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The Nashville Statement on biblical human sexuality: What it says and how critics have responded

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The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood issues "The Nashville Statement," which blasts sexual immorality and deviant interpretations of marriage. (Getty Images)

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood released [The Nashville Statement \(https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/\)](https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/), a new Christian doctrinal missive on modern sexuality, Tuesday. Since its release, there's been much controversy and confusion on the subject.

Here is what you need to know.

What is the Nashville Statement?

The Nashville Statement, which was written by [the members of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood \(https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement\)](https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement), is a Christian organization's response to modern sexuality and how sexuality should be viewed through a biblical lens.

The statement expresses concern at the deteriorating reliance on God and faith and is comprised of 14 points covering issues from abstinence to traditional marriage to transgenderism — all based on a biblical understanding of human sexuality.

The council is a Louisville-based organization formed in 1987. The organization was also responsible for penning 1987's [Danvers Statement](https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/the-danvers-statement/) (<https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/the-danvers-statement/>), which was the organization's take on Christian gender roles that emphasized "Biblical Manhood" and "Biblical Womanhood."

Why was the Nashville Statement written?

The eight-page document begins with a preamble, which addresses the issue of Western culture becoming "increasingly post-Christian" and, as a result, more opposed to God's plan.

The Nashville Statement's preamble explains why those who drafted the statement felt compelled to address sexuality head-on in 2017.

"As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian," the statement's preamble begins, "it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being."

The preamble goes on to tackle human sexuality and gender identity, noting that Western society thinks it's become commonplace "to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences."

"We did not make ourselves," the opening lines state.

"We are not our own," it continues. "Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be."

The preamble closes by directly addressing why the statement was written: "In the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials."

What does the Nashville Statement say about sexuality?

The Nashville Statement contains 14 "articles" on marriage and sexuality from a Christian perspective.

- Article 1 affirms that God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman and says the institution is to be held as sacred as God's relationship with His church. It goes on to say that homosexual or polygamous relationships were not designed by God, and thus, are not of God.
- Article 2 condemns infidelity and relationships outside the parameters of a Christian marriage.
- Article 3 states that Adam and Eve were created distinctly male and distinctly female and in God's image, meaning that, despite their differences, men and women are equal in dignity and worth.
- Article 4 reiterates that differences between genders are what make God's human creation unique and "are meant for human good and human flourishing."
- Article 5 says that the differences between male and female reproductive organs are what determine the distinctions between the male and female genders and that "physical anomalies" or "psychological conditions" do not nullify God's design for the two genders.
- Article 6 affirms that all men and women were created in God's image and are equal in God's eyes —

including those born with a “physical disorder of sex development” Such disorders, the article says, do not make those afflicted incapable of obeying and walking with Christ.

- Article 7 tackles homosexual and transgender self-conceptions and states that male and female are designated only by God, for His holy purposes, according to Scripture.
- Article 8 says that those experiencing same-sex attraction are welcome and encouraged to live the life God designed for them through “purity of life” and adds that same-sex attraction does not put “a person outside the hope of the gospel.”
- Article 9 condemns sexual immorality — whether heterosexual or homosexual — as a result of sin’s distortion of God’s intended purity and marital covenant.
- Article 10 states that approving transgenderism or homosexuality is sinful and a “departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.”
- Article 11 reminds Christians to speak the truth about sexuality in love to both men and women alike and to avoid speaking in a way that dishonors God’s design of His children.
- Article 12 speaks of God’s transformative power to change lives, professes that Christ can enable His followers to fight sinful desires those walking on a sinful path is absolute, and declares that God’s grace can forgive all sexual sins.
- Article 13 says that God’s grace enables people forsake transgenderism and understand that they have been divinely created as male or female and that there is a “God-ordained link” between biological sex and gender self-conception.
- Article 14 affirms that Christ’s death and resurrection provides the opportunity for forgiveness of all sins and that no sinner is beyond God’s reach for salvation.

Who signed the Nashville Statement?

Hundreds of Christians of varying public prominence have signed off on the Nashville Statement so far. Some of the notable names include:


- John Piper, pastor, author, and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary
- Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
- Francis Chan, best-selling author and pastor
- Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family
- Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council
- Dennis Rainey, founder and former president of FamilyLife
- Thom S. Rainier, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources
- Christiana Holcomb, legal counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom
- Paul Nyquist, president of Moody Bible Institute

Others who signed the statement include Christian professors, authors, pastors, speakers, CEOs, magazine editors, counselors, and more.

A taste of the liberal response so far

Nashville, Tennessee, Mayor Megan Barry blasted the statement in a Tuesday tweet.

She wrote, “The @CBMWorg’s so-called ‘Nashville Statement’ is poorly named and does not represent the inclusive values of the city & people of Nashville.”



Megan Barry
@MayorMeganBarry

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The @CBMWorg's so-called "Nashville Statement" is poorly named and does not represent the inclusive values of the city & people of Nashville

11:45 AM - Aug 29, 2017

389 2,496 6,044

Author Jamie Tworkowski tweeted, “Where was your statement on refugees? How about racism? Trump?” He added, “PS: Your timing is amazing. Houston is underwater.”



Jamie Tworkowski
@jamietworkowski

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Where was your statement on refugees?

How about racism?

Trump?

[#NashvilleStatement](#)

PS: Your timing is amazing. Houston is underwater.

6:32 PM - Aug 29, 2017

99 1,150 3,790

Civil rights activist DeRay McKesson wrote, “The God I know does not support the #NashvilleStatement.”



deray mckesson
@deray


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The God I know does not support the [#NashvilleStatement](#).

9:01 PM - Aug 29, 2017

133 777 3,342

Pastor John Pavlovitz had a vulgar reference for the Nashville Statement. He wrote, “I have my own statement on the #NashvilleStatement. It could be lots of words but honestly I could probably narrow it down to just a finger.”



John Pavlovitz
@johnpavlovitz

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I have my own statement on the [#NashvilleStatement](#). It could be lots of words but honestly I could probably narrow it down to just a finger.

9:25 PM - Aug 29, 2017

72 601 2,652

Additionally, The Human Rights Campaign decried the statement as “a tool to discriminate against LGBTQ people.”



HumanRightsCampaign
@HRC

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Faith should be welcoming and accepting, not used as a tool to discriminate against LGBTQ people [#NashvilleStatement](#)
huffingtonpost.com/entry/evangeli...

8:46 PM - Aug 29, 2017

99 727 1,329

Greg Carey, Professor of the New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary, even penned an essay for The Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-nashville-statement-and-the-decline-of-the-christian_us_59a7314ae4b02498834a8e78), in which he effectively called the Nashville Statement irrelevant.

“Why draft a big statement, and why publicize it?” Carey asked. “The answer is simple. Pretty much nobody cares what [the Christian right thinks] anymore. The day is past when the media seeks out right wing preachers to weigh in on social values. Their public audience shrinking, their public presence waning, and their credibility shot to hell, the Christian right needs attention.”

Why this shouldn't be controversial news

The articles contained in the Nashville Statement are a simple declaration of Christian orthodoxy on human sexuality, sin, sexual orientation, and identity.

Those Christians who penned, signed, and distributed the statement are, like many Christians, unanimous in their belief that the Bible is the absolute Word of God and that, according to the Bible, God declares sexual immorality — to include homosexuality, transgenderism, infidelity, and more — sinful.

In the Bible, God has also stated that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman and that any

sexual relationship outside of the bonds marriage is sinful.

However, if you read the entire statement, nowhere does it call for governmental, societal, or even religious intervention against those who disagree with the missive — it simply expresses the Bible's views and offers God's love and acceptance for all, regardless of their human behaviors.