



Toward a Graciously Historic Sexual Ethic

Many of you will be aware that the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted recently to amend the language of their Book of Order to allow for the performing of homosexual marriage by their ministers.

Combined with the current debate about this issue in the wider sphere, we are living in an age where holding to a traditional view of marriage is an increasingly isolating position, and so it is important that we know where we stand on this issue, and why we believe what we believe.

Scott Sauls, who serves as senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee, recently wrote the following article that I think is helpful as we think through our response to the cultural (and ecclesiastical) shift on marriage:

“THE CENTURIES-OLD, universal consensus among Christians, Jews, and Muslims—that God gave sex for marriage between one man and one woman—is being questioned not only by secular society, but within Christianity itself. Individuals, churches, and even whole denominations are shifting in their views and practices. Many contest the long-held belief that *porneia*—

the New Testament Greek term for all sexual activity outside of marriage between one man and one woman—is synonymous with “immorality.”

Ours is a different age, the Western (and mostly white and well-educated) “progressive Christian” says. Biblical prohibitions against divorce, unmarried cohabitation, and same-sex relationships, they say, were written for situations unique to the first century but shouldn’t apply to our modern context. Indeed, those who are unpersuaded by the new interpretations are increasingly viewed as unenlightened at best and bigoted at worst.

So what do we make of this new cultural landscape? How do we understand the Scriptures on this matter? And what should we do with that understanding?

Have We Misunderstood Scripture?

Expressions of sexuality that were once seen as taboo have now become mainstream. As friends and family “come out” with news of a pending divorce or a same-sex or cohabiting hetero relationship, Christians—especially when friendships and family ties hang in the balance—feel pressed to sympathize instead of condemn, to support instead of separate, to affirm instead of deny.

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April Calendar

Sunday

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

“Back to Basics”

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

“Joshua”

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship

“Epistles of John”

Children’s Church, Nursery available

- Sun 3/29 Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (10:30 a.m.)
- Wed 4/1 Book Group for Women (9:30 a.m., Brown home)
- Sun 4/5 Easter Sunday
See page 2 >>>
- Mon 4/6,20 Ladies Bible Study (6:00 p.m., Chilton home)
- Sat 4/11 “Second Saturday” Men’s Breakfast (8:00 a.m., Currier home)
- Tue 4/14 Stated Session Meeting (6:00 p.m., GIPC)
- Wed 4/15,22,29 Ladies Bible Study (9:30 a.m., Brown home)
- Wed 4/8, 15, 22, 29 Prayer Meeting (6:30 p.m., GIPC)
- Tue 4/21 GIPC hosts the Savannah River Presbytery

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TO REINFORCE this instinct, sexual minorities are often compared to victims of slavery. Christians eventually shifted on slavery because they finally saw slavery was biblically wrong, the thinking goes. This is no different. Sexual minorities are the new oppressed minority.

This is a difficult leap, however, since every reference in Scripture to sex outside of heterosexual marriage is negative. The pro-slavery mindset is repudiated by Paul's letter to Philemon, a slave-owner commanded to stop treating Onesimus like a slave and instead as a brother. No such parallel pushes against the historic Christian view of sexuality.

As Scripture unfolds from Old Testament to New, we see a progressive tone in the way it dignifies and empowers women, ethnic minorities, the enslaved, the infirm, and the oppressed. But when it comes to sex and marriage, we actually see a more conservative tone.

Jesus reaffirms the male-female, one-flesh union in marriage. Qualified elders must either be single and chaste like Paul and Jesus or be the "husband of one wife" (that is, one-woman men). Jesus restores dignity to an adulteress and then tells her that if she's going to identify as His follower she must stop committing adultery.

Unlike Philemon and the slave issue, then, there is no hint in Scripture of "emancipation" for sexual relationships—including committed and monogamous ones—outside the male-female marital union.

This teaching is admittedly unpopular in our late modern times. Yet Scripture shows no interest in being popular or relevant—that is, in being adapted, revised, or censored to align with ever-shifting times.

We must remain countercultural wherever the culture and the truth are at odds. It is this posture that makes Christians truly relevant in the culture.

Counterculture for the Healing of Culture

What's the way forward, then, for Christians? I believe the way of grace and truth avoids the polar extremes of both the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

First, we must resist the inner Pharisee, whose instinct is to scornfully separate from a sexually damaged world. Compelled by the love of Christ, we must extend kindness and friendship to those who don't embrace a biblical sex ethic, and we must never engage in negative posturing and caricature. This in itself is countercultural, as evidenced by *Slate* identifying 2014 as "the year of outrage." Christians, then, have an opportunity to stand out as a gracious, life-giving minority in this regard.

This entails staying true to the biblical text and also genuinely loving, listening to, and serving those who don't share our beliefs. Jesus, who welcomed and ate with sinners, and who never once had a harsh word to say to a sexually damaged image-bearer, beckons us to follow in his footsteps.

But we also need to resist the inner Sadducee, whose instinct is to follow—and even be discipled by—the world. We must honor, champion, and obey the Creator's design, at all times in a spirit of gentleness and respect, even if we lose friends and influence fewer people.

We must be okay with living in light of thoughts and ways higher than our own ([Isaiah 55:8-9](#)). In the end, capitulation to culture is neither faithful nor fruitful as a missionary method.

Continued on page 3

Celebrate Easter! **Sunday, April 5th**

Sunrise Service
6:30 a.m.

St. Simons Village Pier

Sponsored by area churches and led by local pastors. An offering will be collected to benefit local ministries serving the needy in our community.

A Service of Lessons & Hymns

10:30 a.m., at GIPC
Luis Haza, Violinist

This service joins Scripture texts that speak of the Passion of Christ with hymns highlighting themes found in those texts. Violinist Luis Haza will provide special music and assist us in our worship.

Lunch at the Browns
12:00 p.m.

(directions at GIPC)

All are invited to a potluck lunch at the home of Alex and Sara Brown immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service. Ham will be provided—please bring a side (& bread/rolls) or dessert to share.

(No Sunday School or Evening Worship)

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Pharisees scorn the world.
Sadducees follow the world.

Jesus, who both affirmed sex and kept it within its protective moral boundaries, was countercultural for the healing of the world.

Affirming Sex (and Chastity)

As a lifelong unmarried celibate man tempted in every way we are, Jesus affirmed sex within the male-female marital union. He created sex. Sex is not a “no-no.” It’s not taboo. It is a gift that welcomes husbands and wives to taste Eden together—naked and unashamed, known and embraced, exposed and not rejected. Proverbs invites a husband to enjoy his wife’s breasts. Song of Solomon pictures a husband and wife admiring and adventurously enjoying one another’s naked bodies. Paul, also unmarried and celibate, says that except for short seasons dedicated to prayer, able-bodied husbands and wives should have sex, and have it often.

Scripture also warns against sex being distorted, abused, turned into a pseudo-savior, or made into an identity. As one church historian has observed, the early Christians were promiscuous with their money (financially generous) but guarded with their bodies (sexually chaste). The surrounding Greco-Roman culture was the reverse.

Why is our Creator’s design so liberating for sex inside the male-female marital union, yet so limiting for every other setting? Tim Keller says it’s because sex is the most delightful—and also the most dangerous—of all human capacities. It is a transcendent, otherworldly experience.

Sex works a lot like fire. Though it can warm and purify, if not properly contained and handled with care it can burn, scar, infect, and destroy. I’ve seen this play out in scores of pastoral situations over the years. “There is a way that seems right to a man,” the proverb puts it, “but in the end it leads to death” ([Proverbs 14:12](#)).

You Are the Light of the World

The more I engage with these issues, the more I’m convinced that the church’s best opportunity to encourage a biblical ethic of sex and marriage is by living out a biblical ethic of sex and marriage. As Madeleine L’Engle reminds us, we draw people to Christ by showing them a light so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know its source.

In other words, in the eyes of a watching world, showing the light makes the telling about the light palpable and credible. The Christian witness cannot be in word alone. It must also be in deed.

Rather than condemning “sex and the city,” then, what if we made it our chief task to simply be the “city on a hill” Jesus intended?

To start we must remove the planks in our own eyes, wherever they may exist. We must forsake hard-core and soft-core porn habits, take captive thoughts and fantasies that objectify God’s image, and reduce unbiblical divorces.

We must also nurture fidelity and forgiveness, hand-holding and lingering conversation—living face to face (in intimacy) and side by side (on mission) within Christian marriages.

Additionally, becoming L’Engle’s “light so lovely” amid a sexually damaged culture will require a renewed and robust vision for marriage and singleness.



WHAT IF we reaffirmed that being unmarried and chaste (like Paul and Jesus) is a noble and fruitful calling, not a curse? What if we reaffirmed that the call to singleness is “far better,” since it frees people to devote themselves fully to God’s concerns? What if we embraced a renewed vision for the church as a surrogate family where everyone—single and married and divorced, hetero attracted and same-sex attracted—finds opportunity for spiritual friendships as deep as David and Jonathan, with long-term love and loyalty rivaling that of a man and a woman?

Most significantly, what if we renewed our emphasis on The Marriage of which all others are a shadow—the mystical union between Jesus and his bride, the church? No matter your temporary marital status on earth, union with him through faith makes you as married and complete as you’ll ever be. From the moment we believe, Jesus is our bridegroom, and we are his bride.

We are our beloved’s, and our beloved is ours. ☪

This article first appeared on the Gospel Coalition website (<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/toward-a-graciously-historic-sexual-ethic>) and is adapted from Scott Sauls’s new book, *Jesus Outside the Lines: A Way Forward for Those Who are Tired of Taking Sides* (Tyndale House, 2015). Reprinted with permission.

Affirming *Biblical Marriage*

In response to the recent shift in the PCUSA, the Stated Clerk of the PCA (our denomination) issued the following statement which affirms the PCA's commitment to biblical marriage:

“ The Office of the Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has received numerous emails regarding the recent action of the mainline Presbyterian Church (USA) in redefining marriage.

On March 17, 2015 the Presbyterian Church (USA) approved language that allows its ministers to officiate at same-sex marriages in its churches.

The change comes after the General Assembly and a majority of that denomination's 171 presbyteries approved an amendment to their *Book of Order* that describes marriage as “a unique relationship between two people, traditionally a man and a woman.”

There are several Presbyterian denominations in the United States. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), formed in 1973 as an evangelical denomination in the Reformed theological tradition, is the second largest.

We, like other evangelical, conservative, orthodox, and traditional Christians from many branches of the Christian faith, believe that, from creation, God ordained the marriage covenant to be a unique bond between one man and one woman.

This biblical understanding is what the Church has always believed, taught, and confessed.

Therefore, we believe that the divinely sanctioned standard for sexual activity is fidelity within a marriage between one man and one woman or chastity outside of such a marriage.

We believe that, from creation, God ordained the marriage covenant to be a unique bond between one man and one woman. This biblical understanding is what the Church has always believed, taught, and confessed.

Throughout history, there has often been a conflict between what the Church has believed, taught, and confessed and the society to which the Church ministers.

The Church, in contrast to the broader culture, is to base her views and practices on authoritative and timeless divine revelation found in the Holy Scriptures, and not on the changing and frequently subjective social practices within the society.

The Church, therefore, has certain unchanging objective standards of biblical ethics.

This is especially challenging in this post-modern era of relativism. We think that the comparatively recent interpretation that biblical prohibitions against same-sex intimacy do not apply to “a same-sex marriage” is based on false premises and faulty reasoning and, therefore, is erroneous – no matter how well-intentioned.

The PCA in both its doctrinal standards (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 24 “Of Marriage and Divorce”) and church polity (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 59, “The Solemnization of Marriage”) affirms biblical marriage as being between one man and one woman.

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Neither the General Assembly nor any of the Presbyteries nor any Session (board of elders) of any congregation that is presently a member of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has redefined marriage. Nor does the PCA intend to do so.

As we affirm what is sometimes called a traditional view of marriage, which we prefer to call biblical marriage, we seek to follow the apostolic practice of “speaking the truth in love.”

We reach out to all persons with the Good News by which we are being saved that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” ☞

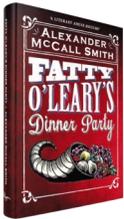
Women's Bible Studies

- ▶ **Evening** 6:00 p.m. on the 1st & 3rd Monday, at the home of Diane Chilton. Current topic: *Praying the Names of Jesus*, based on the book by Ann Spangler.
- ▶ **Morning** 9:30 a.m. each Wednesday (except the first), at Sara Brown's home. Current topic: *Acts*

The monthly Book Group for Women will meet on Wednesday, **April 1st**, 9:30 a.m. at the home of Sara Brown, to discuss *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion*, by Fannie Flagg.

Wednesday, May 6th selection: A delightful novella, *Fatty O'Leary's Dinner Party*, by Alexander McCall Smith, is an amusing and touching portrayal of a kindly, misunderstood soul who is a good man, and a kind one. He had been called Fatty ever since he was 12, growing up in the 1950s in Fayetteville, AR. There he, along with two of his closest friends, Tubby O'Rourke and Porky Flanagan, are set to collectively take on the world of the nutritionally underachieving.

For his fortieth birthday Fatty's loving wife, Betty, plans the holiday of a lifetime to Ireland. And that's when the calamities begin. There is the polite pre-flight request to change flights on account of Fatty's weight; seats in economy class on the plane are too small; the country hotel's dinner spread leaves much to be desired; and the Irish bathroom furniture is not as commodious as he would have liked, resulting in getting stuck in the bathtub. All the time Fatty must put up with the unthinking cruelty of strangers and of a particularly obnoxious hotel guest. Fatty's own quiet dignity abounds and he never stops being big-hearted, courteous and generous, even when the humiliations pile up. In the end, Fatty has the last laugh over his tormentors. ☺



Book Group

Building & Grounds

Improvements were made to the church sign by 1) installing new lighting and 2) lowering the sign to minimize the brightness of the LED lighting for passing motorists and make the sign more visible.

Finance

Loan Update

Loan Balance 2/23/15	\$733,647
March Payment:	
Interest	\$ 2,796
Principal	\$ 3,152
Total Payment	\$ 5,948

Men's Ministry

Men's Spring Breakfast Fellowship "Second Saturday" in April

April 11 • 8:00 a.m.
Currier home

Clay Huddleston will share his testimony of 10 years ministry with Christian rescue missions, homeless shelters and addiction recovery programs. All men are welcome.

Significant Sessional Actions

- Approved moving Communion from Easter Sunday (April 5th) to March 29th;
- Approved no Prayer Meeting or Social Dinner on Wednesday, April 1st (in lieu of Wednesday Community Service (Holy Week) and Easter Lunch at the Brown home);
- Approved Mr. Ed Forester (IPC, Savannah) as pulpit supply for the following Sundays: April 12th, June 7th, and June 28th.

Shop at AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to:

Golden Isles Presbyterian Church

GIPC is registered with AmazonSmile*, which will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from eligible purchases to our church.

1. Type smile.amazon.com into your web browser.
2. Select "Golden Isles Presbyterian Church" as the charity you wish to support.
3. Bookmark smile.amazon.com so that GIPC benefits every time you shop online!



March 30-April 3 Holy Week Services on St. Simons Island

Services, hosted at area churches, begin at noon, followed by a light lunch (\$3).

Rev. Brown is scheduled to preach at the Wednesday service. Please refer to [page 2](#) of the March *GIPC Connection* for a detailed schedule with times and locations, or pick up a flyer at the church.

APRIL

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." (Psalm 43:3)

Family Worship

Old Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	Leviticus	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		11,12	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		26	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		27	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Numbers	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		7	<input type="checkbox"/>

APRIL

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." (Psalm 43:3)

Family Worship

Psalms Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	Psalms	1,2	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		3,4	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		5,6	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		7,8	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		11,12	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		13,14	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		15,16	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		20,21	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		23,24	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		26,27	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		28,29	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		30	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		31	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		32	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		33	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		34	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		35	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		36	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		37	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		38	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		39	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		40,41	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		42,43	<input type="checkbox"/>

APRIL

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." (Psalm 43:3)

Private

Old Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	Proverbs	19	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		26	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		27	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		28	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		29	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		30	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		31	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Ecclesiastes	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Song of Solomon	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		5	<input type="checkbox"/>

APRIL

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me." (Psalm 43:3)

Private

New Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	Colossians	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I Thess.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	II Thess.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	I Timothy	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	II Timothy	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Titus	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Philemon	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Hebrews	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		5	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week beginning MARCH 29

Matthew 5:29-30

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Week beginning APRIL 5

Matthew 5:31-32

It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Week beginning APRIL 12

Matthew 5:33

Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'

Week beginning APRIL 19

Matthew 5:34-36

But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

Week beginning APRIL 26

Matthew 5:37

Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.