

STURGEON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

A STATEMENT ON THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MARRIAGE:

Marriage is founded by God in the order of creation, an order that is built on the evidence from God's revealed Word, the Holy Bible, that man is completed by woman and woman is completed by man. (Genesis 2.18, 3.16) The revelation is supported by the received wisdom of the ages, acknowledged under the term "natural law." As woman and man they were created with instructions to love and to cherish each other. (Genesis 1.26, 27, Ephesians 5.28, 29)

Biblical commentary acknowledges that some are called to singleness. (Matthew 19.12, 1 Corinthians 7.1, 8)

Marriage is a solemn covenant between one man and one woman, entered into in perfect freedom, in which they pledge their love and fidelity for a lifetime. Marriage becomes a vocation in which the man and the woman demonstrate their love and commitment to God and to each other before the world. (Genesis 2.23-24; Ephesians 5.21ff) Marriage is the context for the fulfillment of emotional and physical needs of the individuals in intimacy, creativity, love, enjoyment, sacrifice, service and purity. Marriage is to be an exclusive union and communion. (Matthew 5.31-32, 19.9)

Marriage is a sacrament of society, ordained by God. (1 Timothy 4.30) In marriage, a man and a woman enjoy and model inner grace. As the highest expression of mutual love and affection and the deepest human communion, it is the model God himself used to express the depths of his love and commitment to his people. (Psalm 45, Ephesians 5.21ff)

God created man and woman for real enjoyment of each other in mutual fellowship in which the physical intimacies of the conjugal sexual relationship may be expressed. (Song of Solomon, 1 Corinthians 7.15ff) As an expression of love, physical intimacy is reserved for marriage. The marriage relationship typifies the relationship between the individual and God. (Ephesians 5.25, Exodus 20.3, 14) Full freedom and joy in marriage is reserved for those who live within this framework. (1 Thessalonians 4. 3-8, Hebrews 13.4) The foundational principles of marriage include, therefore, a commitment to pre-marital sexual purity and marital loyalty and fidelity. (1 Corinthians 6.12-20)

Marriage demonstrated on these principles is ideally designed for the propagation of the human race. Marriage is designed as the optimal venue for the rearing of children and for the instilling in children of the fundamental values and relationships. (Deuteronomy 6.7-10; 11.19; Ephesians 5. 25-32; 6.4; Colossians 3.21) Marriage relationships are used in God's revelation of himself and his love and care for his people. He demonstrates the love of the father (Psalm 103.13, John 3.16) and the tender love of a mother. (Isaiah 49.15; 66.13; Matthew 23.37) His love for humankind is eternal, the very model of fidelity.

Marriage is essential to the wellbeing of society, integral to the structure and maintenance of the social order. The cultural value of the family unit is maintained through a commitment to shared social customs surrounding the institution of marriage.

From these fundamental principles follow some conclusions:

- The choosing of a partner for a lifetime commitment is a matter of consequence beyond emotional and physical attraction. Marriage is to be based on principles that support the institution of marriage as outlined above. It is also to be considered that marriage unites two family units.
- A new marriage is worthy of special support and recognition by the community. (e.g. Deuteronomy 20.7)
- Physical and emotional abuse is contrary to the principles on which marriage is based.
- Adultery is morally wrong, both in thought and in deed. (Exodus 20.14; Matthew 5: 27-30)
- Divorce is acknowledged but is to be discouraged. (Matthew 5.32; 19.3-12 compared with Deuteronomy 24.4; 1 Corinthians 7. 10-15)
- Premarital (Deuteronomy 22-15-29) and homosexual (Leviticus 18.22; Romans 1: 26,27) relationships are morally wrong.
- Prostitution (Leviticus 19.29), promiscuity and sexual debauchery (Galatians 5.19) are morally wrong.
- Incest is morally wrong. (Leviticus 18.5ff)

In a society that acknowledges other forms of legal and sexual unions in imitation of marriage, the members of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church commit themselves to the above principles and expect their pastors and staff to adhere to these standards. The building in which the church family worships and fellowships will not be used for the formalization or celebration in any form of alternative unions.

As members of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church we commit to these principles as the ideal expression of the Biblical understanding of marriage. We acknowledge in so doing that we are all sinners, sinners saved by God's grace, and that we live in a world of sin. None of us can claim to be without sin. We are dependent on God's grace for our redemption; we are likewise dependent on God's grace in living out that which we believe.

As individuals, we are learning to confess our sins to God and to each other. As we learn to accept God's forgiveness and learn to forgive each other, we are also continually learning that God's forgiveness does not immediately wipe away the results of earlier sin. We recognize that this is particularly so in the case of transgressions of the principles noted in the statement above. We are learning to accept with regret who we are and what we have done. We are learning to accept responsibility for the consequences of our actions. We are learning that the task of remedying the consequence of sin is a continuing process, one on which we rely on the presence of God's Holy Spirit and the supportive fellowship of our colleagues in the congregation. And, as we learn to forgive ourselves and each other, we welcome into our fellowship others who are dealing with their own failures to live up to God's standards. We express our desire to be able to show the compassion that God has for sinners in our church.

Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church Statement and Policy on Marriage

The Supreme Court of Canada has clearly stated in their reference on Same Sex Marriage (neutral citation: 2004 SCC 79.) that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects “religious officials from being compelled by the state to perform civil or religious same-sex marriages that are contrary to their religious beliefs.” Thus we, Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church, state the following position on marriage.

Whereas, in accordance to the North American Baptist Conference Statement of Beliefs, we affirm that each person is unique, possesses dignity, and is worthy of respect, and

Whereas, we also affirm that we are called to introduce each person to the loving, reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ and the life changing transformation described in the scripture, and

Whereas, we believe that the Bible clearly teaches that marriage is the spiritual and legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. To recognize any other form of union as a legitimate marriage would be contrary to our understanding of the scripture. It would also be contrary to the stated positions of the Alberta Baptist Association and the North American Baptist Conference, with which Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church is affiliated, and

Whereas, though as Christians we seek to demonstrate God’s love to all people, we will not compromise our convictions on marriage as defined by scripture.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1. As a matter of belief, doctrine and religious practice, Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church reserves the term “marriage” for the covenant relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.
2. And that as the Alberta Baptist Association has established the standard that all individuals who are licensed to perform marriages through the Alberta Baptist Association shall not officiate at or co-officiate at a ceremony to celebrate any union not conforming to the previously stated definition of marriage we, Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church, also establish the standard that no individual in any way associated with Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church shall officiate at or co-officiate at a ceremony to celebrate any union not conforming to the previously stated definition of marriage.
3. And that in the event that an individual in any way associated with Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church officiates at or co-officiates at a ceremony to celebrate any union not conforming to the previously stated definition of marriage –
 - a. Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church will immediately do an investigation to validate and document that such a violation of the church’s policy on marriage has indeed occurred;
 - b. Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church will immediately notify in writing the office of the Alberta Baptist Association so that appropriate action can be taken by the Alberta Baptist Association regarding the loss of the individual’s license to perform marriages;
 - c. The individual will be subject to a disciplinary review by Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church which may result in loss of ordination, dismissal from employment, dismissal from membership, or any other steps deemed necessary by the Board or other appropriate governing body of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church.
4. And that the facilities of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church will not be used for weddings, blessings, celebrations, receptions or any other gathering where the union does not conform to the previously stated definition of marriage.
5. And that the above definition of marriage will extend to include retreats, camps, seminars or any other activities of Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church.