



Sojourn Houston Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to declare same-sex marriage as a constitutional right, legalizing it in all 50 states. In response, Sojourn has compiled the following statement. This statement consists of: (1) the ERLC's Declaration on Marriage, which Sojourn adopts, and (2) the relevant portions of Sojourn's bylaws.

Here We Stand: An Evangelical Declaration on Marriage

From the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission

As evangelical Christians, we dissent from the court's ruling that redefines marriage. The state did not create the family, and should not try to recreate the family in its own image. We will not capitulate on marriage because biblical authority requires that we cannot. The outcome of the Supreme Court's ruling to redefine marriage represents what seems like the result of a half-century of witnessing marriage's decline through divorce, cohabitation, and a worldview of almost limitless sexual freedom. The Supreme Court's actions pose incalculable risks to an already volatile social fabric by alienating those whose beliefs about marriage are motivated by deep biblical convictions and concern for the common good.

The Bible clearly teaches the enduring truth that marriage consists of one man and one woman. From Genesis to Revelation, the authority of Scripture witnesses to the nature of biblical marriage as uniquely bound to the complementarity of man and woman. This truth is not negotiable. The Lord Jesus himself said that marriage is from the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6), so no human institution has the authority to redefine marriage any more than a human institution has the authority to redefine the gospel, which marriage mysteriously reflects (Eph. 5:32). The Supreme Court's ruling to redefine marriage demonstrates mistaken judgment by disregarding what history and countless civilizations have passed on to us, but it also represents an aftermath that evangelicals themselves, sadly, are not guiltless in contributing to. Too often, professing evangelicals have failed to model the ideals we so dearly cherish and believe are central to gospel proclamation.

Evangelical churches must be faithful to the biblical witness on marriage regardless of the cultural shift. Evangelical churches in America now find themselves in a new moral landscape that calls us to minister in a context growing more hostile to a biblical sexual ethic. This is not new in the history of the church. From its earliest beginnings, whether on the margins of society or in a place of influence, the church is defined by the gospel. We insist that the gospel brings good news to all people, regardless of whether the culture considers the news good or not.

The gospel must inform our approach to public witness. As evangelicals animated by the good news that God offers reconciliation through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus, we commit to:

- Respect and pray for our governing authorities even as we work through the democratic process to rebuild a culture of marriage (Rom. 13:1-7);
- the truth about biblical marriage in a way that brings healing to a sexually broken culture;
- affirm the biblical mandate that all persons, including LGBT persons, are created in the image of God and deserve dignity and respect;
- love our neighbors regardless of whatever disagreements arise as a result of conflicting beliefs about marriage;
- live respectfully and civilly alongside those who may disagree with us for the sake of the common good;
- cultivate a common culture of religious liberty that allows the freedom to live and believe differently to prosper.

The redefinition of marriage should not entail the erosion of religious liberty. In the coming years, evangelical institutions could be pressed to sacrifice their sacred beliefs about marriage and sexuality in order to accommodate whatever demands the culture and law require. We do not have the option to meet those demands without violating our consciences and surrendering the gospel. We will not allow the government to coerce or infringe upon the rights of institutions to live by the sacred belief that only men and women can enter into marriage.

The gospel of Jesus Christ determines the shape and tone of our ministry. Christian theology considers its teachings about marriage both timeless and unchanging, and therefore we must stand firm in this belief. Outrage and panic are not the responses of those confident in the promises of a reigning Christ Jesus. While we believe the Supreme Court has erred in its ruling, we pledge to stand steadfastly, faithfully witnessing to the biblical teaching that marriage is the chief cornerstone of society, designed to unite men, women, and children. We promise to proclaim and live this truth at all costs, with convictions that are communicated with kindness and love.

Sojourn's Bylaws

Sections 3.1 - 3.4

3.1 Sojourn's Confession of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For legal purposes, the Council of Elders is Sojourn's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application with respect to faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline.

Sojourn also delineates the following beliefs:

3.2 We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139.)

3.3 We believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). We believe God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4). We believe any form of sexual immorality (including lust, adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10). We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Sojourn as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Sojourn's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Sojourn in any capacity, agree to and abide by this statement (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22). We believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of this church.

3.4 Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Sojourn will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, Sojourn's elders and staff shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Sojourn shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.