexual ethic. So we found rampant homosexuality, even bestiality, pedophilia, polygamy, and even cultic sexual activities in religion. Paul deals with those at the church at Corinth. When Christianity came and people heard the Gospel and that they could be forgiven of those thing identified by those who would equip and disciple as sin, to repent of and flee to Christ who forgives and transforms, then the culture began to change through the discipling ministry that even came to what is a Biblical view of sexuality within the context of marriage. The order that came through the Biblical doctrine of sexuality within marriage was so established and blessed of God that God began to deliver. Not that those things totally disappeared but they began to put down a new tract for the culture in terms of what the ethic was of sexuality and putting it within marriage.

What we are seeing in our culture now is a return to Neopaganism. We are seeing a nation that comes from nations that has been blessed with the work of the Gospel that has rescued us not only from the chaos of a pagan world and life view but the destruction of pagan

sexuality. Now we are seeing the cultural elite such as the media, academia and even the government enter into trying to convince us that we need to go back to neo-pagan practices of sexuality. The only ethic is two consenting adults. The reality is that ethic won't stand long because you have no foundation for it. Why consent? Why two? Why adults? That ethic will rapidly disappear in the culture as well even as it disappeared in pagan culture.

When I read the book of Genesis it says three times that God came down to affirm what was going on and to bring judgment upon what was going on. What were those three times? One was the shedding of innocent blood of Cain and God came down in judgment. Another was the secular salvation of the city state at Babel in the tower of Babel. Thirdly, God came down to deal with Sodom and Gomorrah and its embracing of what soon took on its name – sodomy and homosexuality. I saw what God did in Genesis and I look now.

I live in a nation that sheds innocent blood – abortion, infanticide, active euthanasia (the most vulnerable). Secondly, I live in a nation that is building its own tower. Our salvation is not seen emanating from churches but from the Pentagon, Wall Street, Main Street, Schoolhouse Lane. It is no accident that when the Islamic raid was made upon our nation, 9/11, they didn't go after churches. Previous wars on our land like the several times with Britain, they first went to our churches and took them over because they knew at that time that was the core of this nation. The Islamic went after the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and they were going to go after the White House and the Capital, because there is where our hopes are in this day and in this nation. So our hopes are in a secular statist power. Thirdly, we now call evil good and good evil in sexual anarchy and immorality.

God's patience is overwhelming to me. I'm praying that He has not come down to bring judgment yet because He is yet going to come and bring a Gospel awakening. But a church needs to be revived to know how to do that. Now I want to move from a cultural overview to a Biblical overview. I want to look at three passages of Scripture – one in the Old Testament, New Testament and then one that gives wonderful hope. Let's start by looking at Leviticus 18. God's people have been taken out of bondage in Egypt. They have now been set free and are on their way to the Promised Land. The Levitical priesthood are given the conduct of how they are to function and how they are to lead God's people.

Leviticus 18:1–5 says [1] *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. [3] You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived (where they were in bondage), and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. [4] You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. [5] You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*

According to this text the Word of God is to shape our behavior. This is to be a lifestyle. The basic principle He has given us here is those whom God delivers from bondage are not to live as those who are still in bondage. That was here to teach us of His deliverance through Christ, not from Moses, from the bondage of sin. You are not to live shaped by the culture of enslavement to idolatry and rebellion. You are to live shaped by the Word of God. Notice that He doesn't say if you live this way I'll deliver you. No, this is a message of grace. I have already delivered you, now live this way. This isn't what you do for Me to deliver you, this is what those whom I deliver are to do.

Magisterium was in the context of the Reformation. One of the battles was when Martin Luther said 'Here I stand and unless I am convinced by Scripture, I can do no other. God help me.' In other words, he was saying he didn't believe in ecclesiastical magisterium for the church

that errs does not shape him. He and the church are to be shaped by the Word of God. Thus the watch cry of the Reformation, 'Scripture alone is our only rule of faith and practice.' This is what we believe and what we do. That is where we are today. We are going to find out quickly, will the evangelical church be shaped by the cultural or by the Word of God?

Then He says no to culture magisterium. Don't let the culture of where I delivered you shape you. I know you have to deal with it. If there wasn't a temptation to do those things why would He bother saying this? He knows the old man is going to want to pull you back into where you have been and you will want to go back to the flesh pots of that culture. Don't be shaped by the Egyptians or the Canaanites, these pagan cultures. Be shaped by My Word.

I won't be reading all of Leviticus 18 but He will immediately go to the sexual immorality of paganism. In Leviticus 18:6–18 He deals with the sexual sin of incest. He tells them not to uncover the nakedness and that is a euphemism for sexual intimacy. He will go through a list of things basically telling them they are not to do as the pagans or practice incest. Then in Leviticus 18:19–20 He talks about the hygienic parameters of sexuality. In Leviticus 18:21 He goes to the idolatrous cultic sexuality, that is sexual immorality in the name of religion and worship. Then He goes to a fourth category of sexual sins in the next verse.

Leviticus 18:22–23 says [22] *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.* [23] *And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.* Verse 23 is a fifth category of sexual sins – bestiality. So there are five categories of sexual sin that are found rampant in paganism and in the culture where He says to us to say 'no' to that and then He will move to the seventh commandment which is not to commit adultery but enjoy the gift of sex within marriage. We are to say 'no' to any sexual anarchy, any sexual immorality and don't let the world shape you.

Leviticus 18:26–28 says [26] *But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you* [27] *(for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean),* [28] *lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.* He is basically saying when you give yourselves to these rebellions as a nation (and embrace sexual immorality) God promises He will tickle the throat of the land and He vomit that nation out of the land. Don't you be that nation. You be shaped by the Word of God. Now let's look at a text in the New Testament that is built upon this text where grace is leading to obedience. The first two verses are familiar verses to some.

Romans 1:16–17 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* [17] *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* I always thought it was odd for Paul to say 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel.' How many of you men have ever introduced your wife 'Hello, this is my wife, I love her and I'm not ashamed of her'? I would encourage you not to ever do that. So why would Paul say out of love for the Gospel that he is not ashamed of it?

You need to follow the rest of this text and there are two reasons Paul would say this. One is a culture in rebellion against God attempts to evacuate shame in the culture from sin and shamelessly sin. Now it never works and that's why they create euphemisms. It's not adultery, it's an affair. That is why sin is translated into syndromes, to be managed, instead of sin to be killed. Number two, is they want to silence those who say the only way to get rid of shame is through Jesus, who at the cross poured out His blood to eradicate your shame. The culture

doesn't want to hear that. Paul unfolds this in the following verses in Romans 1. He moves from this glorious Gospel to this glorious bad news. It's glorious because it needs to be heard.

Romans 1:18–32 says [18] *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* [19] *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* [20] *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.* [21] *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* [22] *Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* [23] *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

[24] **Therefore God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity (sexual immorality), to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves (heterosexual promiscuity), [25] *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* Sexual immorality not only brings God's judgment but it is the evidence of God's judgment that He gives a nation over when they have denied Him. Now we go into a devolution yet the culture thinks it's in a revolution. We go to the next spiral down.

[26] *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;* [27] *and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing **shameless acts** (trying to take the shame away with its repetition and acceptance) with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* Does this bring judgment? Yes but it's presence brings further judgment from sexual promiscuity to sexual perversion.

[28] *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a **debased mind** (the wrong world and life view) to do what ought not to be done.* [29] *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,* [30] *slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,* [31] *foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.* [32] *Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but **give approval to those who practice them** (they accept them).*

Sexual immorality is followed by sexual promiscuity which is followed by social approval and that's always what happens in a pagan culture with pagan sexuality. That's the death spiral that not only brings the judgment of God but also is the judgment of God. Notice how both Leviticus and Romans begin with the hope – the Gospel that takes away your shame but you have to have people who are unashamed of the shame eating Gospel. Again, you have to have people who are unashamedly will share the shame eradicating Gospel because that alone can remove any and all sin. Let's look at the third passage in I Corinthians 6. I just love this passage.

The first year I was a youth director I was engaged in ministry with someone who was entangled in homosexuality. Then in God's providence I have had the opportunity to ministry to others in the three churches I have pastored who have been entangled in this as well. One of my great encouragements to those who struggle with this has always been this passage in I Corinthians 6. He gives the bad news first.

I Corinthians 6:9–11 says [9] *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor*

*adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

There is no hopelessness there for God can deliver us from sins guilt, power and increasingly unevenly challengingly sin's practice. If I didn't believe that I would just have to leave my job. I was in a group of men talking with a man who was in entangling sin and I remember one saying 'I think some are just beyond deliverance' and before I could get it out of my mouth, one of the pastoral staff said 'First of all, I can't believe I ever heard a leader in this church ever say that and secondly if I believed that then I would quit.' Thankfully that elder is not at this church that said that but I thank God for the boldness of our pastoral staff person that said that and then all I had to say was 'amen.' I have seen it too much.

How do I know that God does that? Those who say 'no' to the delivering grace of God will come under the dominion of sin. There are some sins that become obvious in their dominating addictions and Paul in I Corinthians 9 laid out nine of them but this is not exhaustive. He is not talking about the sin that is living in you, he is talking about living in that sin. If that is where you are in then you are not in the Kingdom of God. His language say you 'will not inherit the Kingdom of God.' He didn't say if you do real good then you can earn the Kingdom of God, no because the Kingdom of God cannot be earned. The Kingdom of God is inherited from the One who purchased it for you, Jesus Christ. But when you say 'no' to the One you inherit it from then it will become evident in your life and that will be in the dominion of sin in your life which will bring nothing but death, despair and destruction.

If you say 'yes' to Jesus He will deliver you from sin's power, penalty, shame and increasingly from its practice. 'Such were some of you' and the reason I know that is that eight of these nine sins were true in my life addictively when I was converted. Some of them I still have to deal with. Some of them He miraculously the day I was converted took them away. So some of them He microwaved them out the day of my conversion and some of them He has been crock-potting now for 40 plus years, but praise God that I may go up and down but no longer do I look at it as if it's my life. God help me flee the temptation and help me kill the sinful desire. I praise God for His kindness, goodness and the hope that comes from this glorious truth.

See the hope in I Corinthians 9:11 which says [11] **And such were some of you.** *But you were washed (by His blood), you were sanctified (in the Spirit), you were justified (made right before God) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* This is why this treatise was written so that we could address this issues with a Biblical perspective and theological clarity. Now let's take a closer look at this treatise/statement and start by looking first at the theological ministry statement on homosexuality that will be draw out in the 10 affirmation and the denials that Briarwood has come up with through our session. The Briarwood Statement (As adopted by the Session of Briarwood Presbyterian Church at its stated meeting on June 18, 2019, on the issues of homosexuality) can be read in its entirety at the following link: [briarwood.org/statement](http://briarwood.org/statement).

*In a culture increasingly obsessed with sexuality, marked by rebellion against God's design for the gift and enjoyment of sex as set out in His Word and the resulting sexual brokenness, our desire is to equip Christians to minister with clarity, conviction and compassion to those struggling with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions.*

*For this purpose, we offer the following Briarwood Statement with the accompanying 10 Affirmations and Denials. We intend the Briarwood Statement to serve as both a clear theological statement of truth amidst the unnecessarily confusing language prevalent in our culture and, at the same time, a practical ministry tool that communicates truth in love.*

*The Briarwood Statement is not meant as a full theological treatment of homosexuality generally nor is it focused on the related but separate issue of gender identity. Instead, the Statement is designed to acknowledge the deep struggle and sense of bondage that those in sexual sin can experience while affirming the authority, sufficiency and preeminence of Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit as the only true and ultimate source of hope and deliverance.*

*Our objective in this Statement is to address these issues faithfully and move people intentionally to Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is merciful and gracious.*

**The Theological Governing Principle** is as follows;

*Everyone is born with a sin nature<sup>1</sup> which inevitably manifests itself in sinful thoughts,<sup>2</sup> desires<sup>3</sup> and actions,<sup>4</sup> corrupting all aspects of human sexuality, none of which are beyond the transforming power of the Gospel.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 3:1–7; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:18,23 (i.e., original sin)

<sup>2</sup>Genesis 6:5; Psalm 10:4; Mark 7:21 (i.e., indwelling sin)

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 3:1–7; James 1:14,15; Mark 7:21–23 (i.e., indwelling sin)

<sup>4</sup>Romans 1:24–32; Mark 7:21–23; Galatians 5:16,17 (i.e., actual sins)

<sup>5</sup>Romans 1:16 (i.e., Gospel transformation)

We have tried to put this as simply as possible. Everyone starts with a sin nature. God has given you created appetites. You have an appetite for dominion, food, drink, sex, knowledge, etc. You are given created appetites by the hand of God being made in the image of God, but because you are also a son of Adam you are born with a sin nature and that sin nature desires to pervert those appetites from the glory of God to where it's all about us. I Corinthians 10:31 says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* When we make it all about us dominion becomes controlling people, food becomes gluttony, drink becomes drunkenness, and sex becomes immoral, promiscuity and perversion. So we have sin nature that is perverting into idolatry our appetites and therefore it inevitably manifests itself in sinful thoughts, desires and actions and one of the aspects it corrupts is human sexuality but none of that is beyond the transforming power of the Gospel. That is our theological position.

How is that worked out in affirmations and denials? The first affirmation is that we affirm that each of us is born a sinner and this sin nature will manifest itself in actual sins including sinful heterosexual and/or homosexual thoughts, desires and actions. The denial to that is we deny that any supposed genetic link to homosexuality would make homosexual thoughts, desires and actions morally acceptable or normative. In other words, we believe that sexual anarchy (homosexual sin) were not in Genesis 1 and 2 but came after Genesis 3, therefore even in the curse of sin in our bodies there is some link that is attached that does not make them normative or morally accepted any more that it makes adultery morally accepted.

The second affirmation is we affirm that all homosexual thoughts, desires and actions are sinful. In other words, it's not okay to have the thoughts if you don't act on them. No, you want to kill the thoughts as well as avoid the actions that come from thoughts and the words and deeds that are related to the thought. Romans 1 talks about sinful desires. The sinful desire from the

sin nature corrupts all of our appetites. Here are the temptations outside of you. James says that if the temptation gets married to the desire the child is sin, the product is death – death of a family, a marriage, and everywhere. James tells us to flee temptation, not resist and you kill the sinful desires every day.

When it comes to heterosexual immorality and being delivered from all associated with that, I tell God ‘Give me a love for my wife Cindy that is so great that I can’t even think of another woman.’ Yes I can acknowledge beauty but I don’t want any eros thoughts. If they are there from my old man I would then ask God ‘Give me an abject overwhelming sense of nausea.’ There is no one in the world who hates nausea more than me. I mean business. I want God to make it nauseating to me. The other thing is I wanted to be filled up with His Word and the love of my wife so that I don’t have room for it. Kill the thoughts by filling up with His Word so that there is no room and kill it by hating them.

Second denial is we deny that homosexuality is the worst possible sin, or the unpardonable sin, or beyond redemption, forgiveness, and transformation as with any other sin. Just like any other sin God can give you the victory. The victory may be over a long period of time, uneven or imperfect but He can give you the victories, starting with the desire, moving to the thought and then to the actions. Then say ‘no’ to the actions which effect the desires and that effects the thoughts.

The third affirmation is we affirm that a Christian’s identity is solely and exclusively in Christ alone. We deny that Christians should identify themselves by any sin in general, or by sexual sins in particular, including identifying as a “gay Christian.” In English the adjective controls the noun or the modifier controls the noun. When you put a modifier in front of Christian it better be something that is testimony to the Gospel like a saved Christian or a being transformed Christian. Your identity is Christ and your past sins no matter how deeply they are embedded and you’re battling them, never become your identity. We’re not an adulterous Christian or an alcoholic Christian or a fornicating Christian or a gambling Christian, even though those may be entangling sins, we don’t identify them in our identity.

People tend to ask me about AA – Alcoholics Anonymous and I don’t really want to go there and I appreciate what they are trying to do with the 12 steps but I tell someone who comes to my office with that issue and is a Christian that they are under the blood of Jesus filled with the Spirit of God with the righteousness of Christ and the sin that you’re battling is not your life. Christ is your life so let’s go to Him for the means of grace and let’s start killing it together with the people of God.

The fourth affirmation is we affirm that, while the term Same Sex Attraction/Orientation (SSA) is often used by Christians to explain their struggle with homosexuality, the use of this term should be addressed within the Biblical categories of language that distinguish between temptation on the one hand and sinful thoughts, desires and actions on the other hand. One of our problems is the culture and the psychologists of the world have given us the terms which come with no hope and we’re trying to flesh that into Christianity. Stay within theological terms – sin nature, old man, grace greater than sin. The worldly terms come with a desire to evacuate the shame that you cannot evacuate apart from the blood and righteousness of Jesus.

We deny that the use or non-use of the term SSA should presumptively be a test of Biblical orthodoxy. You are dealing with people who are in an unbelievably powerful culture that is educating them so when someone comes to you to talk about SSA don’t immediately say that is Biblically unorthodox. Patiently work with them, understand that and start through evangelism and discipleship giving them Biblical categories.



Fifthly, we affirm the need for clarity, intentionality, and community within the church and family as we minister and disciple in a culture that celebrates and promotes experimenting with sinful sexual behaviors in general and homosexuality in particular. You have no idea that is put upon singles, college, high school and young people to do that so they will be somebody. It is the unbelievable cultural pressure to experiment. The antidote is the Gospel, family and the family of God where we love them, embrace them and care for them. Even though we have to deal with that which would destroy them as sin, we love them, we reach them and we like Jesus are enemies of sin. Let the church be a death trap for sin but let it be a haven for sinners to be saved and grow in grace. As the world draws them to this false hope let's wrap the arms of grace and the means of grace around them.

The fifth denial is we deny that the Gospel and the means of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit are incapable of progressively (sometimes instantaneously) delivering Christians from a sexually obsessed lifestyle and culture. The means of grace are fellowship, preaching the Word, disciple, worship, prayer and the sacraments which God will use and promises to use progressively from a sexually obsessed lifestyle and culture. So stay the course with the means of grace in the community of believers.

Sixthly, we affirm that any teaching that declares homosexual thoughts and desires are not sinful unless acted upon to be contrary to Scripture. This is obvious in all texts of Scripture but people are trying to say if they don't act upon it then it's not sin. If you don't act upon it then praise God but if you're thinking it then you have a time bomb. You need to ask God to get rid of stinking thinking. Fill your mind with the truth of God's Word.

We deny that homosexual thoughts or desires are non-sinful impulses, sexual disabilities to be managed or indicative of morally neutral sexual orientation. We don't manage sinful thoughts we kill them. We mortify them. Therefore any sin including homosexuality, I don't care what the culture says in its language, for it is not a syndrome to be managed, but a sin to be killed.

The seventh affirmation is we affirm that many Christians who experience homosexual thoughts and desires sincerely identify such thoughts and desires as unwanted. If you don't believe that then you don't believe Romans 7:15, 23 when Paul says *[15] For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. [23] but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* Paul has not only repented of it but he doesn't want it there but he hasn't arrived at sinless perfection. Then Paul says in Romans 7:24–25, *[24] Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? [25] **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* I can have victory in Christ as I keep my eyes fixed on Him.

Some say we are to help everyone. No, any time you get your eyes fixed on Jesus that old man is not done with you so you have to kill the old man and fix your eyes on Jesus. We deny that a Christian is not culpable or accountable even for unwanted sinful sexual thoughts and desires. A man said to me 'Pastor, what about the man who gets the homo-erotic dream, he didn't want it and he's a Christian' and I say that he has to understand he is not a victim of it and somewhere, somehow that thought has been nurtured in some degree, now go after it. Then ask God in the moments when you've lost control of a dream what will come out is God's Word.

Number eight is we affirm that every Christian is called to flee temptation, repent of sin and mortify the sinful desires of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit through the God-given means of grace. I love this statement and hope you will memorize it and understand what this is

saying. We deny that sexual sins in general and homosexual sins in particular are to be accepted, managed, redefined, redirected or reordered. We are to flee the temptation and kill the desire.

Number nine is we affirm that all Christians, including those who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions, are delivered from the penalty and power of sin and therefore are free from all condemnation. I recently read a testimony of a man who said ‘once I was ashamed of my homosexuality and hid it, now I praise God that it’s covered by the Gospel.’ I’m going to try and find him and talk with him personally because the Gospel doesn’t cover your shame, it eradicates it. Romans 8:1 says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* It is not management of condemnation, for there is no condemnation. The power of sin had been broken in regeneration and now increasingly the practice of obedience can replace the sin in the progressive work of sanctification.

We deny that Christians who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions should suffer in silence or retreat into a subculture rather than into the Body of Christ. That means we have to be consciously reaching out and loving to help them because we want them to get the means of grace in the context of a large group worship, small group discipleship and in relationships with and in the people of God.

Number ten and finally, we affirm that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, completely delivers some Christians from particular sins – including homosexual thoughts, desires and actions – miraculously and instantaneously, while others He progressively delivers through the ordinary means of grace with varying and uneven degrees of progress until they are made perfect in heaven. We deny that Christians will achieve sinless perfection in thoughts, desires or actions this side of eternity.

The result of this were five myths that need to be exploded but I’m out of time so I know the headquarters cannot take what the hindquarters cannot stand so I thank you for your patience. I will try and publish these five myths in a blog for you to see at a later time. I want to simply say the depravity of sin and its destruction, while it should create an urgency in us to reach people, it ought to create an urgency within us to love the people who are under its sway.

The greater the depravity in the downward spiral of sin, one of the myths is that all sins are not equal where some sins by their essence or by their consequences are more depraved. Jesus says that if I’m angry at a man I’m guilty of murder but it’s not the same as actually murdering someone, for now someone has lost a husband or father and now the consequences are greater but when we see the downward spiral of sin and its depravity it ought to be an urgency to propel us to people with the Gospel and an urgency to fill us with the love of God toward them because this same great God has delivered us from the penalty, the power and increasingly from the practice of sin. We will not treat them as self-righteous Pharisees. We will love them as sinners saved by grace, saints in the blood of Jesus. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could spend together in Your Word and for the patience of my brothers and sisters for this is a challenging, difficult subject. God, help us to keep growing in how we speak truth and love truthfully. Truth without love is barbarity, love without truth is cruelty so help us show the veracity of Christ with truth and the victory of Christ with love. I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

## A Pastoral Note

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

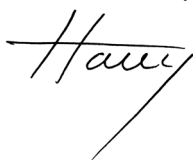
Grace and peace. The Briarwood Statement is a prayerfully developed distillation of Biblical truth focused upon equipping the Lord's people to "speak the truth in love," specifically and effectively to those who are in the seemingly unbreakable bondage of homosexuality and experiencing its inevitable consequences of shame, brokenness and hopelessness.

The Briarwood Statement was produced through a patient and deliberative process which was saturated with prayer and dialogue under the oversight of the Briarwood Session and then they unanimously adopted it. The objective was in light of the present theological confusion and missed ministry opportunities to provide a discipleship tool whereby the Lord's people would be equipped and enabled to "contend for the faith" without being contentious and "defend the faith" without being defensive. The desired outcome being a thoughtful and loving communication of the Gospel to those yet ensnared by this sin's guilt and power, and also to believers who may be dealing with the entangling remnant of the sin of homosexuality from which Christ has redeemed them—some of whom, praise the Lord, are on this specific journey of grace within our own fellowship at Briarwood.

We serve Christ together with a God-given Mission to evangelize everyone, everywhere, everyday, in everyplace with the Gospel of grace in Christ and then disciple them patiently and persistently within the Body of Christ as they grow in the grace and knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. This Gospel first communicates the "bad news," which informs us that we are sinners in need of salvation and we cannot save ourselves. Then the greatest words of the Bible...BUT GOD! The Good News is the God of Glory and Grace, who takes us right where we are by the Holy Spirit through Christ to the glory of the Father, promises to never leave us where we are. What is impossible with man is not only possible with God, but has been secured through Christ and by His Spirit.

Therefore, together with theological clarity and ministry compassion, let us indiscriminately bring the Gospel to the lost and to each other so that those who hear by the power of the Spirit might leave the futility of trying to psychologically, cosmetically, and culturally remove the shame of their sin, including homosexuality, and come to Christ, who is the Friend of sinners but who is no Friend to sin, and who can save you from any and all of your sins—homosexuality being no exception. Praise God, His Grace in Christ is greater than all of our sins and any one of our sins. The same answer for any sin is found from the same Savior of sinners.

For Christ, the Gospel and His Church,



## The Briarwood Statement

(As adopted by the Session of Briarwood Presbyterian Church at its stated meeting on June 18, 2019)

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." ~ Hebrews 4:15-16*

### A Theological Ministry Statement on Homosexuality with 10 Affirmations and Denials

In a culture increasingly obsessed with sexuality, marked by rebellion against God's design for the gift and enjoyment of sex as set out in His Word and the resulting sexual brokenness, our desire is to equip Christians to minister with clarity, conviction and compassion to those struggling with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions.

For this purpose, we offer the following Briarwood Statement with the accompanying 10 Affirmations and Denials. We intend the Briarwood Statement to serve as both a clear theological statement of truth amidst the unnecessarily confusing language prevalent in our culture and, at the same time, a practical ministry tool that communicates truth in love.

The Briarwood Statement is not meant as a full theological treatment of homosexuality generally nor is it focused on the related but separate issue of gender identity. Instead, the Statement is designed to acknowledge the deep struggle and sense of bondage that those in sexual sin can experience while affirming the authority, sufficiency and preeminence of Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit as the only true and ultimate source of hope and deliverance.

Our objective in this Statement is to address these issues faithfully and move people intentionally to Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is merciful and gracious.

### The Theological Governing Principle

*Everyone is born with a sin nature<sup>1</sup> which inevitably manifests itself in sinful thoughts,<sup>2</sup> desires<sup>3</sup> and actions,<sup>4</sup> corrupting all aspects of human sexuality, none of which are beyond the transforming power of the Gospel.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 3:1-7; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:18,23 (i.e., original sin)

<sup>2</sup>Genesis 6:5; Psalm 10:4; Mark 7:21 (i.e., indwelling sin)

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 3:1-7; James 1:14,15; Mark 7:21-23 (i.e., indwelling sin)

<sup>4</sup>Romans 1:24-32; Mark 7:21-23; Galatians 5:16,17 (i.e., actual sins)

<sup>5</sup>Romans 1:16 (i.e., Gospel transformation)

# Affirmations

# Denials

1	<p><b>We affirm that each of us is born a sinner and this sin nature will manifest itself in actual sins including sinful heterosexual and/or homosexual thoughts, desires and actions.</b>  <i>Gen. 3:1-7; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Matt. 5:27,28; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; James 1:14,15</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that any supposed genetic link to homosexuality would make homosexual thoughts, desires and actions morally acceptable or normative.</b>  <i>Gen. 3:1-7; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Matt. 5:27,28; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; James 1:14,15</i></p>
2	<p><b>We affirm that all homosexual thoughts, desires and actions are sinful.</b>  <i>Gen. 1:27-28; Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-11</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that homosexual thoughts, desires and actions are the worst possible sins, or the unpardonable sin, or beyond redemption, forgiveness, and transformation as with any other sin.</b>  <i>Matt. 12:31; 1 Cor. 6:9-11</i></p>
3	<p><b>We affirm that a Christian's identity is solely and exclusively in Christ alone.</b>  <i>Acts 11:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 5:16,17; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:1</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that Christians should identify themselves by any sin in general, or by sexual sins in particular, including identifying as a "gay Christian."</b>  <i>Eph. 5:3; 2 Tim. 2:19</i></p>
4	<p><b>We affirm that, while the term Same Sex Attraction (SSA) is often used by Christians to explain their struggle with homosexuality, the use of this term should be addressed within the Biblical categories of language that distinguish between temptation on the one hand and sinful thoughts, desires and actions on the other hand.</b>  <i>Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:15; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16,17; James 1:14,15</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that the use or non-use of the term SSA should presumptively be a test of Biblical orthodoxy.</b>  <i>1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 John 4:1-3</i></p>
5	<p><b>We affirm the need for clarity, intentionality, and community within the church and family as we minister and disciple in a culture that celebrates and promotes experimenting with sinful sexual behaviors in general and homosexuality in particular.</b>  <i>Rom. 1:21-32; Rom. 12:1,2; 1 Cor. 10:8; 1 Cor. 12:12-23; Eph. 6:4</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that the Gospel and the means of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit are incapable of progressively delivering Christians from a sexually obsessed lifestyle and culture.</b>  <i>Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 6: 9-11; Eph. 1:15-20; Heb. 7:25</i></p>
6	<p><b>We affirm that any teaching that declares homosexual thoughts and desires are not sinful unless acted upon to be contrary to Scripture.</b>  <i>Rom. 6:11,12; Rom. 7:5; Eph. 2:3; James 1:14,15; 1 Pet. 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:11</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that homosexual thoughts or desires are non-sinful impulses, sexual disabilities to be managed or indicative of a morally neutral sexual orientation.</b>  <i>Mark 7:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11,18</i></p>
7	<p><b>We affirm that many Christians who experience homosexual thoughts and desires sincerely identify such thoughts and desires as unwanted.</b>  <i>Rom. 7:14-25; Gal.5:16-25</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that a Christian is not culpable or accountable even for unwanted sinful sexual thoughts and desires.</b>  <i>Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:14-21; Gal. 3:22</i></p>
8	<p><b>We affirm that every Christian is called to flee temptation, repent of sin and mortify the sinful desires of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit through the God-given means of grace.</b>  <i>Matt. 26:41; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 10:13,14; Col. 3:5,6; 1 Tim. 6:11,12; 2 Tim. 2:22</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that sexual sins in general and homosexual sins in particular are to be accepted, managed, redefined, redirected or reordered.</b>  <i>Isaiah 5:20; Rom. 6:11-14; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5,6</i></p>
9	<p><b>We affirm that all Christians, including those who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions, are delivered from the penalty and power of sin and therefore are free from all condemnation.</b>  <i>John 8:36; Rom. 8:1,31-39</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that Christians who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions should suffer in silence or retreat into a subculture rather than into the Body of Christ.</b>  <i>John 13:34,35; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:4; Heb. 10:19-25</i></p>
10	<p><b>We affirm that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, completely delivers some Christians from particular sins—including homosexual thoughts, desires and actions—miraculously and instantaneously, while others He progressively delivers through the ordinary means of grace with varying and uneven degrees of progress until they are made perfect in heaven.</b>  <i>Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:26,27; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:2,3</i></p>	<p><b>We deny that Christians will achieve sinless perfection in thoughts, desires or actions this side of eternity.</b>  <i>Rom. 7:21; Phil. 3:12; 1 John 1:8</i></p>