

## **Biblically Keeping the “Main Thing” the “Main Thing”**

The recent decision from the Supreme Court has raised many questions regarding the religious liberty of churches and Christians, including Christian businesses and schools, in America. While we cannot yet know the full impact and intent of the majority opinion, we do know that we will stand with pastors, Christians, church members, and those taking a Biblical stand for the faith at this critical moment in our nation’s history. We want you to call with any questions you have and be assured we will stand with you on this important issue. Below, we have drafted an initial response. With much prayer and God-given wisdom, we can stand firmly for the cause of Christ in this great land.

### **Excerpts from the Court’s Opinion**

*“The [United States Supreme] Court has ruled that same-sex couples may exercise the fundamental right to marry in all States.” Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U. S. \_\_\_\_ (2015)*

The Court has stated that:

*“The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity.”*

The Court has established same-sex marriage as a fundamental constitutional right based on the assertion of a “harm principle” which, according to Chief Justice Roberts, “sounds more in philosophy than law.” It was clear from the first sentence of the decision that philosophy, and not law, would be the basis for the decision when it stated that the Constitution promises people the right “to define and express their identity.” Chief Justice Roberts warned in dissent that,

*“The majority’s decision is an act of will, not legal judgment. The right it announces has no basis in the Constitution or this Court’s precedent. The majority . . . omits even a pretense of humility, openly relying on its desire to remake society according to its own ‘new insight’ into the ‘nature of injustice.’”*

\* \* \*

*“Many people will rejoice at this decision, and I begrudge none their celebration. But for those who believe in a government of laws, not of men, the majority’s approach is deeply disheartening”.*

The Supreme Court did state in its opinion:

*“Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.”*

### **Recommendations**

Although this decision should not have surprised anyone, the reality of it emphasizes how badly our nation needs Christians to “rise up” and “have done with lesser things” according to the old hymn. King David of Israel plaintively asked, *“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* (Psalm 11:3). The tribe of Issachar, in David’s time, *“had understanding of the times, to know what [God’s people] ought to do . . .”* (1 Chron. 12:32). In that spirit, Christian Law Association recommends the following actions:

#### **1. Pray, as we have never prayed before.**

In response to Friday’s decision by the United States Supreme Court regarding same-sex marriage, we urge God’s people to earnestly and fervently pray for our nation as never before. Romans 12:12 admonishes us to be *“...continuing instant in prayer.”* In this hour of great need, let us persevere in prayer. It is that kind of prayer that the Lord has used in the past to turn nations back to Him. He is able to do that again. Like Esther (Esth. 4:16), when faced with potential destruction of the people of God, our first resort cannot be to “take to the streets” but to take to our prayer closets (Matt. 6:6). Like Nehemiah, when he heard that Jerusalem was broken down, we need to “fast and pray before the God of heaven” (Neh. 1:4-11). Like Daniel, when he heard of the decree demanding prayer to the king only, we need to kneel before God and pray at various times during the day. (Dan. 6:10).

E.M. Bounds wrote, “What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not more organization, or more novel methods, but men mighty in prayer!”

Let us be mighty in prayer!

**2. Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as never before.**

In times like these local churches and Christians can easily be sidetracked by the issues of the day. While it is absolutely vital that we respond biblically to the United States Supreme Court decision regarding same-sex marriage, we must be careful to remember that the hope for America has always been and will always be local churches and Christians proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” America needs to hear that Jesus saves! When people trust Christ as Savior, their lives are changed. When enough lives are changed, a nation can be changed.

We must “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:14). It is not helpful to communicate the Gospel of grace in anger; we must be gracious (Col. 4:6), compassionate, and merciful in our witness (Jude 20-23).

Bottom line: We **must** keep the main thing the main thing!

**3. Clarify what your church believes the Bible teaches about sexual behavior and the definition of marriage.**

The only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman, regardless of what the U. S. Supreme Court says. It is based on God’s design for humanity—male and female—as an expression of God’s image (diversity, Gen. 1:27, and unity, Gen. 2:24). Our churches need to speak frankly about all sexual activity outside of marriage, but particularly about sexual activity that is harmful to Christian marriages: pre-marital sex, infidelity (flirting, pornography), and adultery. The Bible clearly teaches that we are to abstain from all sexual activity outside of marriage. All sexual activity engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman contravenes God’s gift of sex.

**4. Be ready to stand as never before.**

A. Make sure that what your church believes what the Bible teaches about sexual behavior and the definition of marriage is clearly and specifically stated in your Statement of Faith (usually a part of the church bylaws).

- B. Use your church facilities for church purposes only. Churches can no longer simply allow “the public” to use its facilities for weddings. If your church rents out its facilities to the public, it may be forced to accept same-sex couple applicants. Your church needs a written facility use policy in addition to a clear statement of faith. This policy needs to clearly outline that the requestor agrees with your church’s statement of faith. This will aid in protecting the church and its leaders. To adequately protect the church’s property, I recommend that a church only permit facility use, if any, by its members in good standing. I also suggest that no weddings be allowed that are not presided over by one of the church’s pastors. In a growing number of states, when a church opens or rents its facilities to non-members it engages in commerce and becomes subject to “public accommodation” laws that prohibit various types of discrimination. This means that if your church offers certain goods or services to the public (e.g. food, goods, services, and entertainment) your property may be considered a place of public accommodation subject to state, county, and municipal anti-discrimination laws.
- C. Recover the sacred meaning of marriage in word and practice. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman before God (Mal. 2:14). As such, the ceremony is an act of worship of the Creator for the blessing of marriage (Prov. 18:22; 19:14). Weddings in the church should rightfully be referred to as worship services.

This is one of the most challenging and exciting times for Christians in the history of America. We must do the right thing, the right way. It is a privilege and an honor to stand Biblically for the cause of Jesus Christ.

If you have further questions, call us at 888-252-1969.

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