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Our Consciences are Bound: Midwestern Seminary & Same-Sex Marriage



This past Friday, Jackson County Judge J. Dale Youngs ruled the state of Missouri must recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. His ruling decided a case filed by the ACLU on behalf of 10 Missouri same-sex couples who had married out of state.[1]

Youngs determined that state laws and the Missouri Constitution were in violation of the United States Constitution's equal protection clause. Now, all eyes turn to Missouri's Supreme Court, where Youngs' ruling will surely be appealed. This ruling is another reminder of the dizzying pace of cultural change and the necessity for Christian entities to speak clearly—and consistently—on this issue.

As cultural momentum toward full acceptance and normalization of homosexuality and same-sex marriage intensifies, so will the pressure on Christian organizations to adopt

accommodating policies. Indeed, venerable Christian and Baptist entities have amended, or are contemplating amending, their guidelines toward same-sex marriage and alternative lifestyles.

Many self-identified Christian entities yet to officially sanction homosexuality and same-sex marriage operate under their own version of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” They seek intentional ambiguity on issues of gender, sexuality, and marriage to avoid offending one or more of their constituencies. Such middle ground is eroding by the day, as it well should. Every institution’s constituency has the right to know where it stands, and every school—and every school leader—has a moral obligation to make its stance known.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has long since settled its view of marriage and human sexuality, but it is appropriate to state and restate our convictions, especially in light of the swift and dramatic cultural shifts now taking place. We are not polling students, conducting market surveys, or engaging focus groups among likely supporters to determine our position. Nor will we. Midwestern Seminary stands unapologetically for a biblical sexual ethic that affirms marriage as between one man and one woman for life and counts as sin all sexual activity outside of covenantal marriage. Driven by biblical conviction, denominational faithfulness, confessional integrity, and societal witness, we have so planted our standard.

Biblical Conviction

Midwestern Seminary is committed to the Bible as God’s inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word. We confess with the Reformers, *vox Scriptura vox dei*—the voice of Scripture is the voice of God. The Bible speaks clearly concerning marriage and human sexuality, and we joyfully submit to its declarations. As part of his created order, God established marriage as between one man and one woman.[2] This standard remains consistent throughout Scripture, confirmed by Jesus[3] and reconfirmed by the apostles.[4]

Moreover, the Bible prohibits all sexual activity outside of covenantal marriage, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts. The Bible’s statements about human sexuality and marriage are clear—sexual activity is reserved exclusively for one man and one woman, bound together before God in a covenantal, conjugal marriage.

Denominational Faithfulness

Midwestern Seminary is an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation’s largest

Protestant denomination. We abide under their governance and are legally and morally obligated to keep trust with the Southern Baptist churches that own us.

Southern Baptists have clearly and repeatedly stood with Scripture and the broader Christian tradition on human sexuality and marriage. The vast majority of Southern Baptists classify as sin all forms of sexual immorality and alternative lifestyles. Moreover, the SBC will not seat messengers from churches that “act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior.”[5]

As Midwestern Seminary stands for sexual purity and conjugal marriage, we do not stand alone. We are in lockstep with the denomination that owns us.

Confessional Integrity

As a seminary of the SBC, Midwestern Seminary is bound confessionally to the *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*. Our confessional commitment is nonnegotiable, forthright, and unshakeable. We hold our doctrinal commitments with full integrity and keep them in both the letter and spirit of their expectation.

The *BF&M 2000* defines marriage as “the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.”[6] The Midwestern Seminary faculty happily teaches in accordance with and not contrary to the *BF&M 2000* and will continue to do so, undaunted, regardless of cultural challenge or societal contempt.

Societal Witness

Finally, Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” necessitates that we “speak the truth, in love” to all peoples on all things, including issues of marriage and sexuality. We understand Scripture establishes and celebrates conjugal, covenantal marriage as the only sexual relationship that glorifies God and facilitates human flourishing.

Furthermore, Scripture labels all sexual activity outside of covenantal marriage, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts, as sin. For millennia, these acts have been proscribed by the Christian tradition, and love for neighbor compels us to point out these acts as sin and point our neighbors to the gospel of Christ, which redeems us from all sin.

Conclusion

Persistent agitation to legalize same-sex marriage will not abate, and the national

acceptance of same-sex marriage likely will accelerate. Midwestern Seminary is called neither to ride the cultural current nor to stop it but to transcend it altogether.

Our call is to speak consistently the settled truth of Scripture with confidence and grace, and to point all peoples to the message of Jesus, which saves, transforms, and renews. We do so not because the sexually immoral are worse than us, but because they are precisely like us—in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Driven by biblical conviction, denominational faithfulness, confessional integrity, and societal witness, Midwestern Seminary graciously—yet confidently—declares that God intended marriage to be a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, and that all sexual activity outside of that marital covenant is sin. To this truth, our consciences are bound.

[1] Portions of this article previously appeared as *Here We Stand*.

[2] See Genesis 1:28–31; 2:4–25.

[3] See Matthew 5:31–32; 18:2–5; 19:3–9; Mark 10:6–12.

[4] See Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 7:1–16; Ephesians 5:21–33; 6:1–4; Colossians 3:18–21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3–5; Titus 2:3–5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1–7.

[5] Southern Baptist Convention Constitution, Article III.1. Available online, <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/legal/constitution.asp>.

[6] *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*, Article XVIII: The Family. Available online, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>.

TOPICS *Jackson County, Missouri, Sam-Sex Marriage*