

STAYING THE COURSE
The Creation/Covenant Design for Marriage and Sexuality
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One of the favorite arguments of those who seek to change our church's position on homosexuality is their claim that Jesus never spoke about it. In my *Staying the Course* essay, I made the case that even if the Bible made no references to homosexual acts, the biblical view of marriage would exclude homosexual acts.

“When we reflect on the biblical witness, especially our Lord's teaching on marriage, we are confronted with the will of God. When we center on God's will and God's revelation for humankind, Jesus' teaching has to be placed front and center in our deliberations. Thus, we must begin with the doctrine of creation, which makes sex holy in the biblical sense. Life is holy because it belongs to God. A vessel or a sacrifice is holy when set apart for God. So, sex is a gift from God, a holy gift that cannot be separated from the human body, mind, and spirit; thus, it is to be used for knowing and glorifying God. The strongest case for the Church's position against homosexual acts, the blessing of same-sex unions, and the ordination of practicing homosexuals, is the doctrine of creation and the biblical affirmation of heterosexual marriage. Clues of God's intention for humanity are present in the creation story (Gen. 1 and 2). (*Staying the Course*, pp. 104-105)

God created humankind in his image, "in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' (Gen. 1:27-28)

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." (Gen. 2:18)

Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.... Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh. (Gen. 2:23-24)

The description of marriage is placed in the biblical narrative with all that is pronounced good by God prior to the Fall. Four constituent aspects of marriage are indicated. One, it is an exclusive union between two persons; it is singular - "a man," "his wife." Two, it is

a community or social affair: “leave father and mother.” Three, it is a loving, caring covenant, which is heterosexual and permanent; the man “clings” to his wife. Four, marriage is consummated in sexual intercourse between man and woman; the two become one flesh.

Though the author of Genesis was not consciously or specifically prohibiting same-sex relationships, the relationship of marriage described here is consistent with commands about sexuality throughout the Bible. The biblical account of creation, which suggests the model of Christian marriage—one man, one woman in a lifelong monogamous relationship—should be a strong enough argument against homosexual practice.” (*Staying the Course*, pp.104-106)

I continued my discussion of the creation/covenant design for marriage and sexuality discussing “Creation and Marriage,” “Complementarity in God’s Creation of Male and Female,” and “Personal and Community Responsibility” as a way we honor God as sexual beings. I closed the essay with this summary:

”The marriage of one man and one woman in an everlasting covenant is not an incidental human notion; it is a creational reality. It is abundantly clear that sexual intercourse is to be reserved for that relationship of marriage. Christian Scripture consistently condemns all other forms of intercourse: fornication, adultery, incest, and bestiality. Along with that, homosexuality is always condemned as being outside God’s creative order and incompatible with God’s intention for us, his children. When the Bible addresses same sex intercourse, it is always clear, unambiguous, unequivocally, and unanimously negative. But again, the discussion and debate is best served by focusing on the larger issue of revelation and God’s created order. When we reflect on the biblical witness, especially the creation narratives and Jesus’ teaching on marriage, it is clear that God’s will is heterosexual marriage—one man and one woman in a lifelong monogamous relationship. (*Staying the Course*, p. 114)

How can the One Church Plan propose unity that disregards this Scriptural understanding of sexuality and marriage held by a huge part of the church? Decisions about these critical issues of sexuality and marriage are too critical and defining to be made by local churches and/or annual conferences.