



Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality*

EMF holds to the traditional Christian ethic on marriage and sex:

1. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God and is to be enjoyed exclusively within the context of marriage;
2. Marriage is, by definition, heterosexual.

These convictions are derived from the clear teaching of the Bible; in both the Old Testament and the New Testament marriage is presented in a positive light, and homosexual activity, along with all other sexual intimacy outside of (heterosexual) marriage, is declared by God to be sinful. Nowhere in the Bible is there any expectation that marriage can exist between two or more people of the same sex.

Old Testament Background

In the beginning God created Adam and Eve – one man united to one woman (Genesis 2:18-25). It is to be noted that sexual intimacy was part of the pre-Fall relationship between the man and the woman and is a gift to humankind. Reading through the rest of the Old Testament, it is apparent that the model set forth in Genesis 2 is the God-given pattern for marriage (e. g. Genesis 24; Song of Songs; Proverbs 31:10-12). Wherever sexual activity occurs outside of marriage, it is presented in a negative light, and the Mosaic Law expressly forbids adultery (Exodus 20:14) and fornication (Exodus 22:16), as well as homosexual sex (Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13).

New Testament Confirmation

It's true that not all the commands of the Mosaic Law are carried over into the New Covenant; for example, the food laws are rescinded (Mark 7:19), and the New Testament commands loving church discipline, as opposed to the death penalty, for those who wilfully and persistently break God's laws. The New Testament, however, upholds the teaching of Genesis on marriage; Jesus, when asked about divorce, referred to Genesis 1 – 2 (Matthew 19:5-6), showing that he understood marriage to be a one-flesh relationship between a man and a woman. Further, the presupposition behind the Apostle Paul's teaching is that marriage entails a husband-wife relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33). Again, all the references to homosexual sex are negative and indicate that it is sinful (Romans 1:18-32; 1st Corinthians 6:9-11; 1st Timothy 1:8-10).



Reaffirmation of EMF Convictions in the Current Climate

Despite pressures from society, EMF missionaries, staff members, and trustees will continue to uphold the traditional biblical view that:

1. Sexual activity is a gift to be enjoyed only within (heterosexual) marriage, and that outside of this setting it is sinful;
2. Marriage involves a man and a woman, bound together in a covenant relationship – a relationship that cannot be redefined;
3. At the same time, we will always seek to make clear the grace and forgiveness that extend to all repentant sinners, including those guilty of sexual sins.

Implications for Practices of EMF Missionaries, Staff Members, and Trustees

In line with the above reaffirmations,

1. We will seek to uphold traditional Christian sexual ethics in both the teaching and the practices of our missionaries, staff members, and trustees;
2. None of our missionaries, staff members, or trustees would in good conscience be able to perform, bless, or take part in same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies;
3. Recognising that many Christians struggle with sexual temptation (whether heterosexual or same-sex attraction), we will prayerfully foster in the EMF family loving support of one another in such struggles.

*The content of this policy statement was based on the Same Sex Marriage statement of the FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches) and adapted to the needs of the EMF (European Mission Fellowship).