

Thinking about God's good gift of marriage in a rapidly changing society.



## Marriage is in the news: what do Christians think and do about it?

# MARRIAGE MATTERS

We Christians need to think about marriage: marriage in Australian society is changing rapidly and we have to be clear about why marriage matters to God and what we are going to do about it. Discussion of same-sex marriage has put marriage back in the news, but that is only one of a number of related issues. This resource paper aims to help you think about the changing meaning of marriage in Australia and how Christians should respond to it.

This paper focusses on marriage rather than dealing with the whole area of sexual ethics. It offers a theology of marriage, points out some of the implications of this and highlights topics which need further thought.

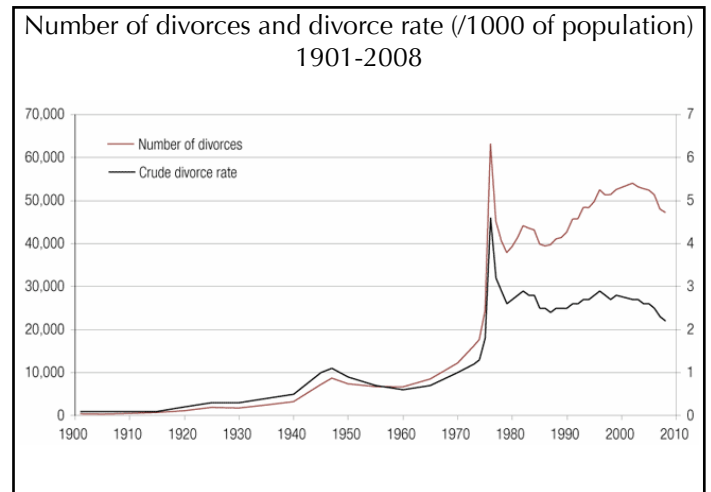


## MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA

Your parents and grandparents were very likely to have been married, they were probably married in their early twenties and, if they were in Australia, almost certainly married in a church. At the same age today, most Australians are not married, most live together before they get married and when they do get married it probably won't be in a church. Marriage is not what it used to be in Australia.

Between 1990 and 2010 the marriage rate dropped by about 20% but the number of couples having a religious wedding dropped by almost 60%. The assumption that weddings and marriage are a religious activity has just about disappeared. That means that for many Australians there is no obvious reason why churches should have a large say in what happens with marriage.

Before 1970 less than 10% of couples lived together before marriage, in 1990 that reached about 45% of couples, in 2010 the figure was 80%.

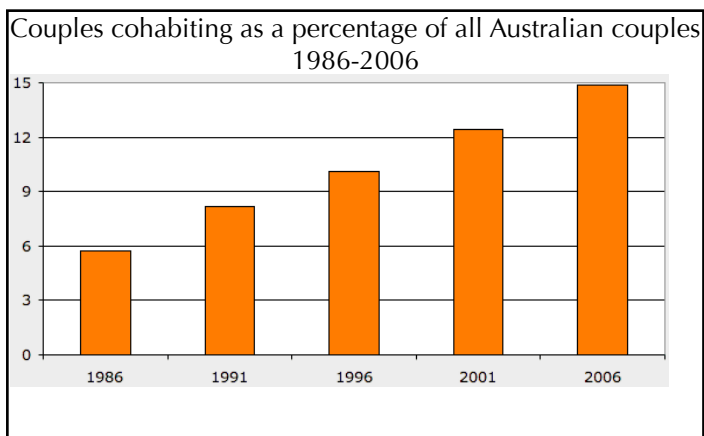


ber continue in a long-term relationship without marrying. In fact, there is “widespread endorsement of marriage as an institution”. Many people hope to get married and stay married.<sup>1</sup> Australians want to get married, but we have changed our view of marriage.

Looking at American society Andrew Cherlin suggests that the meaning of marriage has changed and his observations seem to apply to Australia as well. Marriage was once the done thing, a matter of conformity; it has become “a marker of prestige”. Marriage used to be at the beginning of adult life and a basis for a future. Now it marks an achievement since it means you have careers, savings, a house and perhaps children. It is the ‘capstone’ rather than the foundation. “It is something to be achieved through one’s own efforts rather than something to which one routinely accedes.”<sup>2</sup>

## AUSTRALIANS WANT TO GET MARRIED, BUT WE HAVE CHANGED OUR VIEW OF MARRIAGE

The new view of marriage is clear in discussions of same-sex marriage. Marriage is valued, most people aspire to it and society accepts gay relationships. It seems obvious, then, that everyone in society should be able to reach that same aspiration. Registered relationships and civil partnerships don’t have the same dignity or significance as marriage. Even if most people would have a hard time explaining what makes marriage special, they think it is and feel that all couples should have access to it. As Barry O’Farrell, NSW Premier, recently said, “governments



At the other end of marriage, divorce is far more common. In 1901 there were 398 divorces in Australia, the number grew slowly until 1975 when the Family Law Act introduced no fault divorce. In 1976 the number of divorces peaked at 63,000 and the rate has since stabilised and dropped slightly between 1990 and 2010, probably due an ageing population and reduced number of people who are married. Marriage in Australia is no longer presumed to be a life-long commitment.<sup>1</sup>

It is not that Australians have given up on marriage. Most couples who live together either break up or get married, only a very small num-

shouldn't deny to one section of the community recognition of the commitment in loving relationships they extend to others".<sup>3</sup>

About 58% of Australians agree that same sex couples should have the right to marry, though only 49% support changing the Marriage Act. It is worth noting that while 14% strongly support a change, 18% are strongly opposed.<sup>4</sup> The outcome of the political debate over same-sex marriage is not yet clear. What is clear is that there has been a rapid acceptance of same-sex marriage in the community.

These changes to marriage in Australia raise a host of question for Christians. Do we "defend" marriage? Is marriage something we should talk to our society about? What do we when the meaning of marriage is very different for us and others? How do we respond when couples in the church live together or when marriages break down? How should churches help people threatened and hurt by the confusion? If same-sex marriage is introduced, what should churches and Christians do?

We've been discussing some of these questions for several decades, some are newer. The wave of questions is building and it is an important moment for Christians in Australia to reconsider what we believe about marriage and how that works out in the life and witness of the church.



## God and marriage: Creation

Getting married is a very normal human activity and every culture has a version of it. This is because it is established by God in creation and is woven by him into human makeup. Although Christians have a distinct view of marriage it is not a uniquely Christian institution.



## God's good order

God's created order is the starting point for thinking about a Christian view of marriage.

This claim marks one of the great dividing lines between Christian thinking about marriage and common Australian attitudes. The underlying assumption in our society is that we are self-made, we can and should invent ourselves and define our identity as we want. There is no "human nature" with which we should conform. From that assumption, the Christian view looks like an authoritarian imposition which limits freedom. Who has the right to say how I should live my life?

In contrast, the Christian view is that God has a pattern for us, we don't define ourselves or our relationship from the ground up. Human life is not something we make up as we go along. There is freedom and creativity, but within boundaries formed by God's design in creation and his will revealed in the Bible.

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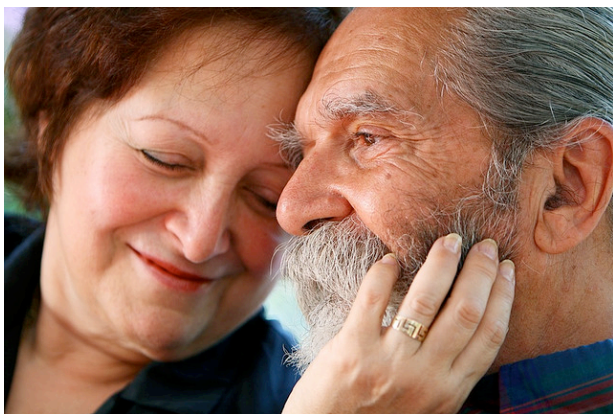
The debate on same-sex marriage show this dividing line. Christians argue that heterosexual marriage is a given, part of God's patterns for human life. The secular world finds the idea outrageous and often assumes that Christian oppo-

sition to same-sex marriage is mere traditionalism or outright homophobia.

Christians who recognise heterosexual marriage as God's patterns do not all agree on how much we should defend our view in the public square and whether we should actively campaign against same-sex marriage. Those differences are about view of church and society, not about God's creation pattern.

There are, however, some Christians who don't recognise the place of God's creation pattern and argue that same sex marriage should be recognised by churches. That is a very significant shift from classic Christian views and is a theological error with major implications.

All people are made in God's image and the difference between male and female is an aspect of this image (Gen 1:26-27). On the basis of sexual difference, God established marriage as a unique, exclusive relationship between a man and a woman in which they find a special intimacy and communion (Gen 2:20-25). Marriage is the exclusive lifelong union of male and female and requires a man and a woman to give to each other the highest human loyalty. Jesus affirmed this view of marriage (Matt 19:4-6) and the apostles taught the same thing (Eph 5:28-33; 1 Tim 3:2,12; Tit 1:6).



The Bible describes marriage as a covenant (Prov 2:17; Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:14). That is, it is a mutual relationship in which husband and wife give their promises to one another. Being a child to our parents happens to us, and slavery is imposed; in contrast marriage depends on a joint commitment from husband and wife.



In the Bible marriage is presented as, ideally, a relationship of love, of giving and receiving in all of life. The Bible celebrates the joy and intimacy of married sexual love (e.g. Prov 5:15-19, Song of Songs) and has stories which show the importance, blessings and comfort of marriage (Gen 23:2; 24:67; Ruth 3:10; Prov 18:22; 19:1; 31:10-31).

### *The joy of sex*

The Bible was clear about the joy of sex long before Alex Comfort wrote the book in early '70s. The communion of marriage is expressed and sealed in sexual love. Sexual union in marriage is "a visible expression and symbolic sealing of the marriage bond uniting husband and wife".<sup>5</sup> Sex in marriage should be an experience of unity, care, honesty and openness: an affirmation of acceptance and intimate knowledge of one other. Part of God's good design is that a man and woman are able to give themselves physically, emotionally and spiritually to one another for mutual enjoyment. So, a sexual relationship has its place and purpose within marriage.

The intimacy of married sexual love reflects God himself and God's love of his people. God is Father, Son and Spirit in unfathomably deep communion; and our capacity to give ourselves to a spouse and to know one another richly reflects God's own inner fellowship.

More directly, marriage reflects God's love for his people. In the Old Testament God is por-

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trayed as Israel's husband (Isa 54:5; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16). The New Testament compares Christ to a husband (John 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-33; Rev 19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17). It is not simply that Christ's relationship with the church can be compared to marriage, the comparison is the reverse. Marriage is modelled on Christ's love for



his people (Eph 5:32). Through Christ the church enters into a relationship with God of which marriage was always a God-given picture.

### *Children*

Children are God's blessing in a marriage (Deut 28:4; Ps 127:3-5). Sexual intercourse, the most intimate expression of human communion, seals a marriage and may also create children who grow up in a family made secure by the promises and commitments of marriage. Love, sex, marriage and children form an intricately interwoven braid. God then entrusts children to parents for them to care for and raise (Deut 6:6-9; Prov 13:24; 22:6; 29:15; Col 3:21; Eph 6:4).

Some marriages remain childless and the Bible often recognises the pain of infertility (Gen 18:11-13; Judg 13:2; 1 Sam. 1:2; 2 Sam 6:23; Luke 1:6-7). In Biblical times children gave a family economic security and ensured that the family name and property would be maintained. More profoundly, infertility means that one of the God-given purposes of sex and marriage is frustrated.

### *Order*

Our society is radically egalitarian and dislikes any idea of submission, so the biblical teaching that wives should submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:5) is deeply distasteful. In 2012 the Sydney Morning Herald stirred a minor controversy over the plan of the Sydney Anglican Church to introduced optional wedding vows in which the bride promised to submit.<sup>6</sup> The planned vows were simply a rewording of the traditional vows in which a wife promised to obey her husband. Either word is offensive to many modern Australians.

The biblical pattern is that wives submit to the loving service of their husbands. There is no expectation that husbands enforce submission, it is to be freely given by a wife. The biblical teaching is distorted if it is used to justify abuse and authoritarianism in marriage. Yet even when submission and leadership in marriage is explained carefully and modelled with love, our society will probably find the very idea offensive.

### *Culture building*

Humans are made to serve God in his world and act as stewards and keepers of his creation, and



marriage is central to the culture we develop. There are three obvious connections between marriage and the fulfilment of this call from God. One is the mutual help of husband and wife. Man and woman are made to stand beside each other in the task. The second aspect is that marriage is the context for children through whom human culture continues and develops. Third, marriage forms a stable basis on which society is built. Thus, for Christians, marriage is the foundational human relationship from which all other institutions develop: family, community, nation.

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### MARRIAGE GONE WRONG

The Bible speaks not only of God's good purposes in creation but also of the corruption of human life through sin. It shows, quite frankly, how marriage is affected by sin. The most immediate result of the "original sin" is that Adam and Eve fear being naked before each other, trust, peace and fellowship have been lost (Gen 3:7). Further, childbirth will be difficult and the man and woman will compete for control in marriage (Gen 3:16). Just as the Bible has many narratives which celebrate the blessing of marriage, it also has many which show dysfunctional, unhappy and abusive marriages (Gen 4:19-24; 1 Sam 25:3-38).

One result of sin is disordered sexuality. Both the Old and New Testaments strongly condemn adultery and other sexual sins (Ex 20:14; Lev 20:10; Deut 5:18; Matt 5:27; 15:19; Rom 2:22; 13:9; Jas 2:11; 2 Pet 2:14). According to God's plan, sex is for marriage alone, and sex outside of marriage is always a sin. Not only are sexual acts outside of marriage sinful, sin distorts our sexual desires. In Romans 1 both sinful lusts and acts are the results of God's judgement (Rom 1:24-27). Sexual relationships can be distorted inside marriage as well. What should be used in loving service can be turned to selfish manipulation and domination.

The prevalence of domestic violence in Australian families is stark evidence of the effects of

sin. About 34% of women who have a partner will experience some form of violence.<sup>7</sup>

The Old Testament recognises and deals with some of the failings of human marriage. On the one hand it provides regulations for divorce. This recognises the realities of human relationships which mean that divorce is sometimes the necessary course of action. It also regulates polygamy (Lev 18:18). Like divorce, polygamy was never presented as an ideal, but rather a cultural practice which needed to be regulated.



Christians should not pretend that their marriages are ideal or that there are no struggles. A real marriage involves two sinners trying to live in faithful love, inevitably both will fail at many points. Christians should promote marriage and be quick to talk about its blessings but not by a sentimental pretence about our marriages.

Another way in which we corrupt marriage is to turn it in to an idol. This happens when getting married and being married and raising a family becomes our greatest good and source of meaning and identity. This idolatry is remarkably common in Australia and is a temptation for

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Christians. The greatest blessings from God are always the easiest to change into an idol and marriage and family are so basic to human living that it is no wonder we make more of them than we should.



## MARRIAGE AND REDEMPTION

Marriage and family have a key role in God's plan to redeem the world. He promises that Eve's seed will crush the serpent; that Abraham's family will grow and bless all families; and that David will always have a son on the throne in Jerusalem.

These promises are fulfilled in Jesus, who is born and raised in a family with a genealogy which reaches back to Abraham and Adam (Matt 1; Luke 3:23-28). He is the promised child, the fulfilment of all the Old Testament promises and hopes: the seed of Eve, child of Abraham, Son of David. Yet, he is born from a virgin conception not natural reproduction. He is a new start, a new creation. Redemption must come from beyond humanity and from God himself, yet God works through a human family.

Jesus establishes the true marriage with his bride, the church. Our human marriages are not the final goal, they reflect the deep union and love between God and his people. Recognising this

frees us from idolising marriage. It is not our highest good nor our final satisfaction.

The fulfilment of marriage with Jesus explains the noticeable shift in attitudes to singleness from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Testament the only "singles" are young people, who are expected to marry, or widows. No one in Old Testament Israel seems to have been called to life-long singleness. In the New Testament the fulfilment of marriage has arrived with Jesus, and he is the model of the new humanity and is not married. Paul, similarly, seems not to have been married (1 Cor 7:8; 9:5) and recommends a life of celibacy for some (1 Cor 7:7-10, 29-34, 40). The example of Jesus and Paul means that while Christians celebrate and support marriage, they should also celebrate and support single life. In the medieval church the spiritual significance of celibacy was over-estimated. Protestants, on the other hand, have often ignored its value.

For many Christians, marriage and family are God's calling. Several New Testament letters include instructions about marriage (Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Together, parents have the responsibility to raise godly children (Eph 6:4) and homes are basis for church and mission (Acts 12:12; 16:40; 18:26; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; 3 Jn 8; Phlm 2), the Christian married to a non-Christian is called to be faithful and give a quiet witness to Christ (1 Cor 7:12-14; 1 Pet 3:1-6).



Christ makes it possible for marriage and sexuality to be significantly redeemed, now. In an important text, the apostle Paul addresses the church in Corinth and lists a series of sins including, but not limited to, sexual sin. He says to the Corinthian Christians, "that is what some of you were, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). This is an important part of the message of Christianity about sex and marriage—redemption in Christ includes this area of life. Because sexual experiences and relationships have a deep effect on the psyche, the message of forgiveness and freedom in Christ can have a tremendous impact on people who feel guilty and damaged by their sexual history.

Because marriage is part of God’s pattern for his people, because it is the most intimate human relationship and because it is the basis for raising children to know God; then Christians should marry Christians. In the Old Testament God’s people are only to marry within Israel because those who worshipped other gods would turn them from the Lord (Deut 7:3–4; Josh 23:12–13). Paul repeats a similar instruction (1 Cor 7:39). The Westminster Confession echoes this, saying that “it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord” (WCF 24:3).

#### CONCLUSION: COUNTER-CULTURAL MARRIAGES

In Australia a Christian view of marriage is counter-cultural. Don’t let the sales of bridal magazines or the hype of celebrity weddings give the impression that we are all excited about the same thing. A redefinition of marriage has been under way, on many fronts, long before the debate about same-sex marriage. (Was “traditional marriage” ever the same as the Christian ideal? Probably not. But the differences have become more obvious).



Think about some of the ways in which the Christian view is different to common attitudes:

- Extra-marital sex, and even adultery, are widely accepted. The statistics confirm the general impression that sex is no longer considered to be exclusively for marriage. One study found that in Australia only 4.7% of men and 11.1% of women have their first experience of sex with their wife or husband.<sup>8</sup> While it is difficult to get accurate information about infidelity, the self-proclaimed “Great Australian Sex Census” announced that 45% of men and 41% of women had cheated on their partner (although there is no information about how the 9,000 people surveyed were contacted).<sup>9</sup> Whatever the exact figures, Australians do not widely share the Christian sexual ethic.

From the marriage service of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

“Marriage is a state of life which God has provided for mankind.  
Jesus, our Lord, honoured it by his presence at a marriage in Cana in Galilee.  
Throughout the Scriptures marriage is an honoured relationship  
and in the New Testament the bond of marriage is seen as a sign of the loyalty and the  
love that exists between Christ and his church.

Marriage is not to be entered into lightly or carelessly but with reverent and serious consideration of the purposes for which it has been given.

It was given so that husband and wife might always enjoy each other’s  
companionship, help and support.

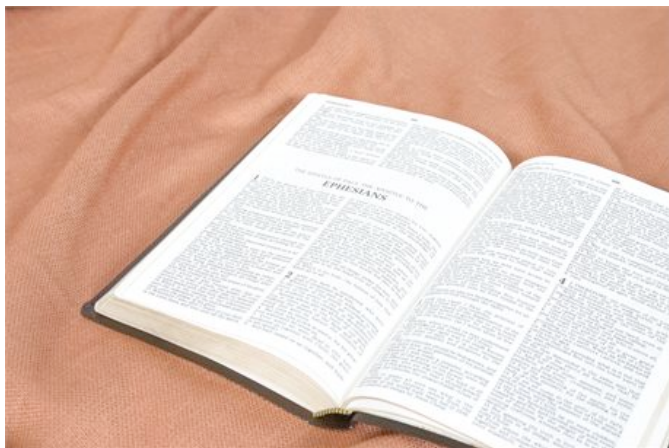
It was given for the proper expression of human sexuality.

It was given so that family life might continue and that children might be brought up in  
the love and security of a stable and happy home.

It was given so that human society might be healthy and have a firm foundation.”

- We live in a society with easy access to divorce. When a marriage is difficult or unsatisfying then it is usually ended as painlessly as possible. The implication of the biblical model is that Christians will seek to persevere in faithfulness and seek reconciliation as far as possible.
- The biblical teaching about servant headship and submission is critiqued and dismissed.
- The notion of chaste singleness is often not even considered or is mocked. It is assumed that a single person, at least of a certain age, must be sexually active or seeking sexual activity.
- Domestic violence is common in Australia, even though it is widely condemned. While, almost all Australians agree that domestic violence is a crime, a surprisingly large number feel it is excusable in certain circumstances.<sup>10</sup>
- Same sex marriage is the most recent sign that whatever “Christian” consensus there was in Australia about marriage is rapidly evaporating.

It is time to recognise that the biblical view of marriage is counter-cultural and commit ourselves to living by God’s revealed pattern, in the light of our redemption. If we could ever assume a cultural consensus which supported Christian views of marriage, that has long disappeared. It now takes effort to think in a biblical way about marriage, and we have to work hard to promote it in churches and support each other to live it. If marriage is important, and it is, then it deserves a significant focus in discipleship.



By God’s grace we should honour marriage (Heb 13:4) and support each other to live a life of sexual self-control, leaving behind the old ways of immorality and license. This is a difficult task in a society which has little sympathy for the Christian sexual ethic. As we live this way we bear witness to God’s patterns and also to his redemption.

We need to make the case for marriage, especially to younger Christians who see their peers treating living together as a serious long-term commitment. The question “why bother with a piece of paper and a party?” is an obvious one. We need to explain that marriage is part of a community and society not just a private relationship, and public promises help to secure it.

Churches should teach the biblical pattern that Christians marry in the Lord, while Christians who are already married to non-believers are called to remain faithful to their marriages (1 Cor 7:12–13).

Inadvertently, we can accept the idolatry of marriage and sex and give the impression that married life is the best form of the Christian life. This hurts single Christians. The gospel frees us from making marriage an idol and lets us recognise the calling of singleness. In a society in which sexual activity is assumed and flaunted, singles have a special role in churches. They call the whole church away from investing marriage and sexuality with too great a significance.

Australian society is obsessed by glamorous weddings and satisfying marriages. We have to promote marriages which are focussed on service, not satisfaction and weddings which are about community and commitment rather than glamour.

What do we say to our wider community? We should do what we can to promote in society patterns of sexual life and marriage which reflect God’s ways. Where we can advocate for better patterns or preserve something of the Christian sexual ethic in our society we should do that. We won’t be under the illusion that promoting a more biblical pattern of marriage makes people Christians or makes us a Christian society. Rather, because God’s ways is good for our neighbours, we promote them out of love. This is why we should oppose the introduction of same-sex marriage.

While our view is counter-cultural, and even offensive, it will also be attractive to some people. As we teach and live God's way of marriage it will be a powerful witness. Our confidence in the view we advocate stems from our faith in a God who created all things and designed our sexuality as men and women for the relationship of marriage, and who is redeeming his people in the image of Christ as his bride.



### Recommended Resources

- C. Ash, *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best It Can Be* (IVP, 2007)
- B. Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Crossway, 2010)
- C. Smith, *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says About Men and Women* (Matthias Media, 2012)
- A.J. Köstenberger and D.W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Crossway, 2010)
- S.J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1990)
- J. Healy, ed., *Same-sex Marriage Debate* (Spinney Press, 2013)
- M.L. Strauss, ed., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church: Three Views*. (Zondervan, 2006)

### What could your church do?

1. Teach frankly about marriage and sex.
2. Support victims of domestic violence.
3. Celebrate weddings and anniversaries.
4. Encourage singles without presuming that God will call them to be married one day.
5. Seek to bless couples who want a church wedding rather than profit from them.
6. Form small groups where marrieds and singles share life and support each other.
7. Encourage couples to invest time and energy into their marriages and not to overload with work, sport, family or church.
8. Teach and model a rich view of Christian marriage, not just rules about sex.
9. Help your youth leaders live by the biblical pattern of marriage and sexuality, including not marrying outside the Lord.
10. Remove any shame for seeking help with marriage problems (for referrals call Presbyterian Counselling Service on 1800 818 133).
11. Offer divorce recovery groups for people in the church and the wider community.
12. Encourage people to read *What Did You Expect?* by Paul Tripp.
13. Run courses with actively strengthen marriages. Presbyterian Counselling Service has *The Marriage Course* available for loan see <http://www.pssd.org.au/page/122/Resources>.
14. Run marriage seminars, open to the whole community, which show the value of marriage and how God's design for marriage works.
15. Hold church weddings which are real community celebrations, not imitations of celebrity events, because it takes a church to build a marriage.
16. Distribute this paper for discussion with church staff, sessions, ministry teams and small groups.

### What we need to work on

Here are some of the ethical and pastoral issues, which the PCNSW should think about further. The G,S&C committee hopes to address some of these in the future. We're interested to know your questions and if you have ideas about how they should be addressed.

- How do we address singleness? What is a biblical view of singleness? How can churches serve singles well?
- Christians have been debating the biblical view of divorce and remarriage intensively for several decades, as divorce has become common. We need to keep on assessing the evidence and the implication; see M.L. Strauss (ed.), *Remarriage After Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views*, Zondervan, 2006. We also need to think about ministry to people who go through divorce in a variety of circumstances.
- How do we view 'living together'? What are our pastoral practices? What do we do when people in de facto marriages come to church and become Christians? What would we do if one partner has converted and the other partner does not want to change the status of the relationship?
- We need to develop a clearer account of why weddings make marriages and have resources which explain that for Christian couples.
- We need to develop strategies to respond if same-sex marriage is introduced.
- In a society which does not hold a Christian view of marriage we will increasingly face situations in the church where Christians behaviour differs from God's pattern. How do we deal with this pastorally? What is the place of church discipline in a pastoral response?

Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> L. Qu & R. Weston, “Attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation” *Family Relationships Quarterly* no. 8, 2008 <http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/newsletter8.html#family>
- <sup>2</sup> A. Cherlin, “The deinstitutionalisation of American marriage” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, (November 2004): 855.
- <sup>3</sup> reported in “Tony Abbott leaves door open to Coalition shift on gay marriage” *The Australian* April 19, 2013 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/libs-may-shift-policy-on-same-sex-marriage-christopher-pyne/story-fn59niix-1226624105127>
- <sup>4</sup> “Public attitudes towards same sex marriage in Australia” Ambrose Centre for Religious Liberty, November 22, 2011 <http://www.ambrosecentre.org.au/images/survey%20final%20report%20for%20web.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> S.J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 82.
- <sup>6</sup> Kelly Burke “To love and to submit: a marriage made in 2012” *SMH* Aug 25, 2012 <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/to-love-and-to-submit-a-marriage-made-in-2012-20120824-24ru7.html#ixzz2QwcVLYUs> see Michael Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology* (Wipf & Stock, 2012), ch. 9 for a discussion of the issues in Sydney Anglicanism
- <sup>7</sup> Liesl Mitchell, *Domestic violence in Australia—an overview of the issues* (Department of Parliamentary Services, November 2011), 5&9. [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/DVAustralia#\\_Toc309798375](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/DVAustralia#_Toc309798375)
- <sup>8</sup> C.E. Rissel *et al* “Sex in Australia: First experiences of vaginal intercourse and oral sex among a representative sample of adults”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* (27/2 2003): 134.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.sexcensus.com.au/Australia/Relationships-Love-And-Relationships-2011>
- <sup>10</sup> Liesl Mitchell, *Domestic violence in Australia—an overview of the issues* (Department of Parliamentary Services, November 2011), 5&9. [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/DVAustralia#\\_Toc309798375](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/DVAustralia#_Toc309798375)



The Gospel, Society and Culture committee aims to provide resources which are faithful to Scripture, relevant to the life and mission of the church, engaged with contemporary Australian culture and informed by careful research. Resource Papers aim to be consistent with the confessional position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and to reflect positions on social issues expressed by the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in NSW. They have not been approved by the Assembly and so do not represent the official view of the Presbyterian Church of NSW.

For more information about The Gospel, Society and Culture committee see [www.gsandc.org.au](http://www.gsandc.org.au).

The initial research and writing for this Resource Paper was conducted by Dr. John McClean.

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