

Dear Grace Covenant Church Family,

Last week, the United States Supreme Court by a 5 to 4 ruling in Obergefell vs Hodges made same sex marriage legal in all 50 states. For many this ruling was not a surprise as it follows a pattern that the Court has demonstrated of diluting and rejecting Biblical principles. However, it was nonetheless a significant disappointment as it stands against the clear Biblical definition of marriage and the cultural practices of societies down through the centuries.

The Word of God is clear in both Genesis 1:26-27 and Matthew 19:4-6 that marriage was established by God and is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Relying on these and other scriptures, we believe that the following is a practical working definition of marriage: "Marriage is the original and foundational institution of human society, established by God as a one-flesh, covenantal union between a man and a woman that is life-long (until separated by death), exclusive (monogamous and faithful), and generative in nature (designed for bearing and rearing children), and it is to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church."¹

In the past, as culture has pushed against our convictions, we have prepared position papers, such as Grace's position paper on divorce and remarriage written in 1990, to help us navigate the journey of our faith. Likewise, in the next few weeks we will be preparing a clear, biblically-based statement on "sacred sex" and sexuality.

The reality of the situation is that last week's Supreme Court decision did not take God by surprise nor does it in any way change the Biblical definition of marriage. Rather it is a call for us to clearly embrace our Lord's definition of marriage and to respond to this recent development with grace and truth like He would (John 1:14). It will be important that our responses reflect the character and heart of Jesus to the world around us.

We have moved into a time when our perspective on marriage is no longer supported by the law of our nation and a growing number of Americans. However, this is not a time to despair or to respond in anger. Responses of fear or anger will not honor the Lord nor will they demonstrate the redemptive power of the gospel. Rather this is an opportunity for us to be the church and to live out what we say we believe.

¹ From the Evangelical Free Church of America

Perhaps more than ever in our nation's history, now is the time for us to commit to pray for the leaders of our nation as Paul wrote in Romans 13:1-7, to be gracious to those who don't share our views and love them as people created in the image of God, and to engage the world around us on this issue in ways that speak truth and point people to the redeeming gospel of Jesus.

As these events unfold in our nation, we must ever more clearly stand on the truth of God's Word regarding marriage, demonstrate to the world around us the beauty of loving Christian marriages, and commit ourselves to teach and model Biblical marriage to our children and grandchildren who are growing up in a rapidly changing culture.

None of us knows exactly what challenges the future holds for the church and for us as followers of Jesus. What we do know is that the Lord of the church is in control and He has a plan that He will work to completion to His ultimate glory. It will be important for all of us to be prayerful and wise as we navigate the path ahead.

Please know that we are praying for you in this difficult time as you interact with those in your lives who may not agree with the Biblical perspective on marriage, and as you help your family and friends to respond to this development with truth and love. May the Lord Jesus be glorified in our lives as we walk this road together.

The Elders of Grace Covenant Church