
CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

October/November/December 2013

VOL. 23 NO. 4

A Biblical View of Marriage

By Jeff Fuller

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a ruling regarding marriage and civil unions that was quite disturbing and disheartening to those of us who hold sacred the right and privilege of marriage. The justices deviated from marriage as a sacred or biblical mandate that exists solely between one man and one woman but wrote that marriage was a right of any persons who wished to enter into a union that would allow benefits both legally and through various other avenues.

While there is much written regarding the ruling of the justices, there was already much written about the sacredness of marriage. One only needs to open the Bible, God's Holy Word, and they will read that marriage is a holy, God-honoring, Christ-glorifying act of a man and woman whom God has chosen to unite together for the purpose of populating and promoting godliness in a world corrupted by the deceiver.

In Genesis 2, we find that God caused Adam to sleep, took a rib from the first man's side and created from it a woman to be his partner in the work of maintaining the garden and to share in the service offered to God. Adam declared, "This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called 'woman,' for she was taken from man" (Genesis 2:23, HCSB).

Writing of this verse, W. A. Criswell says, "Marriage is of God. It is ordained of heaven. It is the first and the holiest institution of men. God Himself gave the first bride away. God Himself performed the first wedding ceremony. In the Garden of Eden, our heavenly Father Himself hallowed and sanctified the first home. In the wisdom of the Almighty, the first establishment is not the church, it is not of the

state, it is not of the schools; it is of the home the Lord God first speaks" (*Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors*, Broadman Press, Nashville, 1980).

From this passage of Scripture and the thoughts of Dr. Criswell, we trace the wonderful path of a biblical view of marriage, which has been trampled on, divided and dissected, and condemned and ridiculed throughout the past several years. The ruling of the Supreme Court in June, the debates regarding the Defense of Marriage Act that was signed into law in 1996 and the rights of states to determine marriage laws are superseded by the biblical mandates regarding marriage.

As for the passage above from Genesis, it was Jesus Christ who affirmed it and taught it when He was teaching regarding the issues of divorce. In Genesis 2:20, the word "helper" is used to describe Eve and means to surround, to protect, to aid or to help. Eve was created by God to come alongside Adam as his "other half," aiding him and helping him. When a man and woman are married, the biblical teaching is that they become one flesh. Such a thought is manifested in the physical union of sexual intimacy. "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6, ESV).

Moving into the Epistles, we find Paul speaking of the importance of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 and in Ephesians 5:22-23. In these passages we see a framework for the marriage relationship which is Christ-honoring. I Corinthians 7, which may be titled as "Principles of Marriage," details for us both the personal thoughts of the apostle and the

(continued on next page)

The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources.
The opinions in the *Christian Life Report* are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission.

A Biblical View of Marriage

(continued from page one)

mandate of God regarding marriage, divorce, being single and the life of widows. But in the midst of his writing to the troubled church, Paul pens, "Keeping God's commands does [matter]" (I Corinthians 7:19, HCSB). How believers operate in the institution of marriage is of utmost importance.

This is why Paul writes, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:21-23, 25, KJV). The apostle speaks of the relationship of marriage as one of submission, love, honor and fear. In comparing the marriage relationship of the husband and

wife to the church, Paul gives credence to the view of the covenant relationship spelled out in the Word of God.

Marriage is sacred, ordained of God, and is a relationship between one man and one woman. The Word of God clearly underscores that God's purpose for marriage is to reveal His oneness, His care and His love through obedience and honor. S. Michael Houdmann writes: "When a believing husband and wife institute God's principles, a biblical marriage results. A biblically based marriage is one that is in balance, with Christ as the head of the man and the wife together. The biblical concept of marriage is a oneness between two individuals that pictures the oneness of Christ with His church" (www.GotQuestions.org).

Jeff Fuller is pastor of Rockford Baptist Church and a member of the Christian Life Commission.

A Potential Marriage Statement for Churches

Recently, a task force of state missionaries formulated this resource as a suggestion for how local church documents might deal with our nation's changing legal and cultural landscape.

Bylaws

We believe that marriage is a union between one man and one woman, following biblical principles (Gen. 2:19-24, Lev. 18:22, Matt. 19:4-6, Rom. 1:18-27, Eph. 5:22-33, Heb. 13:4). We believe that God sanctions only the union in marriage of a man to a woman, including civil unions. Therefore, this church sanctions only a ceremony compatible with those standards.

Policies

1. Due to our belief in the biblical teachings about marriage, same sex couples will not be married in any facilities or on any properties owned by the church.

2. Ministers of _____ Baptist Church will not perform any same sex marriages or civil unions whether on or off church owned properties. Doing so would be grounds for termination.

This information is designed to help autonomous Baptist churches think through vital issues and formulate their own internal policies. This resource, like virtually all past and present resources from the State Board of Missions, is not binding on local congregations, which are entirely self-governing. Permission to use this is not required.



Sunday, October 13, 2013

For resources or other information, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, or (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org



Alabama Baptist Voices: Concerns About Marriage

KENNY HATCHER, pastor, First Baptist Church, Guin, and chairman of the Christian Life Commission (CLC): Those of us over the age of 50 have watched a progressive slide in morality in our nation. We have chosen to ignore the ultimate handbook for the survival of the human species and are now reaping what we have sown. Behind every cultural battle there is a spiritual battle with the lines drawn in God's Holy Word. Those who would cross those lines (in whatever area) do so at their own peril. I am thankful that the same grace of God that reached down for me is still reaching out to all who will trust Him and abide in His Word. If we have learned nothing else, surely we have realized that our choices have consequences for us as individuals and for our nation. Let us choose this day whom we will serve.

BELINDA HEPBURN, preschool director, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, and CLC member: Statistically, many children who attend or visit our churches may have parents or other family members struggling with same-sex attraction or living homosexual lifestyles. As a church, we should minister to these children by following Christ's example in Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16 in which Jesus said, "Let the children come to Me." Jesus welcomed everyone without partiality; however, He was not afraid to confront the lifestyle of their families. While we do not condone the lifestyle of their families, we need to welcome these children and minister to them the same way we do other children. These children, just like everyone else, need to know God's unconditional love and the eternal hope He provides.

DARRYL WOOD, pastor, First Baptist Church, Vincent, and CLC member: No one Christian can stop the formation of cultural sinkholes. When they appear near you, however, step forward to fill them and thus protect others from danger. Address the sinkhole of same-sex marriage with the Bible truth that God instituted marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman.

JUDY RODEN, wife of retired pastor, member of Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz, CLC member: Should our nation take this action it would be endorsing and promoting that which is unbiblical throughout history. It would be endorsing that which is totally unnatural, contrary to nature and unsustainable and impractical for all involved. It breaks the very norm for the sustaining of the

human race. It would create serious psychological as well as spiritual issues for all. It is the opening of the door to a myriad of other unnatural and unbiblical practices. It is the gateway to many unknowns. It is the setting forth for this generation and those to follow the pattern for extinction and not preservation of the human race.

JOHN KILLIAN, pastor, Maytown Baptist Church, and president, Alabama Baptist State Convention: In Matthew 19, the Lord Jesus referenced the Creation story as the foundation for a belief that marriage is an institution between one man and one woman. Noting Creation as the basis for the principle of marriage, we understand that one-man/one-woman marriage is the natural pattern from the beginning. Even some conservatives are questioning the role of government in defining marriage. Consider that a myriad of laws are founded upon a legal recognition of marriage. Thus, civil recognition of marriage is legitimate. Thus, our society must recognize only marriage which is natural; hence, our recognition is only that of one-man/one-woman marriage.

JOE BOB MIZZELL, pastor, Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion: The acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle, including same-sex marriage, is the most radical change in the cultural history of the world. The ruling of the U.S Supreme Court on same-sex marriage is an indication of the sliding morals of this country. A religious freedom battle between Christianity and homosexuality is being won by the gay forces. As a former Army chaplain, I am supportive of the North American Mission Board's decision to bar Southern Baptist chaplains from taking part in weddings, counseling sessions and couples' retreats for same-sex couples.

JOE GODFREY, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) and American Character Builders: The argument from those who support same-sex "marriage" is that some people are born with homosexual tendencies -- they are "made that way" and thus their lifestyle should be accepted by society. They are correct in their premise but wrong in their solution. The Bible teaches that we are all born as sinners with a tendency to rebel against the holy God who created us. We are each tempted in different ways, but we are all tempted to disobey God. The solution is not to give in to our temptations but to confess and repent of our sins and turn to Jesus, our Savior, as the only one who can deliver us from our temptations and sins.



Alabama Baptist Convention
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

P.O. Box 11870
Montgomery, AL 36111-0870

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Montgomery, AL
Permit No. 441

F A C T S & I S S U E S

Compiled by Keith Hinson — Associate for Public Relations & Christian Ethics
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, (334) 613-2289, khinson@alsbom.org

Stop laissez-faire wedding policies. Your church building is not a public space and your church ministers aren't justices of the peace. Make clear that you will marry, and host weddings, only for those who have accountability to the people of Christ and to the Word of God. — *"Your Church and the Same-Sex Marriage Decisions," Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, www.erc.com*

The existence of two distinct genders reveals God's design for sexuality, relationships and family. Both reflect the image of God, and both male and female are necessary for procreation and the optimal family structure for parenting children. — *"Our Position (Marriage)," Focus on the Family, www.focusonthefamily.com*

Countries in which same-sex marriage is legal in some areas: United States, Mexico, Brazil. Countries in which same-sex marriage is legal nationwide: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Uruguay. — *CNN Politics online, August 29, 2013*

Places/dates of legalization of same-sex marriage in the U.S.: Massachusetts (2003), California (2008; 2013), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), Vermont (2009), New Hampshire (2009), Washington, DC (2009), New York (2011), Washington (2012), Maine (2012), Maryland (2012), Rhode Island (2013), Delaware (2013), and Minnesota (2013). — *"Frequently Asked Questions About Same-Sex Couple Households," U.S. Census Bureau, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, www.census.gov*

In 2010, approximately 594,000 same-sex couple households lived in the United States. Nationally, about 1 percent of all coupled households were same-sex couples. [In Alabama, 0.8 percent] ... When broken out by sex of the couple, 10 percent of male-male couples had an own child in the household compared to 22 percent of female-female households. — *Ibid., www.census.gov*

While the Supreme Court and the rest of us are all focused on the human right of marriage equality, let's not forget that the fight doesn't end with same-sex marriage. We need to legalize polygamy, too. Legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice. — *"Legalize Polygamy!", by Jillian Keenan, www.Slate.com*