



THE METHODIST CHURCH IN MALAYSIA

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Dealing with Same-Sex Union, Biblically and Pastorally

We are hearing of some Methodist Churches overseas who are approving same-sex marriage. Although their decision has no implication on the Methodist Church in Malaysia (as we are an autonomous Church), yet there are many who are thinking through its implications for the Church all over. In some ways, the decision has affected Methodists in Malaysia too, especially our lay members who genuinely want to know where the church really stands in terms of biblical convictions. Even in the churches overseas the same-sex marriage approval has never been arrived at unanimously. It has split churches and caused many to grieve over the decision taken. Often, the decision is made from the perspective of human rights.

We wish to state three things broadly:

1. The authority of the Bible
2. The institution of marriage as espoused in the Bible
3. Our Christian response to same-sex marriage

1. The Bible is the authoritative word of God

- * It is "God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Meaning, the Bible is the Word of God, brought into existence by the breath of God. The human authors wrote the Word of God under inspiration from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).
- * The Word of God is able to instruct us for salvation (2 Tim 3:15). God has spoken to us through the Bible primarily to show us the way to come into a relationship with Him. In other words, the Bible is not to be used as a historical or a science book, although it does complement both. However, primarily it is a Book that leads us into a relationship with God.
- * Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). This is to say that God has not left us to wonder what truth is and what error is, what is right and what is wrong. The Bible is able to instruct us as to how we should live.
- * While the Bible was written within particular cultures, this Word of God that is able to teach, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness is not a Word only for the past. It is the Word for the past, present and future cultures.

2. The institution of marriage

- * We are all sexual beings created by God as male and female (Gen 1:27).

- * Marriage is an institution established by God for a man and a woman (Gen 2:24)
- * Our Lord Jesus affirmed the institution of marriage as it should be between a man and a woman (Mt 19:4-6).

3. Our Christian response to same-sex marriage

In view of the affirmations above, what then should our Christian response be to same-sex marriage?

- * We must be faithful to the Word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
- * Marriage is instituted by God in terms of heterosexual monogamy. It is a union between one man and one woman.
- * Heterosexual marriage is God's created order for humankind, and it is not something based on any culture of the past. It is a divine institution meant for all cultures of all times.
- * Same-sex marriage does not find support in the Bible.
- * The Bible is not only unsupportive of same-sex intercourse, but it is against any sexual relationship that deviates from the one man-one woman sexual act within the context of marriage.
- * Even as we follow the teaching of the Bible about marriage, we must follow the teachings of the Bible with regards to loving our neighbours. While we do not accept same-sex union, we affirm that we do not hate those who deviate from the path stated in the Bible. We affirm our love for our neighbours. The doors of our hearts and the doors of our churches are open to anyone who will come to be ministered to, and be on the way to being a true disciple of Jesus Christ our Lord.
- * In The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church in Malaysia (MBOD 2016) the following is stated and we take cognizance of it:

“The Methodist Church believes that, in setting persons apart for ministry, self-avowed practicing LGBTQI (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Trans-Sexual, Queers and Indeterminate) are not to be certified as candidates to serve at any level in the Methodist Church in Malaysia. Nonetheless, this does not prevent us from ministering to them with the love of Christ.” (301.3)
- * In the section called Social Principles in the MBOD 2016, the following is stated:

“We consider the practice of homosexuality to be incompatible with Christian teachings. However, we do recognise that homosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. The Church is committed to provide counselling, healing and guidance as well as the spiritual and emotional support of a caring fellowship.” (84.4e)

“We believe that individuals who are confused about their sexual identity need the healing and transforming power of God's grace rather than sex-change operations.” (84.4f)

We pray that we will be faithful to the Word of God that is contained in the Bible, and not give in to teachings that distort the Word of God. We must not treat the Word of God as an ancient text that can be interpreted according to cultural fashions and fleshly desires. We, as a Church, need to be careful that we guard our pulpits, our intellects, and our emotions from those who are eager to bring about man-made theories that cannot be sustained. At the same time the pulpit must not be used to ridicule those who reject the biblical lifestyle.

To argue from the presupposition of human rights is a huge fallacy because each has his own way of interpreting rights and demanding rights. Let us not be swayed by arguments that want to be culturally and politically correct. Cultures will change and politics will adjust itself to cultures. We, on the other hand, must be faithful to the teachings of the Bible.

Let us be prayerful for the Methodist Church in Malaysia and preach the unchanging Word of God faithfully. For those who have deviated from the truth, we pray for them to return to the Truth.

Blessings,
The Council of Bishops
The Methodist Church in Malaysia