

Personal Issues: Men and Women

Understanding Ethics: A Christian Perspective

A 5 step approach

- 1) What is the issue and why is it relevant?
- 2) How can we understand the issue better?
- 3) What are the key principles and values at stake?
- 4) What is the distinctive contribution from a Christian ethical perspective?
- 5) How should the ethical response be – e.g. from (a) Christian journalists in mainstream news media? (b) Christian communication workers in church media? (c) Christian local churches?

Step 1: *Identifying the issue*

What is the issue and why is it important?

- How should we understand the relationship between men and women?
 - in terms of *roles and responsibilities* in family, society and church contexts?
 - in terms of *sexual, intimate relationships*? [OUR FOCUS]
- The relevance:
 - *Gender roles* – in different cultures and across cultures
 - *Sexual issues* – marriage, cohabitation, divorce, remarriage, polygamy, same sex relationships [OUR FOCUS]

Step 2: Understanding the issue

How can we understand the issue better?

- 1) The classical Christian view of marriage and sexuality has traditionally been a dominant influence in many global contexts.
- 2) Patterns in society are changing – already in the West and gradually also globally, often influencing through the media:
 - Increasing pressures on young people to adopt secular lifestyles
 - Increasing pressures on couples and families to break up
- 3) New alternative views of marriage and sexuality are becoming increasingly influential, including social constructivism and the views of the gay lobby.

Step 3: Analysing the issue

What are the key principles and values at stake in this issue?

- 1) Does being man or woman belong to the actual definition of being human?
- 2) How should marriage be defined?
- 3) To what extent is gender / sexuality a social and cultural construct?
- 4) How to distinguish between different levels – such as the legal, the ethical, the theological, and the personal?
- 5) Should Christians adopt (a) imposition, (b) laissez-faire or (c) persuasion as their attitude to these issues?

Step 4: Contributing to the issue

What is the distinctive contribution from a Christian ethical perspective?

Seven key points:

- 1) Men and women are created equal but different.
- 2) Men and women are given the cultural mandate together.
- 3) Marriage is one man / one woman – leaving – cleaving – one flesh.
- 4) Cohabitation is unstable, informal and inadequate.
- 5) Divorce is generally not right, but may be permitted in specific circumstances (esp. immorality or desertion).
- 6) We need to understand intimate same sex relationships in view of heterosexual gender (a divine creation), heterosexual marriage (a divine institution), and heterosexual fidelity (the divine intention)
- 7) The possibility of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing due to the saving work of Christ.

Step 5: Responding to the issue

How should our ethical response(s) to the issue be?

Three case studies:

(a) Christian journalists in mainstream news media?

- To what extent would that response be different from other journalists?

(b) Christian communication workers in church media?

(c) Christian local churches?

The ethical responses should be both in terms of (1) reflections, (2) attitudes, and (3) actions.

Reflections / discussions

- Which sexual issues are presently most challenging in Uganda?
- How is the news media responding?
- How is the church responding?
- How are families responding?

For further reflections:

- «Today the Christian church has three grand tasks:
 - 1) to win back the West
 - 2) to prepare the Global South
 - 3) to contribute to our common human future»

Os Guinness