

We live in a fallen, sinful world. It is far different from the one God created. However, that does not give us licence to live as the world lives. We are called to be different, to **not** follow the ways of the world, but to follow Jesus. *In John 17:14-17* Jesus prays for us: *"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."*

We are changed when we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour in our life. We are transformed. A new creation as it says in *2 Corinthians 5:17* - We put off the old self and receive newness of life. For sure, it is just the beginning of our walk - but He tells us not to cling to our old self and sin. As I look at the questions provided by the commission, I see that the Word of God has much to say. I can find no reference anywhere where marriage or blessing of same sex couples would be acceptable to God. It would be a deep deception and a grave injustice on our part, to lead people to believe that if we change our canons, God's blessing will be upon them. Not so my brothers and sisters. We would cause them to sin when we say that God will bless their union. He will not. It would be better to have a millstone hung around our neck. (*Luke 17:1&2*)

How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?

In the old testament, we see one man and one woman - Adam and Eve. Further along we see one man, sometimes with multiple wives and concubines. Not until God gives us the laws in Leviticus, do we see restrictions on marriage - but always between men and women, never between people of the same sex. In the new testament we see one man and one woman, again, never marriage of the same sex.

How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?

Throughout the bible, there is no provision for same sex marriage. God has ordained only marriage between people of opposite sexes. They become one flesh (*Gen. 2:24*). We are cautioned **not** to have other types of sexual relations - *Leviticus 18:22* - *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.*

Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?

Yes. Civil marriage is according to the law of the land in which people live. Christian marriage is different. It has been sanctified by God. He is the head of that relationship. Both husband and wife are in submission to Him, but He has given the headship of the marriage to the man - *Ephesians 5:23*: *For the husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church.*

The marriage canon describes “the purposes of marriage” as mutual fellowship, support, and comfort; the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children; and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love. What is the theological significance of:

- **companionship in marriage?**

It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helper fit for him. (Genesis 2:18) God understands our need for someone to be close to us, to understand us and to love us.

- **bearing and raising children?**

An added blessing - in addition to having someone to share our life with. *Genesis 1:28A - And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it ... Psalm 127:3 “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward.”* It is hard to raise children. A man and a woman bring different skills to the job. We need only to look at our society to see the detriment of not having a mother and a father raise their children together.

- **the relationship between marriage and sexuality?**

Marriage is the only vehicle in which God gives us permission to enjoy the pleasure of our sexuality. (*Genesis 2:24 & 25*). Outside of marriage it is called 'fornication' and God calls it sin.

What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?

Marriage can be performed in a civil ceremony according to the law of the land and in no way be connected to Christianity. One would not receive a blessing (asking for God's favor, care and protection) in a civil ceremony. A Christian marriage is the joining of a man and woman under the authority and blessing of God. A blessing implies that we are asking for God's blessing (not our own) and He cannot bless what He has called an abomination.

How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?

A sacrament has been ordained by Jesus Christ. Something for us to do to show that we are His followers - i.e. Baptism and Holy Communion. The prayer book defines sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace". The marriage ceremony would be the outward and visible sign; the inward and spiritual grace would be the submission of the couple to the headship of Jesus Christ as they grow in Him together. That threefold cord that we read of in Ecclesiastes 4:12.

It is unconscionable that we would think that God does not understand the difficulties that we have with our sexuality in the 21st. century. Of course He knows. Of course He understands. That is why He has put in His word for us, what is right and what is wrong. Why He has made it so very clear. *2nd. Timothy 3:16 & 17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* We cannot set aside God's word to do what we think is 'right'. We can't ignore God's word, make up our own and pretend that God will bless it. We are not called to be tolerant or politically correct (the world's way), but we are called to be loving, compassionate and full of grace (God's way). We cannot do that without the love of Jesus within us and His Word to guide us.

Jesus died to redeem us, a sinful people, To make atonement for our sin. To reconcile us to a perfect God. Our God gave us His infallible and inerrant word for all ages - even the 21st. century. The Holy Spirit will never give us guidance that will go against the written word of God. We cannot change God's word. We dare not change our canons to contradict it.

Respectfully,
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