

ELDER STATEMENT ON THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF MARRIAGE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a life-long union of one man and one woman. This idea is supported by the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1:26-28 provides that God created mankind in His own image, both male and female. The passage implies that a unity of one man and one woman is necessary to fully represent the image of God in mankind.

Jesus Christ reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament creation account when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6, "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 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'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Throughout Scripture, marriage as modeled by Adam and Eve is affirmed and celebrated as the norm against which all other forms of partnering are compared and contrasted. Marriage is the life-long union of male and female brought together before God, their Creator. Anything that violates the nature and exclusivity of this union is a violation of God's purpose in creation.

The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution, but is a special divine metaphor that is supposed to illustrate the union of Christ and the church. For this reason also, only a union between a man and a woman can be a proper marriage because a union between two men, two women, or one man and multiple women or any collection of people could not properly illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 condemns a variety of lifestyles including those associated with adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality. The Bible condemns all forms of sexual immorality and encourages Christians to flee from it because of its destructive effects, and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 3:16 & 6:12-20).

Romans 1:18-32 makes it clear that it is not only sinful to engage in homosexual acts, but also to approve of such sins in others or encourage their practice. It is not our purpose to single out homosexual practice but to address the entire range of biblical teaching regarding human sexuality. We believe that the Bible, properly understood, would prohibit all of the following as sin: fornication (a sexual relationship between an unmarried man and woman; i.e. "living together"), adultery, incest, homosexuality,

pedophilia, polygamy, bestiality, pornography and transgender behavior. As a result, in order to live out our biblical, Christian beliefs, we cannot promote or approve of any of these sexual activities that are outside of the sacred bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. It is only in that monogamous, heterosexual relationship where the wonder and beauty of God's gift of sex is to be enjoyed.

As a result it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex union or a polygamist or any union which, in the judgment of the church, is inconsistent with our beliefs (See also our Facilities Use Policy). It is also the policy of the church that no pastor or member of the church staff shall officiate at any such ceremony. Nor may any member of the church enter into such a union without being subject to church discipline.

A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Elders' Statement. Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as marriage we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22).

While we purpose to stand firm on biblical truth we want to be like Jesus who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We all struggle with temptations to all kinds of sin—not just sexual. We also recognize that sexual sin is not characterized in Scripture as being more severe than other forms of sin. And, we understand that by nature some struggle with particular sins more than others. It is possible, though far from scientific certainty, that people may have a genetic predisposition toward particular sins: anger, alcoholism, homosexuality and pedophilia. But predisposition, struggle and temptation are not in themselves sin. We will seek God to discern ways that we can come alongside and share God's love with those who struggle with every kind of sin. We desire to love all people in Jesus' name, pointing them towards Christ's power to forgive and heal.

Adopted July 2015 by the current elder board: Jack Arrington, Chip Atkinson, John Davidson, Mike Harvell, Dick Hohn, Don Johnson, Mitchell Johnson