

## Chapter 7 – Government and Marriage

Should government define and regulate marriage? And how should marriage be defined?

### A. The relevant biblical teaching

#### 1. God created marriage at the beginning of the human race as a lifelong union between one man and one woman

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it . . .” (Gen. 1:27-28).

Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall *leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife*, and they shall become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:23-24).

<sup>4</sup> He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:4-6).

<sup>7</sup> “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” <sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wife, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt 19:7-8).

“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14)

#### 2. God’s definition of marriage was intended to apply to all people in all societies for all time

- The basic material about marriage comes from the beginning of the human race
- Biblical teachings regarding marriage apply to all people on the earth, all cultures and societies, all periods of history until the beginning of the new heaven and new earth.
- God can bring judgment on any person or nation for violating his commands regarding marriage:
  - Sodom and Gomorrah for homosexual conduct (see Gen. 19:1-28, especially 19:5; also Jude 7)
  - Pharaoh, King of Egypt, for adultery with another man’s wife (see Gen. 12:17-20)
  - Proverbs’ frequent warnings against adultery (see Prov. 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:4-27; 23:27-28).
  - John the Baptist rebuked Herod Antipas, an Idumean for incest (Mark 6:17-18)
  - Gentiles without the law are still guilty regarding sexual conduct (see Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 5:9-10, 13; 6:9).
  - “Babylon,” is judged in Revelation for “sexual immorality” among other sins (Rev. 18:3, 9).
  - Those outside the heavenly city in Revelation 21 include “the sexually immoral” (Rev. 21:8).
- The definition of marriage established by God in the Bible should be the standard adopted by all governments.

#### 3. Marriage between a man and a woman is the most fundamental institution in any society

- Marriage is established at the beginning of creation, and before any other institution, government, law, or nations
- Every human nation on earth has recognized and protected the institution of heterosexual marriage

#### 4. Some types of relationships are not permitted: incest, adultery, and homosexuality

- a. **Incest** is prohibited in Leviticus 18:1-18; 20:11-20; Deuteronomy 22:30; and 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.
- b. **Adultery** was regularly prohibited (Exod. 20:14, etc. )
- c. **Homosexual conduct:** Biblical teaching

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination (Lev. 18:22).

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them (Lev. 20:13).

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature (Greek *para physin*); <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error (Rom. 1:26-27).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, *nor men who practice homosexuality*, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such

were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,<sup>10</sup> the sexually immoral, *men who practice homosexuality*, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

- None of these biblical passages says it is only talking about certain types of homosexual conduct.
- The expression *para physin* (“contrary to nature”) is commonly used in other Greek literature to condemn all homosexual conduct
- Conclusion: The Bible views homosexual conduct as morally wrong in all cases

#### 5. The question of polygamy in the Old Testament

- God temporarily allowed polygamy to occur without giving explicit commands against it
- In every narrative example where a man has more than one wife, the situation leads to significant difficulty  
Examples: Abraham (Sarah and Hagar), Jacob (Leah and Rachel), Elkanah (husband of Hannah and Peninnah), David, Solomon

#### 6. Divorce was allowed in some cases

- In the Law, it was assumed that divorce would occur in some cases (Deut 24:1-4; Lev 21:7, 14; Num 30:9.
- In the NT, the most common interpretation is that Jesus allowed for divorce & remarriage in the case of adultery, and Paul allowed for it in the case of desertion by an unbelieving partner:  
And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery (Matt. 19:9).

But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace (1 Cor. 7:15).

#### 7. Civil government should define and regulate marriage for all citizens

- a. Defining and regulating marriage fits the purposes of government according to the Bible
  - (1) It restrains evil – Promotes sexual faithfulness, care for children, financial responsibility, protection for women from exploitation
  - (2) It brings good to society - Promotes social stability, economic well-being, educational & economic benefits for children, the transmission of moral & cultural values, a stable social unit for interactions within society
  - (3) It brings order to society - The public will know who is married and who is not married, society can know who is responsible for the care, protection & training of children, and for the care of spouses in need
- b. Defining and regulating marriages is morally right

#### B. Arguments from reason and experience apart from the Bible

1. Governments should define and establish marriage because no other institution can do that for an entire society
2. Government should encourage and reward marriage between one man and one woman because marriage gives benefits to society that no other relationship or institution can give
  - a. Marriage provides a better environment for having babies than any other relationship or institution
  - b. Married couples raise and nurture children far better than any other human relationship or institution. Children who live with their own two married parents:
    - (1) Have significantly higher educational achievement.
    - (2) Are much more likely to enjoy a better economic standard in their adult lives & much less likely to end up in poverty.
    - (3) Have much better physical health and emotional health.
    - (4) Are far less likely to commit crimes, are less likely to engage in alcohol and substance abuse, and are more likely to live according to higher standards of integrity and moral principles.
    - (5) Are less likely to experience physical abuse and more likely to live in homes that provide support, protection, and stability.
    - (6) Are more likely to establish stable families in the next generation.
  - c. Marriage provides a guarantee of lifelong companionship and care far better than any other human relationship or institution
  - d. Marriage leads to a higher economic standard and diminished likelihood of ending up in poverty
  - e. Marriage provides women with protection against domestic violence and abandonment far better than any other human relationship or institution
  - f. Marriage encourages men to socially beneficial pursuits far better than any other human institution

- g. Men and women in general have an innate instinct that values sexual faithfulness in intimate relationships, and marriage provides encouragement of such faithfulness far better than any other relationship or institution
- h. Marriage provides greater protection against STDs than other relationships or institutions
- i. The biological design of men's and women's bodies argues that sexual intimacy is designed to be enjoyed between only one man and one woman
- j. For all of these reasons, marriage is the basic building block of any stable society, and it is essential to the continuation of a healthy, stable, society

### 3. Legal arguments

- a. Appeals courts in the United States have repeatedly held that the State has a legitimate interest in protecting marriage between one man and one woman (Indiana Court of Appeals in *Morrison v. Sadler* (2005); Arizona Court of Appeals in *Standhardt v. Superior Court* (2003))
- b. No right to polygamous marriages is found in the United States Constitution  
- *Murphy v. Ramsey*, 114 U.S.15 (1885)
- c. No right to "homosexual marriage" is found in the Constitution
- d. Restricting marriage to one man and woman does not violate anyone's fundamental rights  
Marriage has always been defined in U.S. law as between one man and one woman.  
Persons who claim to be homosexuals already have the same right to be married (to someone of opposite sex) that everyone else does.  
(but they are really asking for a redefinition of marriage)
- e. A marriage amendment to the United States Constitution would be the most effective way to establish a uniform understanding of marriage once again in the United State. It would have the following benefits:
  - (1) It would prevent the current & future U. S. Supreme Court from redefining marriage
  - (2) It would prevent individual state supreme courts from redefining marriages
  - (3) It would give a uniform definition of marriage throughout the nation

### C. Objection: "Christians should not try to impose their moral standards on the rest of society."

- 1) Attempting to persuade people that these moral standards are right and beneficial to society is not the same as "imposing" them on others.
- 2) The Bible presents these standards for marriage as the true standards for the whole society in every nation

### D. Recommendations about laws and policies

- 1. Marriage should continue to be defined by government for society as a whole.
- 2. Laws should define marriage as a union between one man and one woman.
- 3. Laws should make other restrictions on marriages that reflect historical and traditional standards
- 4. Homosexual relationships should not be granted the status of "marriage"
- 5. It is doubtful that domestic partner benefits should be given to homosexual relationships, or that they should be normalized in any way as "civil unions."
  - If the members of a society wish to do this, of course they are free to do so, but it is not a proposal that Christians should support.
  - Domestic partner benefits (if allowed) should not be limited to homosexual domestic partners, but should apply to all people living together in long-term relationships where there is mutual commitment, care and support.
  - Objections to giving such monetary benefits to same-sex relationships:
    - (1) These were originally intended to encourage the bearing and raising of children in a heterosexual marriage, which is the only kind of sexual union that can produce children.
    - (2) To give such benefits to homosexual relationships which (by themselves) cannot produce new children becomes a means by which society encourages other types of relationships which will not ordinarily produce children and will not raise them in the most beneficial way.
    - (3) Such benefits also confer a societal indication of approval on the relationships, so Christians should not support policies which approve what the Bible disapproves of.

### 6. Known homosexuals should continue to be prohibited from military service.

### 7. Private organizations such as the Boy Scouts should continue to be allowed to exclude homosexuals from employment as scoutmasters. (*Boy Scouts of America et al. v. Dale* in 2000)

### 8. Should homosexuals be granted the legal status of a protected class?

- Such ordinances give approval to a relationship contrary to the moral standards of the Bible.
- Deciding homosexuals should not be a "protected class" by law gives them the same status as everyone else
- It can quickly become illegal for Christians & others with similar moral standards to behave consistently with their beliefs, so such gay rights ordinances violate the freedom of conscience of individuals in the society.

### 9. Should homosexual conduct itself be against the law?

#### D. Additional section on the question of pornography

1. The issue: Should governments restrict the production and distribution of pornography?

2. The relevant biblical teaching

“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14).

- A prohibition against sex between unmarried persons is clear in the Law (see Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:13-21),
- Other verses that use the phrase “sexual immorality” (translating Greek *porneia*) in modern translations also show that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is sin (Matt. 15:19; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; John 8:41; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2, 9; 1 Thess. 4:3; 2 Cor. 11:2.)
- God is concerned not merely with human actions, but also with the attitudes of our hearts.  
You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's (Ex. 20:17).

“Do not desire her beauty in your heart.” (Prov. 6:25)

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28).

But she carried her whoring further. She saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion,<sup>15</sup> wearing belts on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them having the appearance of officers, a likeness of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea.<sup>16</sup> When she saw them, she *lusted* after them and *sent* messengers to them in Chaldea.<sup>17</sup> And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. And after she *was defiled* by them, she turned from them in disgust (Ezek 23:14-17).

- Conclusion: God's moral standards require that people avoid longing for sexual intercourse with someone apart from being married to that person
- It is wrong to create, distribute, acquire, and view photographs, videos, written material, or audio material, whose primary purpose is to arouse in people sexual desires contrary to God's moral standards

3. Arguments from reason and experience apart from the Bible

- Pornography attracts a person's affections and desires outside of his (or her) marriage and away from his wife (or husband).
- Evidence from sociological studies is also available showing the harmful effects of pornography on those who view it and then on those who are subsequently harmed by these people
- There are many negative ramifications of pornography on communities

4. What laws should governments make regarding pornography?

- Laws against the production, distribution, and sale of pornographic materials because it has a harmful effect on the moral standards of the society & on the people who use it and others to whom they relate in intimate ways.

5. The definition of pornography

- The courts have recognized that the 1st Amendment cannot be used to claim protection for obscene material.
- The standard in *Roth v. United States* (1957): “Whether to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as whole appeals to the prurient interest.”
- The standard in *Miller v. California* (1973): A work was not considered obscene unless it “lacks serious literary, artistic, political, and scientific value.”
- The ongoing problem with pornography in the United States is not that laws are inadequate but that prosecutors are not sufficiently willing to bring charges against those who produce and distribute pornography.

E. The importance of laws concerning marriage

- The future of our nation's children depends on how we define marriage
- The future lives of millions of men and women in society will be affected
- It is the foundational social institution in our society

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