

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE

At a time when the very nature of marriage is being debated, it is important for all voices to be heard. Proposals have been made to re-define marriage to include same-sex partners. These include parliamentary votes and a plebiscite. The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) believe that it is important for these to be debated and that it is in the public interest for this to occur. We also believe that it is necessary for us to contribute to this debate and to promote and defend marriage as being between one man and one woman as taught in the Bible.

As Christians we believe that God is real and He speaks through His Word, the Bible. We believe that He has done this to show us how we should live and that this is for our good. We believe that God's Word provides an absolute standard for belief and behaviour, and His ways work best. Because of this, when we consider these issues, we look to what the Bible says and rely upon it in coming to conclusions about how we should respond.

We acknowledge that there will be disagreement with what the Bible teaches. We acknowledge that not everyone believes the Bible to be what we believe it to be. They are entitled to their views, but in a free and open society, we believe it is important to state ours.

Because of the way we view the Bible, as God's Word to us, we hold to what the Bible teaches. We do not judge these things by our own preferences. We do not claim to be people who are better than others, but speak from the experience of those who have been caught up in God's better way.

What then is a biblical view of marriage?

We believe that the starting point is that God is the creator of all things. He conceived of, made and owns all there is (Gen 1; Psalm 24:1-2; John 1:1-3; 1Cor 10:26).

Men and women were made to relate to God and each other. Men and women were made to complement each other as, together, they represent the image of God (Gen 1:26-27; 1Cor 11:3).

Men and women were made as sexual beings (Gen 1:26-28) and all of God's creation was "very good" (Gen 1:31).

Therefore, God is the author of sexuality. He designed, gave and delights in it (Song of Solomon).

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In principle, biblical marriage is always referred to as being between one man and one woman (Gen 1:26-27, 1Cor 7:2; 1Pet 3:1-7), who between them, represent the image of God. Marriage enables children to be nurtured with the distinct and complementary influences of male and female (Gen 1:28).

Marriage is a relationship forged from promises and is meant to endure until death (Mal 2:13-16; Matt 19:8).

Marriage is the relationship in which sex is to occur and be enjoyed (Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Song of Solomon 3:11, 4:8-12, 5:1; Matt 19:4-6). Any sexual activity outside this context of commitment and fidelity between a man and a woman is described as sin (Mal 2:13-16; Rom 1:24-25; 1Cor 5:1-2, 9-13; 1Cor 6:9-10; 1Tim 1:9-11). The Bible furthermore speaks against homosexual practice in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1Cor 6:9-11; 1Tim 1:9-11; see also Gen 19:1-25 and Jude 7). All of these things are spoken of as being just as true today as when they were written (1Cor 6:12-20; Rev 21:8).

God ordained marriage as the context for the raising of children (Mal 2:15).

Within the marriage relationship, there is a distinction in roles between husband and wife. Neither is inferior to the other, but each is called to selfless love (1Cor 11:3, Eph 5:22-33) and anything less than this is sinful.

The marriage relationship, between male and female as representing the image of God, is itself an image of the relationship between Christ and His Church (Eph 5:22-33).

Government has a legitimate role in acknowledging and protecting marriage as a pre-existing institution, but has no authority to re-define it. While we acknowledge the proper authority of government, that authority is not unlimited, we are to "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's" (1Pet 2:13-15; Matt 22:21).

In summary, marriage is designed and instituted by God. It is a life-long relationship between one man and one woman who are called to selflessly love each other in their different roles. It models, in some mysterious way, Christ's relationship with His Church. It is the relationship in which sex is to be enjoyed. These things are in the very nature of God's intention and design for marriage. It cannot be redefined whether to include multiple partners or partners of the same gender.

We affirm the goodness of sexuality, expressed as God intended it within the commitment of one man and one woman in marriage. We believe the Bible speaks clearly against any other sexual expression, heterosexual as well as homosexual. The Bible similarly speaks passionately in condemning adultery (Mal 2:13-16) even using it as an illustration of idolatry, a breaking of the first and greatest commandment (Hos 2; Ezekiel 23:36-40; Matt 22:36-40).

We condemn any selective disapproval of homosexual activity that overlooks heterosexual disobedience.

Although we may disagree with their practice, we wholeheartedly condemn any hatred of or

violence toward those whose sexual practice is different.

We recognise that some men and women, including some in our churches, struggle with same-sex attraction but choose not to follow that lifestyle. The grace of God is there for them as much as it is for those who struggle with other desires, and with His help they can live as He intends them to. We affirm our commitment to lovingly support and encourage them.

Sexual sin is not the unforgivable sin (Mark 3:28-30). We all stand as sinners in need of forgiveness in many areas of our lives but through the grace of God, seen in the work of Jesus, forgiveness and renewal are offered to all through faith in Him.

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