

A White Paper
Human Sexuality and the Covenant of Marriage
Riverbend Church

Biblical principles are and have always been under attack from secular societies. Today in the United State the secular attacks are no different. However, due to various forms of technological communications, media and the arts, and government have joined in an unprecedented assault on Christian values, particularly in the area of sexual identity. The LGBTQ forces have made significant headway in the shaping of public opinion and gaining legal rulings that are diametrically opposed to Biblical principles.

While many in the evangelical community have resorted to this onslaught by reciprocating with hatred and malice, we must counter the lies of the spiritual forces against the body of Christ with truth and love. That being said, the truth can never be lost in loving sentimentality, or overrun by silence. As the Apostle Peter advocates in 1 Peter 3:14-15 we must face a post-Christian culture with courage in the face of potential suffering, be ready to communicate biblical truth with clarity, and respond with civility to contrast heated words that lead to slander.

The Lord is the divine change agent. With each redeemed saint He has worked a supernatural transformation. In our ministry we must realize that we all are sinners, and there are many sins other than sexual sins that grieve the heart of the Father. Regardless, As the Apostle Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 6:11, many of us were numbered among those who proactive grievous sins, but He walked us, sanctified us, and justified us in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. So let us minister as those who are forgiven and transformed.

Riverbend Church holds to a biblical view of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman. Consequently, we expect our members to uphold the sanctity of marriage and distinguish between a biblical marriage and a civil union. While we believe that the state or federal government may recognize the right for couples of various kinds to enjoy the legal benefits of a civil union, these are not necessarily a biblical union. In point of fact, same sex “marriages” are not biblical, and therefore are merely civil unions.

We do not deny same sex couples their state-granted rights, however, as a matter of conscience we will not participate in a ceremony that violates our biblical beliefs. We expect that the individual member will adhere to biblical principle and always affirm the truth and defend the biblical marriage as the ideal.

Riverbend Church holds to the following biblical principles of human sexuality and marriage:

1. **Men and women are created by God in the triune image of the Godhead**, and are unique in gender both genetically and functionally. As image-bearers of the Triune God, a man and a woman, like the God-head share similar qualities, but are

unique. When joined in a biblical marriage union, a man and a woman become one flesh in that their unique personalities compliment and complete one another.

Genesis 2:7 (NIV) 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:18 (NIV) 18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:22-25 (NIV) 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man. "

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Mark 10:6 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'

2. **Marriage is meant to be generative in nature**, through the bearing and rearing of children nurtured in the admonition of the Lord. God's intent in multiplication is to have ever-increasing numbers of citizens of the His Kingdom.

Genesis 1:27-28 (NIV) 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. "

Psalms 127:3-5 (NIV) 3 Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. 4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

3. **Same sex relationships should be bound by biblical principles.** Human sexuality is meant to be governed by created order and the sanctify of marriage. Created order demands that sexual relations are only between one man and one woman within the confines of marriage. Any other relationship involving sex acts is biblically prohibited. The Bible is very clear and consistent in the prohibition of homosexual relations. Unlike some other social issues, such as the treatment of women, the Bible has maintained a strict prohibition of homosexual relations. Regardless of sexual preference, abstinence is a behavioral choice. Married couples choose to be faithful when tempted, singles choose to be celibate, and homosexuals choose to be celibate.

Leviticus 18:22 (NIV) 22 "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.

Leviticus 20:13 (NIV) 13 “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

Romans 1:26-27 (NIV) 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV) 9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

4. **The Bible also does not equivocate on gender identity in that male and female are the only genetic types for humans.** Any issues of genetic identity are psychological constructs of a fallen culture. As with many issues in our time, regardless of social pressure, media influence, legal rulings, or theological error, the Church is meant to be counter-cultural when social norms are not biblical. The response, however, must be within the context of love rather than hate. For too long many believers have not been loving. The result lacks the light of truth which removes ignorance of biblical truth. The lack of love in our missional responses also lack the salt of truth that is a preservative of biblical social values. We must love even our enemies, so we must love those captive by deviant sexual behavior. In Romans 1:32, Paul warns that we must not approve of those who practice sinful behavior.
5. **Marriage is an image of the relationship between Christ and His church.** The biblical narrative of human history begins and ends within the context of marriage, beginning with an idealistic marriage that results in the fall of the human race in the earthly paradise of Eden to the redemptive marriage of the church to Christ in the heavenly paradise. The church is referred to as the Bride of Christ, and Jesus as the Bride Groom. (Eph. 5:31-32). The church must not surrender this image of the Bible, because it is so much more than a metaphor—it is reality.

Ephesians 5:31-32 (NIV) 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.
6. **Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman and God,** in contrast to a civil marriage which is a contract between two humans and the state. A covenant is based on mutual trust, and a contract is based on mutual distrust. Marriage is a life-

long covenantal relationship separated only by death. While divorce is permitted under strict limitations, it is certainly not promoted.

Mark 10:7-9 (NIV) 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

7. **Marriage is meant to be a monogamous and faithful union**, not to be marred by deviant sexual behavior, or illicit soul ties caused by infidelity.

1 Corinthians 6:16 (NIV) 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."