

Seventh-Day Adventist Views and Stances on Same-Sex Marriage: Consideration for Its Pastors

Milton Thorman Pardosi
Universitas Advent Indonesia, Indonesia
mtpardosi@gmail.com

Abstract

Marriage is an institution that God established in the garden of Eden on the sixth day of Creation week. Marriage has entered a troubling era of change with the rise of divorces and same-sex marriages. There are religious and political groups that reject it, but some accept it. This is also an issue in both Christianity and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That is why it is necessary to review the Bible's principles of marriage so that Christians understand the correct principles of marriage in the Bible. Marriage in the Bible is between one man and one woman according to their nature. Marriage and same-sex intercourse are abominations before God. The researcher found out that there are two models of same-sex marriage emerging at this time. First, same-sex marriage between man and man or woman and woman by nature. Second, same-sex marriage between man and "woman" as a result of genital surgery or woman with "man" as a result of genital surgery. The second type can bring confusion to the church. The researcher suggested that the church and pastors need to take steps medically to ensure that the prospective partners are naturally different, not the result of genital surgery. The Seventh-day Adventist Church rejects same-sex marriage in both the first and second models.

Keywords: Marriage, Same-Sex, Nature

INTRODUCTION

Marriage and the Sabbath are two institutions that God created and gave to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:1-3,24). Both of them are sacred because they were given by God to man, who involved a special relationship between God and man and man and man. Both were meant to bring happiness to humans (Departemen Kependetaan Gereja Masehi Advent Se-Dunia, 2006: 335). These two institutions were brought by Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden after they fell into sin (White, 2005: 24).

On the fifth and sixth day of creation week, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2, God created animals in pairs, male and female. The goal is that the animals can reproduce and fill the earth (Genesis 1:21-25). Adam noticed that every animal had a "companion," but Adam could not find one that matched him (White, 2011: 37). Then God created a woman to be a companion and helper for Adam, who was commensurate with him (Genesis 2:20,21).

God did not create another male, "Adam," to be Adam's first companion. Just as God did not create all animals, male or female, but different sexes, humans were created of different gender or sex in order to complement each other and fulfill God's plan for humans. God's plans for humans

are to multiply, fill the earth and rule over the earth (Genesis 1:28). Thus God in the garden of Eden celebrated the first marriage. That is why the institution of marriage comes from the Creator (White, 2011: 38).

However, humans have abused this sacred institution of marriage. Marriage no longer involves only one man and one woman (monogamy). Polygamous marriage first appeared in the Bible as recorded in Genesis 4:19. Polygamous marriage itself is divided into two groups, namely: polyandry (more than one husband) and polygyny (more than one wife). Another issue in marriage is sexual intercourse with animals which is strictly prohibited in the Bible (Leviticus 18:23; 20:15). This became one of the reasons God destroyed the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Leviticus 18:24). Another problem in marriage is sexual intercourse or same-sex marriage. This already happened in Bible times but has been becoming more and more common today.

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of same-sex intercourse in marriage in the Bible (Genesis 19:5,8). From this story emerged the term Sodomy. Apostle Paul also strongly rebuked the condition of society in his time, which had replaced natural intercourse with an unnatural one, namely: sexual intercourse with one's kind (Romans 1:26,27). God from the beginning forbade sexual intercourse and same-sex marriage (Leviticus 18:22). The inhabitants of the land of Canaan committed these heinous sins. That is why God destroyed all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and gave the land to the Israelites (Leviticus 18:24).

In this day and age, same-sex marriage is becoming "common" and legal in some countries and accepted by several religions in the world. The issue emphasized in legalizing same-sex marriage is human rights. Humans have the right to regulate and live their own lives. Whom to be married, with what gender is a human right that must be respected. Therefore, the researcher in this paper discussed three main issues, namely: What are the principles of marriage according to the Bible? Second, what are the criteria for same-sex marriage? Finally, what is the view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on different-sex marriages as the result of genital changing surgery?

The objectives of this study are: first, to understand and reemphasize the principles of true marriage according to the Bible. Second, to find out the criteria for same-sex marriage. Finally, to find out the Seventh-day Adventist's view of inter-sex marriage as the result of genital changing surgery.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers used qualitative research methods based on grounded theory in this study. What is meant by grounded theory, according to Strauss and Corbin (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 273), which is summarized by Subagyo (Subagyo, 2014: 107), is "a general methodology for developing theory based on data that is systematically collected and analyzed." Subagyo explained that in the grounded theory method, the researcher would have more than one stage of collecting data to obtain a theory. The resulting theory is mainly a special substantive theory rather than a general theory (Subagyo, 2014: 108).

Therefore, the steps taken by the researcher: first, the researcher collected data related to marriage in the Bible. The researcher compiled the data into a systematic theory of marriage according to the Bible. Second, the researcher collected data related to the criteria for same-sex marriage that is currently happening. Through the data that was collected, the researcher concluded

that there are two criteria for same-sex marriage. Furthermore, the researcher collected data related to the concept of marriage in the understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, specifically from the book on the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, writings of Ellen G. White, as well as the statements of the Seventh-day Adventist leaders around the world. Finally, the researcher concluded the results of the research and provided suggestions in a particular way for the church in general and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principles of Marriage in the Bible

As stated in the introduction, God has instituted marriage since in the garden of Eden. The angels witnessed the marriage ceremony of Adam and Eve (White, 1995: 201). After God created Adam, Adam gave names to all the animals that God had created. But Adam did not find a match for himself out of all the animals he had named (Genesis 2:19,20). That's why God said: "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him" (Genesis 2:18, *New English Translation*). Thus, the Lord God created woman to be a helper commensurate with Adam. God created woman from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:21,22). God brought the woman whom He created to Adam, and Adam named her woman because she was taken from man (Genesis 2:23).

Adam was united with the woman whom God had created in one institution of marriage. This union is a lifelong union based on the fellowship of love (Departemen Kependetaan Masehi Advent Hari Ketujuh Se-Dunia, 2006: 334).

Marriage was instituted by God in the garden of Eden was a marriage between one man (Adam) and one woman (Eve), with different genders (Departemen Kependetaan Masehi Advent Hari Ketujuh Se-Dunia, 2006: 336). Adam and Eve, in marriage, became one flesh which also means sex (Pardosi, 2015: 148-149). In the end, the woman whom Adam married was called a wife (Genesis 2:24). Furthermore, in Genesis 3:1, it was stated that Adam had intercourse with his wife Eve. Here it can be seen that initially, Adam's companion was given a female name by Adam. But after both of them sinned, and the woman gave birth to a child, Adam gave his wife the name Eve. Eve means the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20)

Basically, true marriage, according to the Bible, is a marriage between a man and a woman, not one man and several women or vice versa. However, man, because of his sinful nature, has corrupted the correct formula of marriage. The problem of adultery is a big problem in the household. Adultery in question is related to sex outside the marriage bond and which has a familial relationship or incest (Pardosi, 2015: 151). Another problem is having more than one wife or husband, even in a "legal" marriage. Lamech was the first person in the Bible who broke the biblical formula for marriage. Lamech took two wives at once (Genesis 4:19). Several characters in the Bible continued the same practice as Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and many others. However, the marriage formula for only one man and one woman is still maintained by other biblical figures such as Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, etc. The biblical formula for marriage is never changed by God, although His faithful people had broken it.

From the garden of Eden to the entire Old Testament, from the time of Jesus to the entire New Testament, the marriage formula has never changed, namely: one man and one woman, not one

man and several women or vice versa, or same-sex marriage. Some verses in the Bible that show God's consistency in the correct marriage formula are:

1. "Jesus answered, 'Have you not read that He who created man from the beginning made them male and female?' And He said, 'Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife so that the two of them become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate'" (Matthew 19:4-6).
2. "After all, it applies to each of you: love your wife as yourself, and the wife is to honor her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).
3. "But in view of the danger of fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).
4. "For this is the will of God: your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication, that each of you may take a woman to be your own wife and live in holiness and honor, not in lustful desires, as those who do not know God" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

The Bible, on the other hand, also strongly opposes and condemns same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage is not just a sin, but an abomination, a disgusting sin, an unnatural sin whose punishment is death. Some verses in the Bible that confirm it are:

1. "You shall not sleep with men as you have sexual relations with women, for it is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22).
2. "If a man sleeps with a man in the same way as a woman, both of them commit an abomination, they shall surely be put to death, and their blood shall fall on them" (Leviticus 20:13).
3. "Therefore, God gave them over to shameful lusts because their wives substituted for natural intercourse with an unnatural one. Likewise, husbands leave natural intercourse with their wives and are burning in their lust for one another, so that they commit lewdness, man for man, and because of that, they receive in themselves what they deserve for their error" (Romans 1:26-27).

The researcher concluded that God never allows same-sex marriage to occur for any reason. It was an abomination to God which was the customary practice of the pagans in Bible times (Leviticus 18:27-29). The issue of same-sex marriage, in fact, did not just appear in the 18th to 20th centuries but had existed in Bible times. Approving and doing same-sex marriage is against God, who has instituted marriage with the formula: one man and one woman (of the opposite sex). Same-sex marriage is not just a sin but an abomination. It is as heinous as sin: worshiping idols (Deuteronomy 7:25; 18:10), offering children or humans as burnt offerings (Deuteronomy 12:31), eating unclean food (Deuteronomy 14:3), etc. Doing and agreeing to same-sex marriage according to the Bible shows a spirit of rebellion against God. Whoever rebels against the law and God's will show their spiritual life that is far from God. God asks His people to obey and keep His statutes and do nothing abominable (Leviticus 18:21). Same-sex marriage is a violation of the theocentric irrational natural law because the law comes from God, the Creator (Sirait, 2017: 624-630).

Same-sex marriage is part of the violation of 10 Moral Laws in Exodus 20:3-17. The fifth law of the ten moral laws states that children must respect father and mother, not father and "father" or mother and "mother." When same-sex marriage occurs, the birth of children becomes impossible. Humans refuse to produce offspring even though God commanded humans to be fruitful and fill

the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). At the same time, even if this same-sex couple adopts a child, then the children cannot properly carry out the fifth law to respect father and mother because both parents are not father and mother by nature.

Same-Sex Marriage Criteria

Same-sex marriage is currently divided into two criteria. First, same-sex marriage between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. The sex that is owned is the sex that has been owned since birth (nature). This kind of marriage is known as gay marriage. This type of marriage occurs both among gays (men) and lesbians (women). Same-sex marriages like these are no longer just a human rights issue but a civil rights issue that threatens social, political, and religious life. The main supporters of gay marriage are human rights organizations, and the scientific and medical community. At the same time, the main opponents are religious groups. In the case of this type of same-sex marriage, the line is clear in several religions that reject same-sex marriage, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

However, there are other “same” marriages as well. This type of same-sex marriage looks like heterosexual marriage, but in fact, this is a same-sex marriage by nature. This is possible because of advances in science, namely “the operation of changing sex in humans” (Pardosi, 2019: 52).

Some of the reasons why a person performs genital change surgery are: first, the omission of the parents when parents allow their children to develop attitudes and temperaments that are not in accordance with the genitals they have. This situation encourages dissatisfaction because they feel trapped in the ‘wrong body’ where the genital he or she has is different from the characteristics he or she shows. Finally, the growth of the genitals is not perfect. Abnormalities like this, according to the medical, can be corrected through genital surgery (Pardosi, 2019: 60). Actually, the second reason is not a problem because what is being done is not changing the genital but improving the genital in order that it becomes perfect or as it should be.

This second type of same-sex marriage occurs among transgender people. A husband is a real man, but the “wife” is a “woman” but not a real woman who follows her nature. Her “female” status was the result of sex surgery. Thus the “wife” is actually a man who has become a “woman.” The same can happen on the women’s side. The wife is a real woman, but the “husband” is a woman who has undergone genital surgery to become a “man.” This means the “husband” is actually a woman by nature. This is where sometimes the religious side experiences confusion and doubts about rejecting or accepting the marriage of a couple with the “same” criteria like this. Both couples are actually either male or female, but because one of them has changed gender, then their marriage is no longer considered a same-sex marriage. The researcher saw that the second model of same-sex marriage also could not be approved by religious parties who also rejected the first type of same-sex marriage. By nature, both couples actually have the same sex even though physically or their genitals are different sexes.

The issue that can arise in the future is what if the “male” or “female” spouse from the genital surgery decides to return to their original nature? There are cases when a man or woman who has had sex-change surgery finally decided to have sex surgery again in order to return to her or his original sex (nature). Kristanti (2015) reported some facts about transgender people who decided to go back to being men. Some of the examples given are: first, it happened in Japan with the name Mark Marzo who changed his gender to a woman and changed his name to Maria Corazon Marzo.

Second, in the United Kingdom with the name Matthew (2007) changed his gender to male and changed his name to Chelsea Attonley. Next happened in England with the name Brad Cooper (2011), who changed his gender to a woman and changed his name to Ria Cooper. There are many more lists of transgender people who decided to return to their original sex. When this situation occurs, the marital status actually becomes a type 1 (same-sex marriage). The household that is built is likely to face shocks because the couple is not necessarily willing to accept their partner back to their real genital.

One example that happened in Indonesia was experienced by one of the former female athletes of Indonesian Volleyball named Aprilia Manganang. For some time, Aprilia Manganang was recognized as a woman. That's why Aprilia Manganang became an Indonesian Women's Volleyball athlete and, at the same time, an active soldier in the Indonesian National Army with the rank of Second Sergeant. However, on February 3, 2021, according to the announcement made by the Chief of Army Staff (KSAD) of the Tentara Nasional Indonesia, General Andika Perkasa, in a press conference held on Tuesday (9/3/2021), Aprilia Manganang underwent a medical examination and was declared a man. This certainty is determined because Aprilia Manganang has male organs, and testosterone levels, which are identical to men, were found to be higher. General Andika Perkasa offered Aprilia Manganang to undergo medical treatment and surgery (correction surgery). According to existing facts, Aprilia Manganang suffered from a medical disorder called hypospadias (urinary or reproductive disorders) when she was born (Immaduddin, 2021). After the correction surgery process is complete, Aprilia Manganang will report her new gender status to the Population and Civil Registry Service through a District Court decision as stipulated in Law (UU) Number 23 of 2006 concerning Population Administration. You can imagine how complicated this matter would be if Aprilia Manganang were already married. What will happen to his household now that he is a man and his partner is also a man? Most likely, this marriage will be annulled.

The history of legalizing same-sex marriage is a long story. In the beginning, same-sex marriage took place secretly. However, over time, those who are involved in same-sex marriages or those who are about to carry out same-sex marriages demand their rights as human beings and citizens. This demand is also corroborated by research results that support that same-sex marriage can reduce the risk of suicide; educating "children" will be better than children who are educated in heterosexual marriages.

Several countries have legalized same-sex marriage according to The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) reported by BBC News (BBC News, 2019): The Netherlands (2001); Belgium (2003); Canada, Spain (2005); South Africa (2006); Norway, Sweden (2009); Iceland, Portugal, Argentina (2010); Denmark (2012); Uruguay, New Zealand, France, Brazil (2013); United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland) (2014); Luxembourg, Republic of Ireland, Mexico, United States (2015); Colombia (2016); Finland, Malta, Germany and Australia (2017); Austria (2019), etc. Meanwhile, in Asia, Taiwan, on May 17, 2019, became the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage (Liputan6.com, 2019). The first same-sex marriage was held by the Taiwanese government on May 24, 2019, with approximately 300 same-sex couples married (CNN Indonesia, 2019). This list of countries does not seem to be endless but is likely to grow as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community grows and spreads across the globe. Even members of the LGBT community consist of state officials and

political figures, so the process of legalizing it will be easier because of the influence that LGBT adherents have both in politics and the economy.

Indonesia itself has legalized sex-change surgery. Those who have changed their gender must register to the Civil Registry and Population Office to have their data changed legally. This permit was decided through the Decree of the Minister of Health Number: 191/MENKES/SK/III/1989. However, this permit is granted with strict conditions, namely: only hospitals appointed by the government can do it, and a special team of doctors must be formed to do so. As soon as the sex change process is complete, the person can choose whether to change his/her gender status through the District Court and the Population and Civil Registry Service or not. If so, he or she will undergo the process of reporting his or her new gender status to the District Court and proceed to the Population and Civil Registry Office to change his or her gender data. This process has also been official with the issuance of the Population Service and Population Civil Registry Law Number: 23 of 2006 Elucidation of Article 57 paragraph 1 and amended by Law Number: 24 of 2013 Article 56 where it is said that “the recording of other important events is carried out by Civil Registration Officer at the request of the person concerned after the decision of the District Court has obtained permanent legal force. In the explanation, it is stated that ‘Other Important Events’ are events determined by the District Court to be registered with the Implementing Agency, including changing gender” (Klarisa and Sampurna, 2017: 167).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) also appear in the history of the Indonesian people’s cultural traditions. The “fact” of the existence of LGBT people is at least contained in the cultural customs or beliefs in the South Sulawesi (Bugis) area, namely: The Amparita Sidrap community. In this community, there are so-called “Bissu” namely priests who do not have a gender class. This community recognizes several genders, namely: Oroane (male), Makunrai (female), Caalai (woman who looks like a man), Calabai (a man who looks like a woman), and the Bissu group (priests who are gender-neutral) (Sirait, 2017: 627).

Seventh-day Adventist Church View and Stances on Different Sex Marriages as the Result of Genital Surgery

Seventh-day Adventist Church, of which the researcher is a member, is still holding firm views against same-sex marriage. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the 23rd explanation of the doctrine of Marriage and the Family, states firmly that this marriage takes place between a man and a woman who are not of the same sex. Same-sex marriage is rejected by the Seventh-day Adventist Church because this type of marriage is condemned in the Bible. Sin has confused attraction to the opposite sex with attraction to the same sex (Departemen Kependetaan Masehi Advent Hari Ketujuh Se-Dunia, 2006: 343). This can be seen from the statement by the Chairman of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Pastor Ted Wilson (Wilson, 2017), regarding marriage and same-sex marriage decided by the General Conference Executive Committee on October 3, 1999: “As Seventh-day Adventists, we ‘believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation...Throughout Scripture, this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden.” Another statement conveyed by Wilson (Wilson, 2017) as an official statement from the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding same-sex marriage, which is also the decision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is: “We believe that ‘Marriage was

divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship,' therefore 'same-sex unions' are neither biblical nor accepted within the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

The researcher suggested that pastors and the Seventh-day Adventist Church should be more careful in carrying out the marriage blessing, especially for the second type of same-sex marriage, namely a real man or woman who is married to a "woman" or a "male" as a result of genital surgery. By nature, this marriage is same-sex marriage, although legally, this marriage is considered a legal marriage because it is a marriage of different sexes. Seventh-day Adventist Church and its pastors need to conduct a more in-depth investigation both to the parties concerned, the closest family to ensure that the two brides-to-be are not the same-sex couple by nature even though the sexes are different. This needs to be done especially for church members who are new or "suspected" to have abnormalities in attitude, the appearance that does not seem to match the external physical appearance. This becomes very important because it is possible to come to church people who have been in this "state" for a while, and they come to church, are baptized, become faithful members. However, there is a "problem" in determining the gender of both candidates by nature. If this second type of same-sex marriage is allowed to take place, then this will bring big problems to the church. This shows that the church actually approves of same-sex marriage as long as it is not the same sex. The researcher says that the issue of the second model of same-sex marriage has not received special attention and attitude from Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CONCLUSIONS

Marriage in the Bible is an institution that God established in the garden of Eden along with the Sabbath. The marriage formula that God has ordained is the union of a man and a woman. However, because of sin, the institution of marriage faces challenges and is violated by humans. Humans have corrupted the correct marriage formula by practicing polygamy, sexual intercourse with animals, and same-sex marriage. God is against all three. Doing polygamous marriage, sexual intercourse with animals, and the like is against the theocentric irrational natural law that God established in the garden of Eden. To go against God's laws is to go against God Himself. This shows that the spirituality of the person who does it is no longer in harmony with God's will.

There are two types of same-sex marriage: the first is same-sex marriage according to the sex one has from birth (original/nature). Second, same-sex marriage does not look the same because one of the partners has "changed sex" (genital surgery) to a different gender from the original gender/nature. This is also categorized as same-sex marriage even though legally (registration records) both are opposite sex because one of them has changed his gender and has been legalized by the state. This second same-sex marriage can make religious groups hesitant and even wrong in the biblical view to enter into marriage.

Several countries and religions in this world have legalized same-sex marriage. The Indonesian state still rejects same-sex marriage even though it has legalized sex change surgery which can be officially registered at the Population and Civil Registry office. Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to take the same firm stance against the second model of same-sex marriage as it does against the first same-sex marriage. The basis is that, by nature, both partners are of the same sex even though they are not. Same-sex marriage, by nature, does not conform to the principles of marriage in the Bible. This is an abomination before God.

Therefore, the church needs to carry out socialization and also guidance to young people and parents so that marriage is kept holy among Christians, especially among Seventh-day Adventist Church Members. These socialization and guidance are not only carried out in the church with its spiritual activities but in church schools. This socialization and guidance also include prevention for young people who have a tendency to have “different” behavior from their original gender. The neglect of this condition by parents, church pastors, and educators in the school environment will actually plunge young people into decisions that can deviate from the truth of God’s Word. Young people must be helped to understand the sacredness of life and the sacredness of marriage. Education to maintain the gendered nature that God has given is very necessary for young people. Explanations of the negative impact on genital changes through surgery both physically, socially, and especially spiritually need to be explained to young people in the church.

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