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## **Defining the Biblical Marriage Relationship**

*Doctrinal Statement*

- *Approved by the Council of Elders — Dec. 9, 2015*
- *Ratified by the General Conference of Elders — May 15, 2016*

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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## **United Church of God doctrinal statement defining the biblical marriage relationship**

God is in the process of establishing His spiritual family (Ephesians 3:14-15; Hebrews 2:10), which the human family portrays.

At creation, God designed and established marriage between the first man and woman as a divine institution (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9). He created man and woman in His own image (Genesis 1:27) but with distinct differences between male and female. In creating Adam, God said it was not good for him to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Man needed suitable and complementary companionship. So God specifically made woman and established marriage as a covenant relationship not only between a man and a woman, but also with God (Genesis 2:21-25; Matthew 19:4-6, Malachi 2:14).

Marriage between a husband and wife is the basic building block of the family and human society, and is the only biblically approved sexual relationship (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible teaches that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe God intends that marriage only be between one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (1 Corinthians 7:2-3). God also stated that husband and wife are made “one” to produce “godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15).

God’s intent for the marriage union moves beyond just the physical plane of a social and economic compact with human bonding and procreation. The marriage relationship between a husband and wife with their inherent personal and gender uniqueness was established to teach husbands and wives to love, honor and respect one another with the same kind of giving and self-sacrificial love demonstrated in the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Marriage thus has a great divine purpose that transcends this physical existence.

Marriage is a godly relationship and divine institution, and God joins together a husband and wife in marriage (Matthew 19:6, Mark 10:9). Any definition of marriage other than as an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman is illegitimate and invalid in the sight of God and His Church and contradicts His divine instruction as revealed in the Bible (Acts 5:29).

Marriage is a very serious commitment, safeguarded in the law of God. Any form of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual acts, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, sexual lust or use of pornography, is sinful and offensive to Him (Exodus 20:14, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:5, Matthew 5:48, Galatians 5:19-21). Similarly, a transgender marriage or sexual relationship, and/or changing the God-ordained roles of men and women, is sinful and unbiblical. However, God offers reconciliation to all whom He calls and who repent of these and all other sins and seek His forgiveness and turn to Him in faith and obedience (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Peter 3:9-13, 1 John 1:8-9). While God clearly and unequivocally condemns all sin with the suffering and harm that it brings, every person should be afforded compassion, love and kindness (Titus 3:3-7).

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The governing documents of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, specify that the collective ministry of the Church is vested with the authority to define its beliefs and practices based on the Bible, the supreme source of revelation for mankind (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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