

Church of God: Redefining Marriage Would Negate Marriage

The Church of God bases its doctrinal positions and practices on the teachings of Scripture. Its statement of Practical Commitments affirms, under the rubric of Family Responsibility, "Marriage is ordained of God and is a spiritual union in which a man and a woman are joined by God to live together as one (Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:7)."

Further, the Church addresses the critical issue of moral purity by asserting, "Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and we are to glorify God in our body (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31). We are to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Examples of fleshly behavior which do not glorify God are noted in several passages of scripture (Rom. 1:24; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). Sinful practices which are made prominent in these scriptures include homosexuality, adultery, worldly attitudes (such as hatred, envy, jealousy), corrupt communication (such as gossip, angry outbursts, filthy words), stealing, murder, drunkenness, and witchcraft."

In response to the imprudent decision of the United States Supreme Court on June 26, 2013, in the case of the *United States v. Windsor*, the Church reaffirms its historical and biblical position on marriage. The action of the court nullifies Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act that defined marriage for purposes of federal law as the union of a man and a woman and, consequently, by this action upholds the legality of same-sex marriage.

The Church of God supports a definition of marriage that upholds the truth that sexual difference is a valuable

characteristic of the marriage relationship and that the fundamental good of complementarity found in the union of a man and woman is essential for the well-being of the family. Abundant research acknowledges the equivalent significance of mothers and fathers to the healthy development of children. We defend an understanding of marriage that reflects centuries of common sense, biological reality, the Bible's definition, the Judeo-Christian tradition and the wisdom, on this subject, of all the great religions. We sustain a position that argues for the welfare of children and the good of society.

We affirm this statement based on two truths: the sacredness of marriage and the sinfulness of homosexuality.

The idea of marriage did not originate from the mind of man but of God. The Bible explains that the Creator made man and woman for each other (Gen. 2:18-24), and this truth is reaffirmed by the Savior (Matt. 19:4-6). It is God who ordained marriage, and it was Christ who said, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." This being the case, men cannot legitimately change the definition of marriage to please themselves. A redefinition of marriage would constitute a negation of marriage. Human laws must be judged by the laws of God.

Same-sex marriage recognized as legal in effect legitimizes homosexuality, which the Bible declares to be sinful. Homosexuality violates the natural order of sexuality by which the human race develops and continues. It violates scriptural teachings, as demonstrated in Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; and 1 Tim. 1: 9, 10. It violates God's plan for marriage and the family, as clarified by Gen. 2:18-24; Matt. 19:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:9; and 1 John 1:9. Although some distort the Scriptures to suggest that the plain meaning of the passages does not apply, the reality is that homosexuality is never viewed as anything but displeasing to God.

In recognizing God's condemnation of sinful practices, the

Church affirms its love and concern for the temporal and eternal security of those in this lifestyle and denounces only their sinful conduct. The Bible assures those who wish to be free of homosexual urges that freedom is possible. After the 1 Corinthians 6 listing of sins, including homosexuality, it declares, "Such were some of you." Deliverance is a reality.

In lamenting the court's decision that we believe may adversely affect future generations by unpredictable demographic, cultural, social and religious outcomes, we also call upon people who value biblical marriage to take all possible steps to counter family disruption in all of its forms.