

Church Policy On Biblical Marriage

(Adapted from Authoring attorney Tim Smith www.calinjurylaw.com)

The Bible is God's instruction manual for followers of Jesus Christ, as well as leaders in His church. Our church, related policies and personal conduct must be consistent with the authority of Scripture.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (ESV) 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Church's policies regarding moral conduct and same sex marriage are based clearly on the Biblical definition of marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman. Obedience to the Word of God in the areas of sexual behavior promotes stable and productive family life. All sexual relationships outside of marriage are clearly condemned in the Bible. (Leviticus 18:22, 26:15-56, Romans 1:24-29 and I Corinthians 5:9-13, 6:9-12, 15-20) The Bible tells us that homosexuality is sin. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God because homosexuality and everything that accompanied that lifestyle had so morally polluted the culture that God could not find more than four people in the community who were not completely depraved by the lifestyle. (See Genesis 18 and 19.)

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 declares that people in the church were to come out of sin to include homosexuality and other sexual sins. Understanding that they set free, washed, sanctified (set apart) and cleansed by Jesus Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit they were no longer practice sin.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 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, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (ESV) 1 Timothy 1:8-10

As a church that follows the Lord Jesus Christ, we want to make sure that those within the church are doing everything they can to follow the precepts of the Word of God. We cannot compromise with what the world outside the church says is acceptable. Since the inception of the church, followers of Jesus Christ have stood for what is true and right in the eyes of God, not in the eyes of the world. The governing authorities in Jerusalem commanded Peter and John to stop preaching about Jesus Christ. Their response was to obey God rather than man. (Acts 4:19-20) This is still true in many nations where the church is persecuted for not conforming to the world.

The Judeo-Christian concept of marriage dates to the origins human life on this earth. The Book of Genesis tells us that God's creation was "very good" after Eve was created to make Adam complete.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 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." (ESV) Genesis 2:18, 21-23

The Biblical covenant of marriage preceded any governmental laws regulating marriage. The Biblical concept is that marriage is an emotional, physical, and spiritual union between one man and one woman.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (ESV) Genesis 2:24-25

The term "one flesh" signifies that just as our bodies are one whole and cannot be divided into pieces and still be a whole, so God intended it to be with the marriage relationship. There are no longer two entities, but now there is one entity - a married couple husband and wife.

The marriage relationship is a model and reflection of our relationship with God. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loves the church. (Ephesians 5:25) Wives are called to respect their husbands as the head of the family, just as we are to respect Christ as head of the church. (Ephesians 5:22-24) After beautifully describing the selfless, loving relationship that should exist between the husband and wife in marriage, Paul states, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it (marriage) refers to Christ and the church."

Thus, the marriage relationship between a man and woman is one of the examples to the world of the relationship that is to exist between Christ and the church. To the extent that the Biblical establishment of marriage is corrupted, the example of the relationship between Christ and the church is damaged.

In Mark 10:2-9, Jesus clearly states that God's view of marriage is the holy union of a man and woman. Clearly, God's plan was that marriage involved a man and a woman. Therefore, it is the policy of _____ Church marriage is to be a monogamous, heterosexual covenant entered into by a man and woman with God. No other relationships can be deemed a marriage in God's sight and this church will not recognize, participate in, or support any other concept of marriage. Homosexual marriage is unbiblical and necessarily involves approving ongoing conduct that the Bible clearly describes as sin.

For these reasons, and given the place of honor and holiness that marriage is given in the Bible, _____ Church adopts the following policies:

Pastors

Only Pastors employed by or licensed by _____ Church shall conduct wedding ceremonies on the _____ Church premises.

Pastors who are not employed or licensed by _____ Church may perform a wedding at _____ Church only after agreeing to follow the marriage policies of _____ Church, including this document, and provided that the pastor receives the approval of the senior/lead pastor or his designee.

Marriages entered into at _____ Church shall only be between a man and a woman. Pastors performing marriages at _____ Church may only perform marriages between a man and a woman.

A Pastor employed by _____ Church who performs or officiates over a same sex wedding ceremony shall be promptly terminated consistent with the _____ Church Bylaws.

Wedding Applicants

All persons desiring to be married at _____ Church or by _____ Church Pastoral Staff shall be required to complete a course of pre-marital counseling with an _____ Church Pastor or qualified counselor authorized by _____ Church. Pre-marital counseling may be performed by another qualified pastor if such pre-marital counseling is consistent with and at least as rigorous as the pre-marital counseling provided by _____ Church. The Pastor conducting the pre-marital counseling has authority to determine that in his judgment the couple is not ready for or should not be married at _____ Church or by _____ Church Pastors. In that instance, unless the Pastor's decision is overridden by the Senior/Lead Pastor, _____ Church will advise the couple that _____ Church has declined to allow the marriage to be held at _____ Church or to be performed by _____ Church Pastors.

_____ Church Elders and Pastors reserve the right to decline the services of any pastor or the use of _____ Church property or facilities to perform any wedding ceremony that it is inconsistent with the Biblical standards for marriage and with this marriage policy.

This policy was approved by the Elders of _____ Church on this ___ day of August, 2008.

The Elders and Pastors of _____ Church.