

Marriage Through the Eyes of God



As residents of the State of California, this fall (2008) we will have an opportunity to vote on the definition of marriage (proposition 8). As of the writing of this document, our culture is in the midst of a struggle over the very definition of one of the most sacred institutions in the history of civilization. The State of California has recently found (in a 4-3 Supreme Court decision) that a fundamental right to same-sex marriage exists implicitly in our state constitution. This decision overturned an earlier proposition that defined marriage as being between one man and one woman.

What is the state's role in defining marriage? What does it even matter to Christians or the church if the state recognizes same-sex marriage? This document does not seek to answer all of these types of questions, but instead will focus on the Biblical perspective on marriage. We do not want our church to turn into a platform for political issues, but we feel we all need to be aware and have our antenna out for court cases or legislation dealing with issues on which the Bible clearly speaks. We feel the current marriage legislation is one of those issues.

Even for those who do not claim to embrace a Biblical worldview, there's no denying that for millennia, traditional marriage between one man and one woman has been celebrated by every culture on earth as the cornerstone of society. In all human societies, marriage is socially approved as a relationship between a man and a woman. Even ancient history illustrates the male/female marriage as a common element in diverse societies from Mesopotamia, India, etc. The history of marriage demonstrates that the non-recognition of same-sex marriages does not stem from a particular religious tradition; it is universal. Even secular and aggressively atheist regimes (like soviet Russia) have never recognized same-sex marriages. There's just no getting around it: healthy marriages between a man and a woman are honoring to God and essential to the health and stability of future generations.

Marriage is not something dreamed up by mankind. The Biblical view of marriage originated with God. Marriage was instituted by God with His ideals and purposes. It was God who saw man's loneliness and said it was not good. It was God who made Eve and gave her to Adam as his wife. Commenting upon Genesis 2:18-24, Christ said, "Haven't you read the Scriptures? They record that from the beginning God made them male and female. And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together'" (Matthew 19:4-6 NLT). God intentionally designed and created us male and female. God intended sexual intimacy to be enjoyed only within the context of the male and female relationship. Further, God intends that this relationship (marriage) be a committed, life long, covenant relationship between a man and a woman. This marriage relationship is based on mutual love and respect.

We are divinely designed to become one flesh. God meant for marriage to be a long-term pledge to bring Him glory.

There are several God-designed reasons given in the Bible for marriage.

Companionship: Genesis 2:18 NLT – "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.'" Marriage is designed for companionship. Man needed a helper and one was given to him by God.

Conceiving and raising children: Genesis 1:28 NLT – "Then God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky and all the animals that scurry along the ground.'" Obviously people do not need to be married to conceive children, nor can all married people have children, but one objective of marriage is procreation.

Personal devotion and pleasure: 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 NLT – "But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. Do not deprive each other of sexual relations unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Again, it is obvious that marriage is not necessary to have sexual relationships, but the same God who created the sexes established the rules for sexual relationships. Marriage is the God-given setting for the expression of sexual desires.

To Reflect Christ: Ephesians 5:24-26 NLT – "As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word." The marriage union of a Christian husband and wife is to be a living witness of the relationship of Christ and the church. When our children, family, and friends see our marriage and ask about our happy relationship, we should point them to Christ and the church.

God's order and system for marriage prevents sexual perversions.

1. God's order is designed to prevent homosexuality: Genesis 2:22 NLT – "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib and he brought her to the man." God made and gave a woman to man – not another man. See also Genesis 19:5-8, Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:27. These references make it clear that God's design is for a heterosexual relationship only.

Continued on back

2. God's order is designed to prevent bestiality:

Genesis 2:20 NLT – “He (Adam) gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.” God made and gave a woman to man – not an animal. Among all the animal kingdom there was not found an appropriate companion for Adam. So, the Lord made a woman, not any other kind of animal, and brought her to man. See also Exodus 22:19, Leviticus 18:23.

3. God's order is designed to prevent polygamy:

Genesis 2:22 NLT – “Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib and he brought her to the man.” God made and gave a woman to man – not women. Adam said “she” shall be called woman not “they” shall be called women. Christ said a man shall cleave to his “wife” not “wives.” In all instances the singular pronoun is used indicating that God's order is for monogamy not polygamy. See also Deuteronomy 17:1.

4. God's order is designed to prevent incest:

Genesis 2:21 NLT – “So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening.” God made the woman from Adam's side. Eve was Adam's wife – not his daughter. See also Leviticus 18:6-8, 1 Corinthians 5:1, which forbids any kind of incestuous relationship.

In Genesis 2:24 we read, “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” In this verse, **there are at least three essential components of marriage mentioned: 1) leaving, 2) joined (cleaving), and 3) united into one (being one flesh).** Let's briefly look at these three components and some spiritual implications of each.

Leaving: “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother...” Leaving pin-points the priority of the marriage relationship. Obviously this does not mean abandonment of one's parents at marriage (see 1 Timothy 5:3-8). Rather, it implies that the most basic and essential human relationship is in marriage. The relationship between husband and wife is more essential and enduring than any other relationship. Yes, a son will always be a son of their parents, but once married the son's primary relationship is with his wife. Since marriage is the most basic relationship, both the husband and the wife must guard it and not allow other relationships to interfere with it. Spouses must not allow any relationship with co-workers, friends, family, or even children to supersede, interrupt, or replace their relationship with their spouse. Just as a believer's relationship with Christ is primary, so should a husband's relationship be with his wife. If marriage is a husband's primary relationship, it will reflect Christ's love for His bride.

Joined (Cleaving): “Joined to his wife...” Joining (cleaving) shows the permanence of the marriage relationship. The word joined means to adhere, abide, or stick. To be joined to someone is an expression of dependence and permanence.

Marriage is about commitment – joining (cleaving). This is expressed in wedding vows. People pledge to love and keep each other in sickness or health, poverty or riches, until death do they part. Just as the vine and the branch need and compliment the other, so does the husband and the wife. Even so, true believers cling to Christ in all circumstances. We cleave to Him, but more importantly He keeps us.

Being One Flesh: “And the two are united into one.” Being one flesh is about the union of our relationship. On a basic level, to become one flesh refers to the physical, sexual, and emotional union that occurs between a husband and wife. According to Ephesians 5:28-29, this oneness means a desire, protection, and nurturing of one another. With marriage, neither the husband nor the wife loses their uniqueness as an individual, nor do they lose the identity of their personhood. The miracle of marriage is that two unique, separate entities choose to commit themselves exclusively to one another and through mutually submitting themselves to one another they achieve oneness, but with that achieved, neither loses their personal uniqueness or personhood. What the one does directly impacts the other. A husband is of such a nature that to love one's wife is tantamount to loving oneself. No one in their right frame of mind deliberately inflicts self-injury. No, people protect and care for their bodies. Even so, we should do the same with our spouse. What is damaging to my spouse is also damaging to me. Thus, husbands would not speak badly of her or treat her in some second class fashion, but care and share with her. Even as Christ left the riches of heaven and became flesh for mankind, He shared our nature so that we might share in His. In His body He bore the costs of sins and He makes His dwelling within the believer. A believer is one with Christ. Christ prayed, “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.” John 17:20-23 (NLT)

God is good and gracious. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift. Marriage is certainly among His good gifts. God has ordained marriage for our good and happiness. Marriage is good for all people: Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Atheists. God has established the nature and design concerning marriage. To follow His design leads to contentment. To ignore God's design leads to confusion and strife. As believers we are to be conscious that our marriages are to be a witness of the relationship between Christ and His church.

Life Bible Fellowship is a church that believes the institution of marriage is a sacred covenant designed by God. Marriage is to model the love of Christ for His people and to serve both the public and the private good as the basic building block of human civilization. Marriage is intended by God to be a thriving life-long relationship between a man and a woman, enduring through trials, sickness, financial crisis, and emotional stresses, therefore Christians are called to defend and protect God's marriage design and to minister in Christ's name to those who suffer the consequences of its brokenness.