

**THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIAN TERRITORIES
POSITIONAL STATEMENT**

HUMAN SEXUALITY

A. Marriage and Family Life

In spite of changing lifestyles and values, the family unit — father, mother and children — is still the ideal social institution in contemporary Australian life.

By marriage the family remains the basic source of nurture, of love, of economic and other life supports, of fundamental education and socialisation and of spiritual and moral development. Other social institutions serve best as supportive resources.

In the face of emerging alternative lifestyles and modes of living, which in recent years have grown in incidence and open acceptance, The Salvation Army affirms its absolute conviction that the marriage of one man to one woman is a sacred institution ordained by God and that a traditional good-faith commitment to an indissoluble union is one of the most rewarding of life's decisions for any man or woman, providing the optimal conditions for family life.

We encourage married couples to continually seek ways to enrich their relationship and to seek counselling quickly should difficulties arise.

We encourage parents to discover how best to develop a close relationship of mutual trust and respect with their children and to accept responsibility for their children's physical, moral and spiritual growth and well being.

The Salvation Army acknowledges that many people today find themselves in situations outside the ideal stated above. Persons in such circumstances should always be encouraged to feel totally accepted within The Salvation Army.

Thus The Salvation Army, through all its programs and services, seeks to strengthen marriage and enrich family life.

Approved by IHQ, January 1992.

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B. Sexuality and Singleness

Singleness is a part of every life. Every marriage begins with two people who have experienced singleness, and usually ends with at least one partner beginning a new single life.

The Salvation Army as a Christian movement, believes that human sexuality is a gift of God and that the Bible presents sexuality and its proper expression as a privilege, created, ordained and blessed by God. We believe in chastity before marriage and fidelity within the marriage relationship.

The Army acknowledges that, in believing that sexuality is designed by God to lead to an expression of love within the marriage relationship, it requires restraint and control of natural desires from all, married and single alike.

Singleness may be chosen or not. Whichever is the case, the single life can be lived in a positive spirit. Celibacy should not be a negative state but a positive one. Singleness is neither especially blessed, nor a sign of God's disfavour. There are unique ways in which single Salvationists can serve God and there are special opportunities for married Salvationists, so that Paul might well have added "single and married" to his list in Galatians 3:28.

The Army encourages single people — whether previously married or not — to maintain a positive attitude to their singleness and a healthy and balanced social life, and to recognise that God can use all people effectively in His Kingdom.

Approved IHQ, 15th October 1992

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C. Homosexuality

The Salvation Army seeks to understand, accept, and lovingly minister to all people, recognising the depth and intensity of feeling about sexual identity, as well as the attendant pain and difficulties sometimes experienced in living in harmony with God's standards.

Homosexuality is broadly defined as being sexually attracted to, having a definite sexual preference for, people of the same gender. It is The Salvation Army's belief that whilst recognising the possibility of such orientation, (the origins of which are uncertain), the Bible expressly opposes homosexual practice¹, seeing such activity as rebellion against God's plan for the created order.²

The Bible teaches³ that God's intention for humankind is that society should be ordered on the basis of lifelong, legally sanctioned heterosexual unions. Such unions (marriages), having the potential for procreation, lead to the formation of social units (families), which are essential to human personal development and therefore to the stability of the community.

We firmly believe that obedience to God together with the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, make it possible for all to live a lifestyle pleasing to Him. This may include celibacy or self restraint for those who will not or cannot marry.

A disposition towards homosexuality is not in itself blameworthy nor is the disposition seen as rectifiable at will. The Army is sensitive to the complex social, emotional and spiritual needs of all people including those with homosexual inclinations. We oppose vilification of, or discrimination against anyone on the grounds of sexual orientation. No person is excluded from membership, fellowship or service in the Army solely on the basis of sexual disposition.

Homosexual practice, however, is, in the light of Scripture, clearly unacceptable⁴. Such activity is chosen behaviour and is thus a matter of the will. It is therefore able to be directed or restrained in the same way heterosexual urges are controlled. Homosexual practice would render any person ineligible for full membership (soldiership) in the Army. However, practising homosexuals are welcome to worship with, and join in the fellowship of The Salvation Army.

Regardless of sexual orientation, any person who yields to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and determines, by God's grace, to live in accordance with the Scriptural principles outlined above, is welcomed and accorded all the benefits and privileges of membership in The Salvation Army.

¹Leviticus 18:22

"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (NIV)

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders..., will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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." (MV)

²Romans 1:23-25

"... and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen." (NIV)

³Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (NIV)

Genesis 2:21-24

“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (NIV)

⁴Romans 1:26-27

Also highlights bi-sexual practice as unacceptable.

Approved by IHQ, November 1996.