

## **QUESTION:** Marriage and Human Sexuality...

Christian marriage is not simply a personal choice between two individuals; it is not merely a legal contract or a social institution; nor is it just a Christian ceremony prescribed by the church. Rather, Christian Marriage is a covenant relationship which relates to every area of a person's life, with the desire that God will bless and guide. We find the words of God, Himself, speaking of marriage, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is a committed partnership between a man and a woman. God's creative work was not complete until He made woman. He could have made her from the dust of the ground, as He had man. However, God chose to make her from man's flesh and bone. In so doing, he demonstrated that in marriage a man and a woman symbolically become one flesh. This is a spiritual union of a couple's hearts and lives. Throughout the Bible, God handles this special partnership seriously. The goal of marriage should be more than friendship; it should be oneness.

Marriage is a gift from God. God gave marriage to Adam and Eve. They were created perfect for each other. Marriage was not just for convenience, nor was it brought about by any culture. God gifts marriage to us. The gift of marriage should be accepted prayerfully and with an understanding that as God gives this gift He will also provide what we need to be successful in this special union.

Marriage is intended to be a relationship between a couple and God. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, made an amazing observation. Two are better than one. In Ecclesiastes 4 he writes, "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Solomon lists several reasons why two are better than one. Two accomplish more than one. Two can support one another better than he or she could support themselves. Two are able to care and protect one another. These certainly are significant benefits found in marriage. Then Solomon moves from two cords to three. Remember Solomon states that one cord could be broken easily; two cords would require more strength; however, three cords woven together can not be easily broken. It's been noted, "If two travelers are better than one, then three would fare even better." Imagine the strength if the third on the journey were the Lord Himself. Solomon had more than numbers in mind; he was also thinking of the unity involved in three cords woven together—what a beautiful picture of friendship and God's power! We believe God blesses the bonds of a marriage, even as Jesus blessed the wedding in Cana of Galilee with his first public miracle. Marriage is a serious relationship for a man and a woman to enter into, in full partnership with God. Marriage is sacred and holy, and it requires more of two individuals than they in their own strength can offer. God in his infinite mercy knows our weakness and has given us His Spirit to guide us and empower us so that we can be what He calls us to be.

As a Christian church, who accepts the full counsel of the Bible, we fully affirm that marriage is intended to be entered into by a man and woman and only by a man and a woman. We find the trend to ignore God's Word of chastity and purity destructive to society and the individual as well as sinful in the eyes of God. We oppose public acceptance of sexual promiscuity and all factors and practices which promote such behavior. We maintain a biblical view of human sexuality which makes the sexual experience, within the framework of marriage, a gift of God to be enjoyed as a communion of a man and a woman, as well as for the purpose of procreation. Sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and against the teachings found in the Bible. The depth of the sinfulness of homosexual practice as well as sexual relationships of any sort outside of the union of marriage is recognized, and yet we believe the grace of God sufficient to overcome both the practice of such activity and the perversion leading to this practice (*adapted from The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*).

Red Cedar Community Church (RCCC) is in complete agreement with the following statement found in The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church.

222. We believe that every person is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects the image in terms of intimate love, communication, fellowship, subordination of the self to the larger whole, and fulfillment. God's Word makes use of the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people and for revealing the truth that that relationship is of one God and with one people. Therefore God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship. (*Scriptural support: Gen 1:27-28; 2:18, 20, 23-24; Isa 54:4-8; Jer 3:14; Hosea 2; Mal 2:14; Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:9; John 2:1-2, 11; 1 Cor 9:5; Eph 5:23-32; 1 Tim 5:14; Heb 13:4; Rev 19:7-8*).

Any sexual act which is performed outside the sacred union of marriage between a man and a woman is against biblical teachings and is therefore sinful. It should not be surprising to find those who have yet to believe engaged in such activity. The role of the Believer in such situations is to influence the Unbeliever toward making a decision for Christ, which will then give them the assurance of salvation as well as the gift of the Holy Spirit enabling them to live as God directs. However, a professing Believer who engages in such activity is violating his/her covenant with God and ought to cease such actions immediately. The role of a fellow believer in such a situation is to lovingly show his/her brother/sister what the Bible instructs on such matters in the hope that he/she will confess his/her sin and repent. The full counsel found in 1 John is to be taken to heart. John writes, "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (1 John 1:5-10). In other words, do not treat sin as a minor issue. Once sin is revealed in your life confess it to God and repent, receiving God's forgiveness and grace.