

## Defending Biblical Marriage

The desire of our church leaders is to speak clearly on the definition of marriage, the role of government and the Church in the institution of marriage, and the link between the gospel and biblical marriage. This shared desire brought representatives of these local church fellowships together to formulate a concise statement on this most important topic. As we worked to produce this draft, we enjoyed unity through the work of the Holy Spirit. Each of the pastoral leadership teams fully agree to and support this statement as representative of our beliefs. Our hope is that this document will be used to strengthen the marriages within our community, encourage those who are currently living in relationships that are outside the God-given pattern of marriage to repent of their sin, and to serve as a defense against those who attempt to pervert the marriage union. This statement is also designed to promote godly interactions among those who confess faith in Christ and with the outside world. It is not glorifying unto God for Christians to display hatred or malice toward anyone. Our hope is that this statement will engender humility before God and one another. We offer the following statement for your encouragement and edification. May God be glorified by the practice of His Church!

### *Definition:*

Marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, ordained by the Creator and Savior of the world.

### *Affirmations and Denials:*

We affirm that this definition is from God. Jesus sustained the pattern of marriage given by our Creator in His defense of marriage in Matthew 19:4-6:

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,<sup>5</sup> and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (cf. Genesis 2:21-25)

We deny that any institution—government, church, or individual—can legitimately redefine marriage (Proverbs 17:15; Leviticus 18:4-5; Isaiah 5:20). We further deny that marriage is a mere social construct devised by human wisdom; it is rather a universal institution given to humanity by God (Ephesians 5:31-32).

We affirm that God designed sexual identity, male and female, as part of his good creation. We further affirm that God's design for sexual pleasure and union is confined to the marriage covenant (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5).

We deny the moral lawfulness of any sexual perversion. This specifically includes adultery, fornication, rape, pedophilia, incest, bisexuality, homosexuality, transgenderism, polygamy, bestiality, pornography, lust, voyeurism, sado-masochism, and any other perversion of God's design. (Leviticus 18; Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

### *The Role of Government in Marriage*

We affirm that God instituted human government as His servant in the world to promote good and restrain evil:

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.” (1 Peter 2:13-14)

We deny that human government is autonomous in its authority or has the right to institute laws which are contrary to God's revealed will (Romans 13:1-4).

We affirm that followers of Jesus Christ must submit to governing authorities as to the Lord (Luke 20:20-26; Romans 13:1-7).

We deny that followers of Jesus Christ must obey any ordinances or laws which contradict the commands of Scripture (Acts 4:19-20; 5:27-29).

We affirm that human governments should administer the institution of marriage as given by God for the sake of the common good. We further affirm that human governments should protect and promote the biblical institution of marriage (Proverbs 14:34; Romans 13:3-4).

We deny that any civil union that deviates from the God-given model of marriage is a valid marriage (Matthew 14:3-4).

### *The Gospel and Marriage*

“‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31-32).

We affirm that marriage is sacred because it pictures the relationship between Christ and His church through the distinct roles and life-long covenant between a man and his wife (Ephesians 5:22-23).

We deny that the picture of the relationship between Christ and His church can be fulfilled through any other civil union that is contrary to the God-given model of one man and one woman (Romans 1:18-32).

We affirm that without the power of the Gospel and the presence of the Holy Spirit, mankind is inclined to pervert God's design for marriage. All are by their fallen nature filled with unholy sexual desires (Romans 1:16-17; Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5).

We deny that any sexual perversion disqualifies a person from the grace of God which He extends to those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:1-3). We further deny that malicious reactions toward those involved in sexual sin can be consistent with the loving example and saving gospel of Jesus Christ, the Friend of sinners, (Matthew 11:19). True Christians, understanding their own sinful and perverse nature, reject self-righteous attitudes and lovingly seek to help others to receive the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ.

*Conclusion:*

God "has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 3:18). By the gracious provision of His infallible Word, we can know what kind of unions delight and displease the heart of God. The lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman delights Him. Any deviation from that marital pattern displeases Him. The responsibility of human government, then, is to promote and uphold God's pattern for marriage and reject any other marital pattern conceived by the wisdom of this world. The responsibility of Christians in the area of marriage is at least three-fold: 1) Promote and pursue God's pattern of marriage, 2) Submit to human government to the degree that it upholds God's standard for marriage, and 3) Help the non-Christian world see God's design for marriage as a glorious picture of the union between Jesus Christ and His church. May God grant grace and strength to every Christian in the fulfillment of these responsibilities. Amen.