

Kansas City Declaration on Marriage

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Introduction

The family is the pillar of society. This fact is clear primarily from the Bible, the word of God itself. It was the first institution the Lord himself established. There, in the Garden of Eden he created Adam and Eve and gave them direction to be fruitful and multiply. The family—one man and one woman, bearing and parenting children in a lifelong relationship—was God’s idea.

Appropriately, the church, the regenerate, baptized people of God—followers of the Lord Jesus Christ—is also designated as his “family.” The apostle Paul wrote, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the *household of the faith*” (Galatians 6:10; cf. Ephesians 3:14-15; 1 Peter 4:17).

The concept of the church following the form and fashion of the original creation for human development—the family proper—is therefore understandable. It was the family first and the church following after it. The point is that the family is primary in God’s creative order. More practically, then, as the Christian family goes, so goes the church. As the family goes, so goes society as a whole. It is a fact of history that when the family dissolves and disappears so does society. Civilization cannot stand on its own two legs without God’s primary unit for social relationships. Society needs the family to provide a healthy nurturing environment for children and adults.

At the moment the family in the West is under attack. Firstly, from within internecine guerilla warfare is destroying its essence as couples get married but are not serious about the concept of one man and one woman, “for better or worse, through sickness and health, richer or poorer, till death do us part.” Rather, it is rewritten to be understood as “until I am unhappy or unfulfilled”—whatever those two words may mean; or, “until I meet someone more attractive, appealing” or “responsive to my needs.”

Divorce is currently ending fifty percent of all marriages. This rate may increase if not addressed and corrected. Even one unhappy ending to

marriage is undesirable. But at this rate, divorce will continue to erode the foundations of Christian union under God. It will continue to leave children unsettled and cynical about God's chosen institution for human community.

Secondly, marriage is under attack from without, largely from gay rights advocacy groups who wish to redefine marriage as one man and one man; or one woman and one woman. A simple study of human physiology would demonstrate the unnatural and distorted view of marriage this concept presents.

If state and national governments are enticed by this re-crafting of God's institution what would next be allowed? Bestiality, bigamy, polygamy? Maybe somebody marrying themselves or a tree in their yard. "Ridiculous," you might say. But believe me, if marriage in the traditional sense goes out of style and is replaced by a caricature, then expect that anything else might develop. Consequently, civilization, no doubt, hangs in the balance on this very issue.

Following is the Kansas City Declaration on Marriage. Framed by a number of scholars and thinkers in the area and mainly crafted by Barrett Duke of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Alan Branch of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dan Heimbach of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, it provides a fabulous overview of marriage as it should be understood and embraced by those committed to the health and well-being of humanity. It is a response to the current challenges directed at biblical/traditional marriage. And it helps to articulate in a crystal-clear fashion the essence and importance of marriage.

You will find this document biblical, helpful, insightful, and practical. And when called on the spot to answer the question—"Why does one man-one woman marriage matter?"—this document will give you content for your answer.

In a chapel service and subsequent consortium held at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on November 12, 2003, participants inscribed and endorsed this document. You are invited to do the same. Visit the MBTS website (www.mbts.edu), go online, and add your signature to the list of supporters.

My hope and prayer to God is that the family will be strengthened, encouraged and rebuilt through the efforts of ventures such as the Kansas City Declaration on Marriage. May God grant it.

Kansas City Declaration on Marriage

Marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. This has been the definition of marriage in Western culture for millennia. Recent events and trends have threatened to undermine this definition in the West. Homosexual marriages already are recognized in some European countries and parts of Canada. In the United States, the Vermont legislature created civil unions to provide a government-sanctioned quasi-marital relationship for homosexuals. The movement toward homosexual marriage in the U.S. is also evidenced by the proliferation of “domestic partner registries” and corporate benefits for same-sex couples. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* prevents society from enforcing any laws discouraging homosexual sexual acts as corrupt or immoral. These current practices along with other pending judicial mandates threaten to throw wide open the door to full legal and moral affirmation of homosexual marriage.

We agree with the *Baptist Faith and Message* that “Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.”

Any weakening of the traditional, Judeo-Christian definition of marriage will undermine the foundation of Western culture and result in deep, permanent fractures that will fundamentally alter American culture, indeed all of Western civilization. The *Colorado Statement on Biblical Sexual Morality* reflects our rejection of demands for redefinition of marriage when it says, “We affirm that God established the moral definition of marriage, and that it should not be changed according to the dictates of culture, tradition, or personal preference. We deny that the morality of marriage is a matter of mere custom, or that it should be allowed to shift with the tide of cultural opinion or social practice.” We reject the claim that homosexual unions should be granted equivalent moral status to heterosexual monogamous marriage, regardless of the terminology used to describe those unions. We affirm the biblical model of marriage, the union of one man and one woman for life, as the only appropriate model for uniting people in marriage. We deny that this conviction is incompatible with redemptive ministry to homosexuals. Homosexuals need the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they need the ministry of the church, just like everyone else. We call on our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord to reach out in redemptive ministry to homosexuals,

while at the same time opposing the unbiblical concept of homosexual marriage.

We hold these beliefs for the following reasons:

Marriage is the foundational institution of human culture (Gen. 2:18-22; Matt. 19:3-9; Eph. 5:22-33; Eph. 6:1; 1 Thess. 2:7, 11; 1 Tim. 5:4).

The first social institution was marriage. As the foundation of the family, marriage is the foundational cultural institution. The family is a critically important institution in society because it supplies certain essential components to the bedrock upon which all other human relationships depend. In the family people learn compassion and mercy, essential elements that enable society to care for the weak among us. They learn how to cooperate with each other, an essential trait that enables individuals to combine their energies to accomplish great tasks. They learn commitment to others, an indispensable characteristic that assures unity and success. Most important, they learn to sacrifice for the needs of others, the linchpin of all healthy human relationships.

A family established on the marriage between a man and woman forces the cultivation of these characteristics in ways that other relationships do not. For heterosexual marriage demands the purest cultivation of these characteristics in order to succeed. Modern marriage counterfeits fail in significant ways to develop and model these characteristics. By their very nature cohabitation and same-sex relationships avoid some of the dynamics that a husband and wife must address. For example, those who cohabit often are reluctant to make a permanent commitment to each other; and same-sex relationships are never forced to deal with the fundamental differences between the sexes.

Marriage is a covenantal relationship (Gen. 2:23-25; Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 19:5-9; Eph. 5:31).

The first commitment ceremony between a man and a woman involved a commitment to a relationship. Marriage is more than a legal contract between two individuals. Marriage, within Judeo-Christian teaching, is a covenant relationship. It is the beginning point for successful long-term relationships. Its basis is not performance but relationship. Marriage according to the words spoken at the first marriage ceremony involves leaving parental relationships and creating a permanent new relationship, in which the two enjoy a pure, selfless intimacy. Therefore, we reject

current efforts to equate civil unions with marriage or to treat marriage as a contractual relationship.

Marriage creates one unity out of the two corresponding genders (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:22-33).

In marriage the male and female form a single intimate union. When God created man, He created a male and a female. As the *Baptist Faith and Message* states, “The gift of gender is thus a part of the goodness of God’s creation.” Neither gender comprises the sum of all that it means to unite human beings in a sexual relationship. God chose to typify certain characteristics of humanity in the male and other characteristics in the female. By definition, homosexual marriage is incapable of achieving this “one flesh” union. Therefore, we reject the notion that homosexual marriage is equal to heterosexual marriage.

Marriage provides the best environment for the personal, social, and economic well-being of children (Eph. 5:22-33; Eph. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:8; Titus 2:4-6).

The biblical model of marriage reveals a husband and wife working together, complementing each other, to provide a stable, successful home in which children are equipped to fulfill their greatest potential. Long-term homosexual relationships, especially among males, are extremely rare. Children who grow up in single-parent/adult homes are more likely to live in poverty all their lives. The absence of the support structures provided by marriage results too often in underperforming, emotionally distressed children who do not reach their fullest potential. The result will be an ever-expanding government that must assume more and more of the burden of taking care of the emotional, physical, and economic well-being of its citizens. Therefore, we reject the practice of adoption by homosexual couples.

Marriage encourages the development of healthy sexual identity in children (Gen. 1:27-28; Gen. 2:18; Deut. 6:4-25; Prov. 1:8-9).

God designed the family to be a learning environment for children. Children learn about sexuality by observing their parents. The absence of both sexes as role models will make it more difficult for children to be able to form a healthy understanding of their own sexuality and to appreciate the differences of the other sex. Homosexuality violates three fundamental principles of human sexuality. It violates the principle of exclusivity. The creation record acknowledges God’s creation of only two sexes—male and female (Gen. 1:27). It violates the principle of

fertility. The man and woman were designed to propagate their species through sexual union (Gen. 1:28). While the gift of sex is not limited only to this function, it is a fundamental expectation of sexuality that homosexual sex is incapable of fulfilling. It violates the principle of complementarity. God created a female to complete the male (Gen. 2:18-25). Therefore, we reject the notion that children can be raised as effectively in homosexual relationships as they can in heterosexual marriage.

Marriage is life-affirming (Gen. 1:27-28; Gen. 2:18; Prov. 5:18-19).

God instituted marriage as a means toward good. It was designed to improve quality of life and enable healthy reproductive behaviors. Homosexuals, especially males, do not tend to form long-term relationships; and they tend to die of causes directly attributable to their lifestyle 20-25 years earlier than heterosexual males. Therefore, we reject the notion that any homosexual relationship can be the equivalent of heterosexual marriage.

Marriage is the only appropriate context for sexual relations (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 13:4).

We affirm the Colorado Statement's clear and extensive pronouncements on biblical, sexual morality, and its conviction that the biblical standard for sexual expression is heterosexual, monogamous marriage. We reiterate its claim that "sexual behavior is moral only within the institution of heterosexual, monogamous marriage." Therefore, we reject the claim that homosexual sex between consenting adults constitutes an acceptable, biblical sexual relationship.

Marriage is the ideal model for the family (Prov. 31:10-31; Eph. 5:22-33; Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:7, 11; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-12; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

We affirm those who have been forced for various reasons to live in single-parent families. We commend those parents who have determined to do the best they can to provide for and nurture their children in these situations. We acknowledge that children can and do thrive in these families. However, we do not believe that these represent the best environments for children to reach their fullest potential for reasons we have already stated.

Therefore, in order to cherish and protect marriage as a crucial asset to our society and in view of what we have expressed, we call for the following:

- The immediate passage of a Federal Marriage Amendment that will place in the U.S. Constitution the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman.
- The strengthening of marriage laws in all states that will emphasize the covenant nature of marriage.
- The restriction of marriage by every state to the union of one man and one woman, including civil unions or any other marriage-like union.
- The abolition of no-fault divorce.
- A greater determination by Christians to honor their marriage commitments and to resolve their differences in Christ-like, God-honoring ways rather than divorcing.
- Greater commitment from churches and other religious institutions to provide mentoring for married couples that will model and sustain healthy marriages.
- A commitment by church and other religious leaders to help prospective couples prepare for marriage before they marry through premarital counseling.

November 12, 2003
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, Missouri