



West Side Church Position on Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage

INTRODUCTION:

The great mystery and the phenomenal beauty of God's creation of man in His image: male and female, and His gift of marriage are the basis for the greatest human expressions of love in marriage and the family. Gender and sex are foundational to all we are and know as human beings. Indeed it is hard to find anything more powerful or pervasive in every area of life: home, relationships, entertainment, music, politics, and culture. Sin has corrupted the image and twisted gender and sexuality leaving us with the Battle of the Sexes, Gender Wars, prostitution, pornography, abuse, divorce and all manner of sin, sorrow and the destruction of these God-given gifts and ideals.

The most recent sin struggle, after the "free love" movement of the 1960's, legalization of abortion in the '70's, escalating divorce and cohabitation in the '80's and '90's, has been the shift from rejection of homosexuality, to tolerance, to acceptance of it as a viable lifestyle, to the active and aggressive promotion of the homosexual lifestyle and agenda. This has led to a revolution in our culture in our basic definitions, behavior, and laws (including the passage of same-sex marriage laws). This calls for a clear and concise statement of position on these issues for West Side Church to inform and encourage an appropriate and biblical response. At West Side we seek to submit to the authority of Scripture to govern all our statements and positions.

I. GOD'S WORD SPEAKS:

A. ON GENDER:

Genesis 1:27-28 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the round.'" (NIV)

- Genesis is God's revelation of creation beginnings. The creation of man in God's image is found in three things:

1. The Distinct Creation: God's breath, His forming the man and building the woman, with an essence, intellect, will, emotional, moral, and relational nature corresponding to God.
2. The Dominion Work: The purpose given to humankind in life to engage the creation and rule over it as a steward and servant of God.
3. The Marriage Covenant: The unique "male & female" image and bond of partnership, oneness, and perfect harmony between husband and wife.

- Gender observations:

1. "Male and female" is only mentioned of humankind in creation, even though it is found elsewhere in

the animal and plant world. This signals its importance to God to the image He created in us.

2. There is the indication of complete equality.
3. There is the full sharing of that full spectrum of image characteristics, the blessing God gives, and the assignment of work to rule the creation.
4. Gender is NOT optional. It is not based on your environment. It is not a result of your culture or conditioning. Your gender is what you are; one or the other, and you are not alone but connected to others or to an-other.
5. Gender or sex is not an individual's choice, a right, a recreation, a marketing strategy, a dress code, something you can add on or change, a thing you DO or DON'T DO according to your personal preferences.
6. Everything large and small, every moment of every day is influenced by your gender: every interaction, brain patterns, loves, passions and relationships, decisions, career, emotions, voting, metabolism, inner motives, buying habits, family & parenting, etc.

- The beauty of creation in the Garden of Eden, and the corresponding disaster of sin in the Fall are evident in each of the areas.

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| 1. Distinct Creation: | Right with God |
| After the fall | At war with God – no fellowship |
| 2. Dominion Work: | Right with creation |
| After the fall | At war with creation – hard labor |
| 3. Marriage Covenant: | Right with each other |
| After the fall | At war with each other – gender wars |

- The image of God in each area is damaged and distorted but not completely lost after the Fall.

“God created man, male & female in His image, establishing gender from the beginning.”

B. ON MARRIAGE:

Genesis 2:18, 24-25 “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.’”

- This creation and call to “oneness” is a foundational principle repeated later by the prophets (Mal. 2:15), Jesus (Matt. 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-9), and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 6:16, Eph. 5:31) as God's standard for gender and marriage for all human history.

- The “helper suitable” term is a unique combination of words in the Bible, used only here. It means: perfect counterpart, an equal partner: coining the new term “counterpartners.” The woman is NOT made in the image of the man. She was created from man to show they are very literally one in the image of God.

- In these verses is God's ideal for His human creation in His image and the establishment of marriage

for the family:

1. God created the need for companionship and satisfied it: He said He was not done with man alone. And He brought the animals to be named by the man to surface that need in him.
2. God ordained the marriage institution: Before government, social structures, school, or the church, God created marriage and the family institution. Marriage belongs to God who created it, so He defines it.
3. It is heterosexual: male and female.
4. It is exclusive: one mate alone.
5. It is permanent: for life.
6. It is exemplary: it is given here to be the set pattern for all others to come.
7. It is a new unit: "Leave and cleave (be united)" indicates the ideal family future, the "flesh-line" connection between husband and wife will be stronger than the "blood-line" connection with the family of origin.
8. It is oneness: inseparable in everything; on the same page in every area of life: being ONE in expectations, spiritual beliefs, communication, conflict resolution, finances, leisure, parenting, family and body.
9. It is intimate: here is God's gift of sex for the expression of love and fun.
10. It is fruitful: here is God's gift of sex for procreation, the multiplying of the race.
11. It is perfect harmony: no shame, complete purity, transparency, and innocence.

- Sex is what you ARE: soul and cell. It is etched / stamped / imbedded on every fiber of your being. You can no more escape sex than escape humanity. It's part of the image of God in you. And the Lord established the perfect covenant for that image in this first marriage.

"God created man, male & female in His image and established the marriage covenant ideal."

- The following is a Summary from West Side's approved "Marriage & Sexual Morality Statement":

"We believe that God instituted marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman before God. God designed the marriage relationship to be a lifelong partnership. In this partnership, He desires to bring blessing and growth in the physical and the spiritual lives of both husband and wife."

C. ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE:

- The Old Testament Law:

- *Leviticus 18:22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."*
- *Leviticus 20:13 "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads."*

- The Old Testament Stories and God's judgment:

- Genesis 19:4-7 "Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom--

both young and old--surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing."

- See also Judges 19:22-23.

- The New Testament:

- *Romans 1:26* "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."
- *1 Corinthians 6:9* "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."
- *Jude 1:7* "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire."
- See also *1 Timothy 1:9-10*.

- There is no way to honestly interpret the Bible any other way than to understand homosexual practices as a perversion of God's intended created, natural order without abandoning the Bible or the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. When mentioned, homosexuality is always included as an example of God's displeasure with sin. There is never a positive mention of homosexuality as an alternative.

- There is never a mention of a homosexual marriage or homosexual marriage alternative in the Bible.

- Observations on the origin of homosexuality in light of Scripture:

1. We live in a fallen world and because of original sin there will be desires, inclinations, and temptations contrary to God's ideal in every area of life, including sexuality. (Romans 3:9-12)
2. Homosexuality has not been scientifically proven to be of genetic origin. And there are many other clinically documented reasons for homosexual behavior choices such as confusion of role models, serious family dysfunction, early sexual abuse, influence of older homosexuals during adolescence, conscious choice, and experimentation.
3. There is evidence that in some instances there are physiological characteristics that will predispose someone to a specific behavior. A good example is alcoholism. This might be true in some cases with sexual inclinations. But whatever contribution genetics might make to homosexuality, it is not to homosexuality directly but to some other trait that makes the homosexual option more attractive to some more than others.
4. Desires that may appear to be or feel innate (1) are not necessarily God-given, (2) must have biblical boundaries, (3) are no justification for indulging homosexual sin any more than lying, stealing, hatred, alcoholic addiction, or any sexual sin.

"Homosexuality and homosexual marriage defies God's designed pattern, rebels against His authority, and forfeits His blessing."

- As we have also stated in our “Marriage & Sexual Morality Statement”: Given this clear standard of God’s Word,

“all other attempts at marriage unions are not blessed by God, (sex outside marriage, homo-sexuality, polygamy, etc.)”

- The same is true for any alternative definition of marriage.

II. THE CURRENT SITUATION:

- There are immediate challenges to the gender and marriage ideal; questions about exceptions and problems. “But hasn’t sin destroyed the image and the ideal?” “Though all come into the world created male & female, none are created married. What about all of the exceptions that have come since the Garden that affect us all?”

- The account of God’s creation of the image and ideal covenant marriage does not take into account:

- singleness
- parental abuse
- homosexuality: tendencies, recruitment, acceptance
- widowhood
- child abuse
- divorce
- spousal abuse
- absentee parents
- long term illness
- abandonment
- foster home needs
- infertility
- mental illness
- incarceration
- birth defects
- addictions
- STDS, HIV – AIDS
- pornography
- separation due to war and military service
- 2nd 3rd 4th marriages
- blended families
- gangs as surrogate family

- None of these and dozens if not hundreds more gender and family situations (some brought on by sin and some by living in a sinful world) are covered in the perfect ideal marriage in Genesis 2. So...

How do we reconcile the image ideal with reality? What’s our response to this dilemma?

“Just as the genesis of gender affects everything, so also response to the destruction of the image & ideal affects everything.”

III. THE OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE TO GOD’S GENDER AND MARRIAGE IDEALS BROKEN BY SIN:

A. LISTING OF THE OPTIONS:

OPTION #1: REJECTION OF THE IMAGE AND THE IDEAL.

- Having rejected the sovereign Almighty God of Genesis 1-2, and salvation in His Son Jesus, the sinful world soon rejects His ideal for marriage and the family.

- At one time, all of the following were bundled up into a committed marriage. Every one of these is now easily attained, accepted, or even expected outside of marriage; no ceremony or signed certificate necessary.

- intimate companionship > now in dating relationships
- sexual pleasure > now everywhere
- Procreation > now without marriage/or even a father
- Parenthood > now with no opposite sex partner needed
- life-partner commitment > now for a few years
- soul-mates > now room-mates
- Faith > now irrelevant – interfaith marriage

- All that is left of marriage is a kind of self-fulfillment and temporary commitment, devoid of biblical truth.

- Once you are removed from the God-ordained ideal, eventually anything goes! Marriage with no boundaries or definition soon has no meaning. When there is no objective or set standard, then anything is permitted according to the whims of people and their lawmakers, without God. Soon this will lead down a “slippery slope” or “off a cliff” and will deteriorate further to include serial and open marriage (encouraging multiple sex partners in marriage). Then further: bigamy, polygamy, group marriage, marrying at any age, marrying your pet! This is the way of the world!

“The way of a God-less world is to reject the image and the ideal.”

OPTION #2: RESISTANCE TO THE DESTROYED IMAGE & IDEAL.

- Most people still react strongly against the deterioration and perversion. In fact, there is revulsion to what seems unnatural because it is unnatural.

- This is something almost never said in the debate over pornography, homosexuality, or any other form of sexual behavior that deviates from God’s image and ideal. This is what everyone knows, but is afraid to say.

- These challenges of God’s created order of gender, these perversions and deviations from male & female in marriage are at their very core repulsive to us. They produce a reaction that is instinctive and visceral.

- Opposition to these things is not usually or most often because of hate, a phobia, restrictive upbringing, prudish archaic tradition, or intolerance. The foundational reaction against these things is because they violate, defy, twist and are wrong at the level of soul and cell.

- Sadly, there are those (including Christians) who follow-up this reaction within them with hatred, speaking the truth without love, and violent action. All of which is sin. There must remain respect for the dignity of man created by God in every single person. This calls for grace, patience, and compassion for those who have rejected God and His ideal.

But at the core, deviations from God’s ideal cause a deep disgust that people cannot deny, though the world tries!

“A first common reaction to the destroyed image and ideal is to simply react strongly against the deterioration and perversion.”

OPTION #3: RETREAT FROM THE IMAGE & IDEAL IN CONFUSION AND FEAR:

- It is easy to be confused and intimidated into silence about gender issues if you get your information and cues from the world and the media without God and His Word. As a result many back away in confusion and fear of offending.

“Retreat from the image and ideal can lead to tacit approval of the world’s new definitions.”

- None of the above is acceptable for the Christian and church that is true to God’s revealed Word.

OPTION #4: REDEMPTION OF THE IMAGE AND RENEWAL OF THE IDEAL BY JESUS.

- The great hope for sinful mankind is that the Lord redeems the image and renews the ideal. The Lord forgives our sin and heals our brokenness. He brings:
- Wholeness (shalom-peace) restoration of a right relationship again with God, creation, others and self.
- Holiness. Becoming like God’s Son, by the power of God’s Spirit.

- All of us have to bring to God the challenge of living a fulfilled life in the face of unfulfilled desires and dreams.

- We will not all marry.
- None of us will stay married, all will at some point die or be widowed.
- We will not all multiply; have children.
- We will not all come from unbroken homes.
- We will all struggle with our sexual tendencies of every kind.

- But the Gospel tells us in each situation Jesus redeems gender and applies the ideal for wholeness and holiness.

- This applies to singleness, infertility, early death, a broken home, a second marriage, fidelity, breaking an addiction, and homosexual tendencies and temptations.

- Just because we have tendencies and attractions doesn’t make them right. We need to surrender these to the Lord and invite Him to transform us.

- Jesus exemplified the perfect, delicate balance of speaking the truth in love in these matters when He was brought a woman caught in adultery. He said "neither do I condemn you...Go now and sin no more." (John 8)

- This can also be seen in His interaction with the Samaritan woman. He boldly, but calmly pointed out her sexual sin but called her to salvation in the Messiah. (John 4)

“Jesus redeems the image and renews the ideal.”

B. THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSES FOR THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CHURCH.

- Believers are to live Christ-like and to hold forth Christ and His work in partnership with the church.

- The church must be the place where all can struggle well together to apply Jesus’ healing and hope to our unique situations. Here is a safe family of increasingly healthy male & female relationships, in our singleness, our marriages, families, and church family.

- Homosexuality is no worse than other sexual sins, but it is a graphic illustration of exchanging God's created natural order for the unnatural every time it is talked about in the Bible.
- As Christians we are not only champions of the biblical standard, but we must be the announcers of the Gospel of redeeming love. In Jesus we can find wholeness and holiness again: the image of God and His ideal for relationships.
- To this end we must:

1.Uphold God's image and ideal. (Genesis 2:24-25)

2.Share the Gospel as the only answer. The love of Christ in redeeming us and making us a new creation, renewing His image in us, is how the ideal for gender applies to all of us. (Colossians 3:5-11)

3.Speak with conviction based on the truth and authority of God's Word. The Word of God is the standard. God invented marriage and the family. They are His gifts. We are not free to remake them according to our own preferences. God's revelation must be taught and lived with all of our energies. (Revelation 22:18-19)

4.Speak carefully, like Jesus did. If the Lord would balance compassion and forgiveness ("neither do I condemn"), with the truth of standing against sin ("go and sin no more"), then how much more should we speak the truth with love carefully? (John 8:1-11)

5.Speak with compassion based on God's love. This is about people not politics. People who are ensnared or tormented by any kind of sin, people who are blinded by the enemy of our souls, people who are lost and in need of a savior, need to have the truth. To withhold it would be cruel. But to convey that truth with anything but the compassion and love of God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, is to deny the very Gospel we rely on for our own salvation. (Galatians 6:1, 2 Peter 3:9)

6.Speak from the context of our own brokenness. Compared to God, we are all unholy. We are all sexual sinners. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God, in need of His grace and mercy. We must speak with great humility out of that condition. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Romans 3:23)

7.Be careful to live God's standard and love. Our role as believers and as a church is not simply to declare adherence to the ideal. We must look to our own homes and lives. Christians have not always lived out the image and ideal. Statistics of tragedy and sorrow are about the same for believers and unbelievers in America.

It is hypocritical to oppose homosexuality when engaged in things such as pornography, easy divorce, or infidelity in heterosexual relationships. We must do what is needed to repent, strengthen our own marriages and families by God's grace and help, before we try to change the world. (Ephesians 5:3-4)

"Christians must speak the truth in love upholding God's image and ideal and announcing the Gospel of God's redeeming love in Christ for wholeness and holiness with compassion, humility, and respect."

"The church must be the place where all of us can struggle well together to apply Jesus' healing and hope to our unique situations."

IV. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES:

- This issue is not simply a matter of gay rights. This is not the same thing as the racial civil rights issues of the 60's and today. This is a matter of religious freedom, the definition of marriage, the social fabric of our culture, the Bible, ultimately the eternal souls of men and women, and the glory of God!

- We affirm the following conclusions from the above text:

- ***“God created man, male & female in His image, establishing gender from the beginning.”***
- ***“God created man, male & female in His image and established the marriage covenant ideal.”***
- ***“Homosexuality and homosexual marriage defies God’s designed pattern, rebels against His authority, and forfeits His blessing.”***
- ***“Just as the genesis of gender affects everything, so also response to the destruction of the image & ideal affects everything.”***
- ***“The way of a God-less world is to reject the image and the ideal.”***
- ***“A first common reaction to the destroyed image and ideal is to simply react strongly against the deterioration and perversion.”***
- ***“Retreat from the image and ideal can lead to tacit approval of the world’s new definitions.”***
- ***“Jesus redeems the image and renews the ideal.”***
- ***“Christians must speak the truth in love upholding God’s image and ideal and announcing the Gospel of God’s redeeming love in Christ for wholeness and holiness with compassion, humility, and respect.”***
- ***“The church must be the place where all of us can struggle well together to apply Jesus’ healing and hope to our unique situations.”***

- In light of these conclusions:

- West Side welcomes all in our midst regardless of sin to seek the hope, and the power of redemption and transformation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, working out that image and ideal in our lives and relationships.
- West Side will seek to teach and live out the appropriate responses for the Christian and the Church given in this document. We must not act as if homosexuality is the only serious sin, and we must not act as if homosexuality is not a serious sexual sin.
- West Side will not support or encourage a change to the biblical definition of marriage.
- West Side Church is in agreement with The Yakima Valley Marriage Covenant which defines marriage between a man and a woman. We will not perform a wedding for a homosexual couple.
- West Side will not accept as a member anyone who is unwilling to repent of their sexual sin.
- West Side has policies that restrict the hiring of homosexuals. Our policies ask that our volunteers recognize what the Bible teaches in regards to family and lifestyle choices. Participants in the following lifestyles are asked not to apply, serve or lead: living with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage, participation in a homosexual relationship, pursuing an affair outside of marriage.

**GOD CREATED MAN, MALE & FEMALE, IN HIS IMAGE,
AND ESTABLISHED THE MARRIAGE COVENANT IDEAL.
JESUS REDEEMS THE IMAGE AND RENEWS THE IDEAL.**

- In glory, Jesus will complete in us His new creation, His image and His ideal. For now, the power of redemption and transformation of the Gospel means He is working on that image and ideal in our lives and there is hope for all our relationships today.

Approved by the Elder Council 04-14-12