

IBC and Marriage

Homosexuality, Immanuel Bible Church, and the Glory of Marriage

I. Introduction

As the twentieth century drew to a close, various assaults on traditional marriage and the family had become common in the ostensibly Christian West. Early in the twenty-first century, for the first time in human history, various jurisdictions legalized same-sex marriage. First was the Netherlands in 2001. Since then ten other countries have followed suit: Belgium in 2003, Canada and Spain in 2005, South Africa in 2006, Norway and Sweden in 2009, Argentina, Iceland and Portugal in 2010, and Denmark in 2012. During this time, various regions of Mexico have legalized same-sex marriages, as have six states in the United States: Massachusetts in 2004, Connecticut in 2008, Iowa and Vermont in 2009, New Hampshire in 2010, and New York in 2011, as well as the District of Columbia in 2009. While this has been occurring, various Christian denominations and organizations, as well as individual churches, have sought to articulate a biblical response to this historically unprecedented phenomenon.

The Elders of Immanuel Bible Church have written this "Position Statement" to reaffirm what we believe about homosexuality and marriage while offering some pastoral counsel on how best to respond, both inside and outside the church. Our beliefs flow from our conviction that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, "a supernaturally given revelation without error or misstatement in the original" (Cf., 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Rev. 1:4-6) and that "Christians are called to a holy life . . . that we should walk, not after the fleshly nature, but after the Spirit" (Cf. Romans 8:12-13; 13:14; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

II. Foundational Truths Regarding Homosexuality and Ministry to Homosexuals

1. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that God approves sexual relations only within marriage and exclusively between males and females. This is unambiguously proclaimed in Scripture in three ways. First by God's ordaining marriage to be between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:23-24; Mt. 19:4-5; Eph. 5:31). Second by His condemning as sin both adultery and fornication, the latter typically referring to sexual intercourse between unmarried partners (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18; Mt. 15:19; 1 Cor. 6:19, Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4). Third by His unequivocally categorizing as sin homosexual activity by males (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10) and females (Rom. 1:26).

2. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that through one man, Adam, sin came into the world (Gen. 2:17; 3:6; Rom. 5:12) and that, as a consequence, all humanity is corrupted by sin. Sin, as an inherited condition, is universal and pervasive (1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 51:5; 143:2; Rom. 3:1-12, 19-20, 23; 7:18, 23; 8:7; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:3; 1 John 1:8, 10). Sin is also the result of a free but evil choice (Gen. 3:1-6; Is. 48:8; Rom. 1:18-32; Jas. 4:1-3; 1 John 3:4). This does not mean that all people are prone to the same sins. It often happens that one form excludes another. Whether a person is born with a predisposition to some specific, defining sin, or whether the attraction to that sin is the result of circumstances in which his or her character has developed, all specific sins, including homosexual activities, contribute to, and are symptoms of, alienation from God.

3. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that all Christians, who know their own hearts and have experienced the depth of God's grace that saved them while they were dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13) should feel compassion for those who are still the slaves of sin, irrespective of the nature of their besetting sins, because such was once their

own state (1 Cor. 6:11). Furthermore, since all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; Jas. 3:9), they possess an imparted and inherent worth and dignity. Though sin defiles and defaces that dignity, no sinner should be treated with contempt because of the nature of his or her defining sin or sins. Hence, harassment of persons with a homosexual orientation, whether motivated by hate, fear, or a feeling of moral superiority, should be repudiated.

4. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that, irrespective of the nature of those sins to which individuals are prone, the power of grace through Christ is far greater (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:2-3; 4:22; 5:8; Col. 3:5-10; Titus 3:3). Therefore, no sinner is beyond the hope offered through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that salvation involves repentance from sin (Mt. 3:2; Lk. 13:1-5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 John 1:9) and the forsaking of sin, which is one of the fruits of repentance that must continue throughout one's Christian life (Is. 55:7; John 5:14; 8:11; Rom. 6:12; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 4:22; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:11). To proclaim a gospel devoid of repentance and its fruit, the forsaking of sin, is to reduce the gospel to antinomianism and thus expedite the damnation of those enticed by such teaching. This, of course, includes the practice of homosexuality.

6. Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that, although God does not tolerate sin, He knows our frailty (Ps. 78:39; 103:14), that the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17), and assures us that "no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). The Lord Jesus Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, since He has been tempted as we are, yet without

sin; hence He is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). There is hope for all sinners, including homosexuals, because Jesus Christ offers healing in which the power of sin is broken and Christians are freed to know and experience their true identity in Christ and in the fellowship of His Church.

III. Immanuel Bible Church and Marriage

Scripture affirms and therefore we believe that marriage is the one-flesh union of one man and one woman (see II.1, above). And the ultimate purpose of marriage is to display the gospel – the gracious covenant relationship between Christ and His Church (Cf., Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31-32). Furthermore, we believe that as Christians we should strive to bring all areas of our understanding and practice into harmony with God's will as revealed in Scripture. Therefore, we reaffirm our commitment to God's ideal for marriage by upholding biblical teaching on marriage and working tirelessly by God's grace to have marriages that demonstrate this teaching in life.

Recommended Resources For further reading including detailed exegetical work and helpful statistics, please see the following resources: **Books**

[Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today](#), 3rd Edition by John Jefferson Davis

[The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics](#) by Robert Gagnon

Articles online

[The Bible and the "Gay Marriage" Question](#) by Robert Gagnon

[A Christian Psychology of and Response to Homosexuality](#) by Sam R. Williams

Pamphlets

[Homosexuality: Speaking the Truth in Love](#) by Edward T. Welch (CCEF)

Quotes in the second paragraph of Section I are taken from Immanuel Bible Church "What We Believe" statement.