

MARRIAGE

A Position Paper
First Bible Church of Decatur

Position Paper on Marriage

First Bible Church Constitution, Article 8, Section 7–Marriage (Approved December 6, 2015)

We believe that God has expressly and exclusively reserved the gift of sexual intimacy and intercourse for marriage. God expects the married to live in faithfulness to their spouse. God expects the unmarried to live pure and celibate lives, refraining from sexual intimacy (1 Th. 4:3; Mt. 19:12; Exodus 20:14; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:9,18; 7:2–5; Heb. 13:4; Mt. 15:18–20; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Ro. 1:26–27; Lev. 18:22; 1 Tim. 1:10; Gen. 19; cf. Jude 7).

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning, which is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union designed by God to last as long as they both shall live. All teaching, counseling, and policies of First Bible Church shall affirm and abide by this definition of marriage (Gen. 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6; 1 Timothy 3:2; Heb. 13:4).

Rationale for the Revision

- 1. Summary:** On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) denied the rights of the states to define marriage the way the founders of the United States and the framers of the Constitution of the United States and SCOTUS itself, had defined marriage from our nation’s founding. By ruling to define marriage to include same sex unions, SCOTUS serves to legitimize what the Bible rules to be sin. We expect in the near future that churches that remain faithful to the Scripture will be under immense legal pressure to compromise Biblical standards.

While First Bible Church has always defined marriage and sexuality in this way, the Elders commend this amendment in order to declare our faithfulness to Scripture, bear witness to our culture, and limit our exposure in the future legal battles that are certain to come.

2. Further Explanation of the Amendment, Article 8, Section 7:

- 2.1 Marriage is designed by God for at least three purposes: 1) to provide the most stable environment for the procreating, nurturing, socializing, civilizing, and disciplining of children (Gen. 1:22; Ex. 20:12; Dt. 6:4–7; Mal. 2:15; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:24); 2) to create a partnership between a man and a woman for their mutual good, spiritual growth, sexual purity, and physical care (Gen. 2:18; Ps. 54:4; 1 Cor. 7:1–5; Psalm 5:19); 3) to illustrate, to both the church and the world, God’s unfailing love for and impeccable faithfulness to his people (Eph. 5:25; Rev. 19:7).

- 2.2 We believe that God has expressly and exclusively reserved sexual intimacy and intercourse for heterosexual marriage (Exodus 20:14; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:9,18; 7:2–5; Heb. 13:4) God expects the married to live in faithfulness to their spouse and the unmarried should live pure and celibate lives, refraining from sexual intimacy (1 Th. 4:3; Mt. 19:12). Sexual immorality in any form (including adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Mt. 15:18–20; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Romans 1:26–27; Lev. 18:22; 1 Tim. 1:10; Gen. 19; cf. Jude 7).
- 2.3 We believe that God creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26–27). Rejection of one’s biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
- 2.4 We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking his mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19–21; Rom 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 6:9–11).
- 2.5 We believe that every person, regardless of their sexual orientation, past sexual sins, or current views on marriage, even if they disagree with ours, must be afforded love, compassion, kindness, dignity, and respect (Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:31; 1 Peter 3:15; John 8:11; Titus 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24).

3. This amendment accomplishes seven objectives.

- 3.1 It directly addresses *Obergefell vs. Hodges* (June 26, 2015).
- 3.2 It “flies our colors” in the midst of a massive treason in the church in America.
- 3.3 It confesses that we are a people submitted to the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:1–4).
- 3.4 It clarifies that we are in solidarity with historic, apostolic Christianity.
- a. “Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.” (Westminster Confession, 1646).
 - b. “Therefore He also wishes us to honor it (marriage), and to maintain and conduct it as a divine and blessed estate; because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others, and therefore created man and woman separately (as is evident), not for lewdness, but that they should [legitimately] live together, be fruitful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the honor of God” (Luther’s Larger Catechism, 1529).

- c. “Dearly beloved friends, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of his congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in Paradise...” (Church of England, Book of Common Prayer, 1552).
 - d. “Marriage is to be between one man and one woman; neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time” (London Baptist Confession, 1689).
- 3.5. It strengthens our legal position to claim the religious liberties that are endowed to us by God and recognized in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.
- 3.6. It forms the basis upon which to craft church policies that reflect a Biblical worldview (i.e., wedding policies, facilities use policies, etc.).
- 3.7. It makes it more difficult for future generations of church leaders at First Bible Church to abdicate the authority of Scripture.