

The Elders' Position on Same-Sex Marriage

**Morrison Heights Baptist Church
Clinton, Mississippi**

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As shepherds of God's people, our interest in the question of the suitability of same-sex marriage is completely spiritual. While there are political, economic, and cultural voices in the wider conversation, we offer no counsel as to the strength, weakness, viability, or reliability of such perspectives. Our conviction is that the spiritual considerations are ultimate and because of gospel implications, no other concern approaches in importance.

What is the Question?

Should marriage be recognized as the covenantal union between a man and a woman or should it be broadened to allow for the same kind of covenantal union between those of the same sex?

Why is this Question so very important?

For the Christian, fidelity to God and His gospel plan are at stake.

1.) Fidelity to God's design. Marriage was created by God and instituted in the second chapter of Genesis. Thus, the institution is pre-political and pre-cultural and must not be redefined in any way. Marriage can only be between a man and a woman.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24, ESV) This verse is quoted in the New Testament by Jesus in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7 as well as by Paul in Ephesians 5:31 and 1 Corinthians 6.

2.) Fidelity to God's purpose in bearing children.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...(Genesis 1:28a, ESV)

Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. (Malachi 2:15a, ESV)

3.) Fidelity to God's call to holiness.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope

fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-16, ESV)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27, ESV)

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21, ESV)

4.) Fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:32, ESV) Marriage is certainly God's design for the earthly benefit of humanity but there is something far greater at stake: the gospel itself. Ephesians 5 makes clear that marriage is a picture of the sacrificial love of Christ for His bride, the church. Accordingly, any tampering with God's design for marriage is tantamount to confusion on the gospel. The stakes could not be higher.

Does this mean that we are anti-gay?

We believe in the necessity of the forgiveness of Christ for all persons. All persons are created in the image of God and their value is derived from their Creator. Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost and was a friend to sinners. His ambition is ours also. We do not divide persons into physical or material categories but we preach the universal sinfulness of man that necessitates the new birth. We teach and labor against sexual sin of every kind, heterosexual and homosexual, just as the Scripture teaches. We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ liberates and transforms every person into a new creation in Christ. We are a congregation of people who have struggled with every imaginable sin but by God's grace have come/are coming to be transformed by Christ.

It is our conviction that Christ died to set us free from the evil desires of the flesh, including sexual sin of every kind. **We do not claim to be perfect in this or any other area but we believe that being Christian compels us to walk humbly and justly before God and others while living in repentance of known sin.**

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor

*swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** (emphasis added) 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. "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:9-20, ESV)*

Morrison Heights has long provided a ministry called *In His Time* to those involved in sexual brokenness and enmeshed in unwanted same-sex attraction. Ours is a record of compassion and kindness toward all persons while advocating the life-transforming power of the gospel and the Spirit.

Why speak on this issue?

As elders of a local congregation of Christians, the spiritual care of the souls of our people is a direct charge from God. We must speak clearly and courageously when the cultural conversation would lead our people away from God and His Word.