

Best Practices When Preaching on Sexuality and Gender

Purpose

This guide is intended to assist PAOC pastors and leaders in communicating Biblical convictions about sexuality and gender in ways that are clear, legally responsible, pastorally sensitive, and rooted in the redemptive heart of the gospel. These best practices align with Article 6.4 of the PAOC Constitution and acknowledge the legal framework established by recent Canadian legislation.

1. Preach from Conviction and Compassion

- Proclaim a **Biblical vision for sexuality and gender** not merely in reaction to cultural developments, but as a positive and hopeful expression of God's design (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4–6).
- Speak **with theological clarity** and **pastoral humility**. Remember, your words reach people who are personally or relationally affected by these topics.
- Avoid framing sermons as “us versus them.” Statistically, individuals in every congregation are navigating questions of same-sex attraction or gender identity. Speak to them as part of *us*: beloved image-bearers of God, welcomed into the journey of discipleship.

2. Honour Legal Boundaries

- Be aware that **conversion therapy**, as defined in Canadian law, includes practices aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Do not suggest or promote any coercive efforts to alter someone's internal sense of identity.
- Instead, teach that **all believers**, regardless of sexual orientation or gender experience, are called to obedience to Christ in thought, desire, and action. Focus on spiritual formation, not psychological re-orientation.
- Offer care and discipleship rooted in **voluntary participation, spiritual support, and biblical teaching**, not therapeutic manipulation.

3. Prioritize Identity in Christ

- Teach that **our primary identity is not our sexuality, temptations, or gender experience**, but our redeemed identity in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10).

- Encourage all believers to submit their desires to the Lordship of Jesus, and emphasize that transformation is a work of the Holy Spirit over time, not merely behaviour modification.

4. Provide Pastoral Safety and Relational Integrity

- Create confidential, respectful spaces for individuals to share their experiences without fear of exposure or shame.
- Walk alongside those who are struggling with gender identity or same-sex attraction in ways that reflect **Christ's compassion, truth, and grace** (John 1:14).
- Always have accountability practices in place for private meetings. Bring a mature believer if deep pastoral conversations are required.

5. Teach Consistently and Apply Equally

- Avoid singling out specific sins or struggles. Address sexuality and gender in the broader context of **discipleship, sanctification, and human brokenness**.
- Apply biblical standards to all equally. Heterosexual sin must be addressed with the same seriousness as same-sex sexual sin.
- Emphasize that temptation itself is not sin; rather, faithful obedience amidst temptation is a hallmark of discipleship (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15).

6. Choose Words that Build Bridges

- Use **language that is respectful, accurate, and people-honouring**. Avoid slurs, jokes, dismissive tones, or inflammatory rhetoric.
- Speak *to* people, not *about* issues. Use personal, pastoral language, not ideological or politicized terms.
- Remember that **clarity and kindness are not mutually exclusive**. Be both faithful and loving.

7. Equip the Church for Redemptive Engagement

- Educate leaders and congregants on how to engage with the 2SLGBTQ+ community with **truth, integrity, and compassion**, not silence or hostility.
- Encourage believers to listen well, ask honest questions, and walk in humility. Many in our churches have 2SLGBTQ+ friends, relatives, or experiences themselves.

- Resist fear-based narratives. Trust that the gospel is compelling, and that the Holy Spirit is still in the business of transformation.

8. Offer Hope Through the Gospel

- Always end with **the invitation to Christ**. Jesus welcomes all who are weary and burdened, regardless of their past, their temptations, or their confusion (Matthew 11:28–30).
- Emphasize that no one is beyond the reach of grace, and no story is too complicated for God to redeem.
- Encourage repentance, not as shame-driven guilt, but as a joyful turning toward life.

Conclusion

Our responsibility as spiritual leaders is not to resolve every cultural or psychological question, but to faithfully proclaim Christ, shepherd His people, and embody the hope of the gospel. These matters are complex and emotionally charged, but they also represent opportunities to extend Christ's love in meaningful ways. Let us speak with conviction, lead with compassion, and always remember: we are all people in need of grace, walking together toward wholeness in Jesus.