

WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS THINK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE.

This past Thursday, the High Court was to rule on the ACT's decision to allow gay marriage. If the High Court has ruled that gay marriage in the ACT is invalid, then praise God! If not, then, Lord have mercy. Unfortunately, whatever the outcome, the truth remains: we live at a time when an incredible shift is taking place in our culture. We are witnessing the 'homosexualisation' of culture. Powerful forces in the world around us are promoting homosexuality as a normal, acceptable and even praiseworthy lifestyle. What is the primary goal for this movement? Legal recognition of homosexual marriages.

As public attention focuses on this issue, it has been remarkable to see how many people who describe themselves as Christians support homosexual marriage. When we encounter these forces and see their impact on the world and Church, it is crucial that we as Christians return to God's Word and listen to what He has to say about these issues. We must start at the beginning and acknowledge that in establishing His created order, God made humanity as male and female. We read in Genesis 1:27 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." God determined, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper corresponding to him" (Genesis 2:18) and He created woman as the necessary partner for man. He instituted marriage as the one flesh union of a man and woman (Genesis 2:24) which was to carry out the necessary task of procreation – God told Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28).

God's Word teaches us that He established marriage for three reasons. First it prevents man-kind from being alone (Genesis 2:18). Second, it provides for the continuing life of humanity through procreation (Genesis 1:28). Third, it curbs the inclination toward sin and lust in this fallen world, for as Paul wrote: "But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).

Homosexuality runs directly counter to this ordering of creation provided by God. God's Word in the Old and New Testaments is absolutely clear on this point (Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Roman 1:24-27, 1 Timothy 1:8-10).

It is important to realise that the Old and New Testaments stated this condemnation of homo-sexuality in the midst of the ancient world that believed there was nothing wrong with homo-sexuality.

Homosexuality has gained wider acceptance as it is promoted by powerful forces in our culture. One of the most common arguments is that homosexuality is a natural state. It remains an open question whether homosexuality has a genetic component. In the July 2005 issue of the *Concordia Journal* Dr. Robert Weise surveyed the current state of research and wrote, "While there may be biological factors influencing sexual orientation, they do not appear determinative or causative" (pg. 239). It seems likely that there is a combination of genetic inclination and societal influence in varying degrees within each person.

However, even if it were conclusively proven that homosexuality is a genetic condition, it would not change the truth that God's Word shares with us about the sinfulness of homosexuality. The entrance of sin into the world in the Fall (Genesis 3) warped and twisted God's creation. The presence of the genetic predisposition to cancer, heart disease, alcoholism or any harmful condition bears witness to the impact of sin on creation. It does not make these things "natural," but rather makes them part of a sinful, fallen world. A genetic predisposition to homosexuality would be no different than the genetic predisposition to alcoholism. The struggle against these sins would be caused by the impact of sin in the world, and not through any personal fault of the individual. However, in neither case would this give an individual the right to engage in homo-sexual acts or drunkenness and the abuse of alcohol. Both would remain sins that Christians must avoid and for which they must repent when they have committed these sins.

As a result of our sinful, fallen world a Christian may have sinful homosexual inclinations and desires, in the same way that a Christian may have sinful heterosexual inclinations and desires that break the Sixth Commandment. In both cases, the Sixth Commandment forbids Christians from acting on these desires and calls us to repentance in the face of these desires. When Christians fall and engage in a homosexual act they need to repent and receive God's forgiveness, just like Christians who engage in a heterosexual act that breaks the Sixth Commandment. At the same time, it is important to realise that sin is sin. Homosexuality is one form of the many ways that people sin. Christians must strive in their lives to avoid all forms of sin. We know that we frequently fail to do this in many different ways. On those occasions, we take comfort in knowing that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the assurance of forgiveness to all who repent and turn to Him in faith.

Reflection on God's Word also leads to the conclusion that Christians cannot endorse any form of "homosexual marriage." As we have seen, God's Word teaches us that marriage has three purposes: 1) it prevents mankind from being alone (Genesis 2:18); 2) it provides for the continuing life of humanity through procreation (Genesis 1:28); 3) it curbs the inclination toward sin and lust in this fallen world (1 Corinthians 7:2). Since homosexual relationships violate the second and third purposes of marriage, they do not reflect what God calls marriage and Christians are not permitted to call them marriage

Ultimately the discussion about homosexuality is really a discussion about the authority of God's Word. If we believe that the Scriptures are God's inspired and inerrant Word, then we will recognise that they remain God's authoritative revelation to us. They will continue to guide the God pleasing life that reflects and respects His ordering of creation. However if we treat Scripture as a human document that we must evaluate and then decide which parts we wish to accept, the result is that we lose God's Word as the guide for our faith and life. As Dr. David Adams has correctly judged regarding the topic of homosexuality: "If successful in their efforts to undercut the authority of the biblical witness on this subject, the proponents of homosexuality in the church will have effectively deprived the church of the means to apply what the Bible says about virtually any moral issue to the life of the church today" (*Concordia Journal*, July 2005, pg. 228).

Unfortunately, the general acceptance of homosexuality in our culture is here to stay. If the Church is to be faithful to God's Word, it will increasingly find itself to be counter-cultural as it tells the world what it doesn't want to hear – just as things were at the beginning of the Church during its first few centuries of life. Yet if the Church is to remain Christ's Church, she must listen to God's authoritative revelation about all subjects - including homosexuality. May the Holy Spirit grant each of us the faith to listen to God's Word and confess the truth about the ordering of God's creation that He has made known to us.