

CLARIFYING STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE, HUMAN SEXUALITY, AND GENDER

Briercrest Christian Academy, College & Seminary

Preface: This statement defines and explains Briercrest's doctrinal position on the nature and sanctity of monogamous, heterosexual, covenant marriage. We seek to model the disposition of Jesus as he came "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). We pose this humbly, yet with conviction, knowing that we have all sinned but aspire to the purity and holiness to which Jesus and the Scriptures call us. As an evangelical organization, we believe that the gospel is preeminent in our work and that Jesus came to save sinners; sexual sin being no less forgivable. We repent of sin, receive forgiveness, strive towards holiness, and are reconciled in the church.

As educators, we know that all our students may not have arrived at fully formed convictions regarding the matters addressed here and will need to study further. Nonetheless, this represents Briercrest's position on these contemporary topics. This clarifying statement does not intend to be exhaustive, nor cover other topics that may emerge in the future.

A. The Biblical Definition of Marriage

As Christians, we believe that God is the originator and designer of marriage, that He has communicated His design through the Bible, and that His design is binding on how we define and practice marriage.

Therefore, notwithstanding the broader sense in which marriage may be defined, we adopt the following definition of marriage for the belief, doctrine, and religious practice of the Briercrest College & Seminary ("Briercrest"):

The term "marriage" is reserved for the formalized covenant relationship between one man and one woman who commit themselves through legal declaration to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence. Divorce is not part of God's design for marriage; however, the Scriptures do acknowledge that certain conditions sadly can lead to divorce. While divorce is not to be taken lightly, forgiveness, healing, and restoration are available for those who journey through divorce.

Biblical Marriage

1. Based on Scripture, we affirm:

- Marriage is of divine design and origin.
- Marriage is designed to take place between one man and one woman (heterosexual and monogamous).

- Marriage is designed to be permanent and enduring until the death of one or both spouses.
- Marriage is spiritually and symbolically sealed through sexual union.
- Marriage is a covenant (promise) before God and in the presence of the community.
- Marriage is a symbol of God's covenant relationship with his people.
- See Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:24,25; Malachi 2:14; Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:2-4; Ephesians 5:21-33.

B. Human Sexuality and the Bible

The heterosexual nature of marriage is revealed in Scripture in two ways. First, in the creation narrative (Genesis 1:28) God commands the man and woman to produce offspring. In Genesis 2:23-25 God mandates marriage and He intends sexual relations to occur in the context of this marital relationship.

While the Old Testament condemns same-sex intimate relations (Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), as Christians, we affirm that Jesus Christ "fulfills" (rather than abolishes) the Old Testament "Law and Prophets" (Matthew 5:17-20). Acknowledging the continuity with the Old Testament, we align ourselves with a variety of New Testament texts. In Romans 1:26-27 the apostle Paul describes same-sex relations of both men and women as examples of rebellion against the Creator and the created order (Jude 7). In 1 Corinthians 6:9, he describes same-sex relations as a sign of exclusion from God's Kingdom. Finally, in 1 Timothy 1:10, he includes such activity in a list of violations of God's basic moral law. In consideration of these biblical texts, the historical church's position is that same-sex relations are not consistent with God's design for human marriage and sexuality.

C. Sex and Gender in the Bible

We believe that the witness of Scripture calls us to accept our biological identity as given by God (sex assigned at birth). The Bible affirms that our essential identity is to be found in our relationship with God, not in our biological sex, gender identity, or our own sexual understanding.

The creation account, in fact, emphasizes that God created humankind in the "male and female" binary condition. Various biblical texts speak negatively of any attempt to portray oneself as the opposite sex (Deuteronomy 22:5). In the Romans 1 text noted above, Paul argues that the right response to God's general revelation as Creator includes the grateful acceptance of His created order for male and female. Nonetheless, our essential worth is not found in our sex or sexuality but in the fact that we were created in the image of God, made for relationship with Him, and merit salvation by the death of His Son, Jesus.

For more detail on our position see the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) "Statement on Religious Freedom and Human Sexuality" <https://www.abhe.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ABHE-Tenets-Human-Sexuality.pdf> (see page 2).