

Barryton Church of Christ Marriage Policy

In light of the ruling of the United States Supreme Court to make same sex marriage legal in all 50 states, it seems important that the leadership of the Barryton Church of Christ clearly articulate its biblical stance concerning marriage.

As set forth in our *Statement of Faith: Who We Are, and What We Believe*, Barryton Church of Christ believes that marriage, as set forth in Scripture, is an institution ordained by God between a woman and a man, and for Christians, a relationship that also includes Himself. The Barryton Church of Christ holds to a biblical definition of marriage as derived from passages in the book of Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:22-24.

Genesis 1:26-28 ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:22-24 ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ 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."

²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

God created marriage as the basic and primary means to fulfill the calling of mankind to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and rule it. *In order* for man to do that over the whole face of the earth, he couldn't do it alone, he had to populate the earth in order to do that. It would require a complimentary partner to make such mandates possible.

Marriage is designed by God to bring about these core purposes through complementary partners (male and female). Marriage also provides fulfillment in physical, emotional, and social needs at a personal, intimate level. It is divine in its origins and therefore defined by its creator.

We can therefore conclude from scripture that all other sexual relationships would be outside of God's purpose and will; *that there is no provision* for sex outside of marriage (fornication, adultery, etc); *there is no provision* for, but *direct prohibitions against* homosexuality, incest, pedophilia or bestiality (as examples).

Man was created by God and woman created from man (by God) for the purpose of a man leaving his father and mother, that they cleave together and in that bond literally form one flesh. That "*one flesh*" intimacy is certainly manifested most clearly in the child born of them whose genetic code is the perfect combination of those two partners. God is the sovereign creator of everything that exists, living and inanimate, and it is He who assigns gender from before the time of conception. It is not a human construct to be chosen individually.

This is God's design.

The churches purpose in providing marriage ceremonies is not to grant legal status, but to seek the Lord's blessings in a sacred covenant. We will continue to function in this capacity with or without signing the legal marriage licenses of the state.

We are not naïve, there will be some who believe they have the right to "correct" the biblical view of marriage through threat, lawsuits and mandates. It is fully expected, as seen in history, that we will not always be given a safe place to practice only a biblical model of marriage/weddings.

We will only participate in marriage ceremonies involving those [bride and groom] who are members, or family of members, holding to the doctrinal stance/view as set forth in the "Statement of Faith: Who We Are, and What We Believe, Barryton Church of Christ", and attached "Core Values Held Concerning Marriage".

However, *we will not participate* in ceremonies for heterosexuals *or* homosexuals who are not seeking a marriage covenant based on the word of God and His clear directives. This we will do with love and respect, rather than from a position of superiority and hateful retaliation.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul recognizes that our spiritual lives and our sexual lives are tightly intertwined. When one gets off-center of the image of God, the other behaviors are soon to follow. Paul shows us that when we refuse to honor God as

creator, and thusly, as the director of all things in life, we will begin to pursue the things that have been forbidden us by God as our inherent rights.

Many will say that there are varying opinions about this even in Christendom. The issue for each of us to face is whether or not the teaching of the scriptures is relevant for us today.

The division today is over whether Paul was writing to a distinct culture in a distinct time without universal application. We would argue that Paul wrote under divine inspiration and was led by a firm conviction of the divine institution of ***marriage and humanity***.

We are here to present the gospel of Jesus Christ and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are not here to divide but to unite around the authority, mercy and the hope of God's reign.

We have concluded that we will uphold the clear teachings of the scriptures.

Core Values Held Concerning Marriage

- 1) We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and as such is our rule for faith and practice. We look to its pages to discover what God's design is for humanity, marriages, family life, community life, and individual life. We use interpretive methods that seek to discover the author's intended meaning and strive to not read into the text what is not present.
- 2) Marriage is a divine institution. God created marriage in Genesis and stated that a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh (Gen 2:24). Regardless of procreative ability, God set our marriage to be a relationship of husband and wife, and when Christ-followers, a relationship that includes Him. If the design of marriage were to have included a relation and sexual union of man to man or woman to woman, that design would have been included in Genesis or some other clearly worded prescription in the Bible.
- 3) Theologians identify mutuality as a core characteristic of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Mutuality allows for differences in oneness. Thus, the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son but they are all one God in Being. This mystery of the Trinity is great and marriage reflects this mystery in Christ. A Christian marriage is comprised of three people: God, a husband, and a wife. These differences mirror the mystery of the Trinity in an incomplete fashion. God is not the husband or the wife, the husband is not the wife or God, and the wife is not God or the husband but they are together one in marriage. The differences of being are essential in the mirroring of God.
- 4) Sexual purity in the Old Covenant was illustrative of faithful exclusiveness. First, virginity was an honor given to women to illustrate that God's people were to be separate from the world as a woman was separate from a man until marriage. Spiritual unfaithfulness was couched in sexual terms. Lusting after other gods, adultery, and harlotry are frequent analogies in the Old Covenant of spiritual unfaithfulness. This understanding of faithful

exclusiveness was expanded in the New Covenant when Jesus taught that a man sinned when he simply lusted after a woman (Matthew 5:27-28). This language would have been familiar to the Jews of Jesus' day to highlight the importance of spiritual faithfulness through sexual purity.

- 5) Sexual expression in the Bible is limited to sexual activity between a husband and a wife. Nowhere in the Bible is cohabitation, adultery, sex with an unmarried partner/fornication, same-sex activity, sex with children, sex with animals, or use of sexually stimulating materials like pornography endorsed. In fact, evidence in each of these categories affirms God's plan that sexual expression is to be experienced in a marriage of a man and a woman.
- 6) The term *homosexual* is not found in the original languages of the Bible. This term was coined in the 1920s by therapists who were providing psychological services to men and women who struggled with unwanted same sex attractions. No single word was universally employed to define this struggle. It has only been introduced into recent translations as a phrase, which communicates the principles of same-sex behavior. The Bible simply describes same-sex behavior rather than labels it as homosexual.

