

# 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