



# Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Singleness

## Elder Position Paper

Sexual confusion runs rampant in our culture, but we thankfully and joyfully affirm the good gifts that God has given in sexuality, marriage, and Gospel-centered celibacy. We look to Scripture as the sufficient and authoritative revelation of God when considering His design as Creator. This is precisely how Jesus discusses marriage when Pharisees tested Him about divorce: “Have you not read that He Who created them from the beginning made them male and female...” (Matt 19:4)?<sup>1</sup> We see here that human beings are two sexes: male and female. From the beginning, only these two biological sexes exist by God’s perfect design (Gen 1:27), and nowhere in Scripture is a category of psychological gender that differs from biological sex ever hinted at or taught. When ministering to a person who identifies as transgender, we believe that the biblical way forward includes repentance, faith in Christ, biblical counseling, and striving with His help through the normal means of grace (Scripture, prayer, corporate worship, the sacraments, fellowship, etc.) to live as the man or woman He sovereignly appointed that person to be from conception.

At Creation, God gave marriage and the family as the first human institution (Gen 1:27-28, 2:18-25), followed later by government (Gen 9:5-6; Rom 13:1-7), Israel as the covenant people of God (Gen 12:1-3, 15:1-21) and the Church (Matt 16:18; Acts 2). Marriage is a public covenant between one man and one woman for life, sealed with a sexual relationship (Gen 2:24-25; Matt 19:3-9; Mal 2:14; Rom 7:2).<sup>2</sup> Marriage’s ultimate purpose – revealed in the New Testament – is that in the union and relationship of husband and wife, the union and relationship of Jesus Christ and His Church would be displayed (Eph 5:22-33). This

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are from the Holy Bible: English Standard Version (ESV) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> When ministering to a person who is same-sex attracted, we believe that the biblical way forward includes seeking Christ in repentant faith for new desires that are in line with God’s created order and will, and striving with His help through the normal means of grace (Scripture, prayer, corporate worship, the sacraments, fellowship, etc.) to glorify Him in celibacy or in biblical marriage.

glorious purpose is seen in the loving, sacrificial leadership of a husband who exercises his God-given authority for the good of his wife and kids, as well as in the joyful submission of a wife who exercises her gifts and calling in helping her husband as he leads their family. The primary blessings and functions of marriage are partnership/companionship (Gen 2:18-25), pleasure and purity (Sg Sol; 1 Cor 7:2-5), and procreation/child raising (Gen 1:26-28; Mal 2:13-15; 1 Tim 2:15, 5:14).<sup>3</sup>

The husband is called to physically and spiritually protect and provide for his family, (1 Cor 16:13-14; 1 Tim 5:8; 1 Thess 4:10-12), as well as graciously lead his wife and children in the prophetic and priestly callings of ministering God's Word to them and leading them in worship (Josh 24:14-16; 2 Tim 1:1-3; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Eph 5:25ff). The wife is called to help her husband in the working-and-keeping mandate (Gen 1:26-27, 2:15, 18), following and empowering his leadership as she exercises the full scope of her gifts in the multitude of opportunities God has placed before her for His glory. Scripture beautifully describes the godly wife as a home-oriented, industrious, creative, strong wife and mother who causes her family to flourish (Prov 31:13-14; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Tim 2:11-15, 5:14).

Most people will be married at one point or another, but marriage is not explicitly commanded. It is, however, commended for those who are not gifted with celibacy (1 Cor 7:2, 8-9). By *celibacy* we mean that some believers are gifted by God with contentment in singleness for the sake of more concentrated devotion to the Kingdom of God (Matt 19:10-12; 1 Cor 7:6-7). Scripture speaks highly of this voluntary singleness for the sake of the Gospel, though it nowhere elevates such singleness above marriage, nor does it elevate marriage above singleness – rather, each is a gift given by God to His children at His discretion and for His sovereign purposes. The hallmark of this kind of sanctified singleness is distraction-free contentment in devoting oneself to ministry (whether full-time or non-vocational) in a way that having a family would not allow (1 Cor 7:32-35). Whether someone is never-married, unmarried because of divorce, or widowed, singleness may be a calling given to some. Others would like to be married but are not free to do so (perhaps because of an unlawful divorce), in which case they trust the Lord for strength to glorify Him and rest in His sufficient grace in their singleness (whether for a time or lifelong).<sup>4</sup> If a single Christian is in a position to freely pursue marriage and either desires marriage or is dealing with regular sexual temptation, he or she would do well to pursue marriage to another believer.

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<sup>3</sup> See Westminster Confession, XXIV.1-4. Contrary to what is common today, voluntary childlessness is not a biblical category.

<sup>4</sup> See the SVC elders' position paper on divorce and remarriage.