

## **EFCC Affirmations**

### *In Light of the Supreme Court of the United States Decision on Same Sex Marriage*

It's been 239 years since the original signing of the Declaration of Independence and the beginning of America, the "great experiment" of a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." Over the centuries, our country's leaders have made many monumental decisions that have significantly affected its citizens.

This past week, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) made such a decision when it affirmed the constitutional right of marriage for same-sex couples. Some in our country rejoiced and immediately filed for marriage licenses. Many were outraged and heartbroken, wondering what this means for religious institutions, especially for evangelical churches like EFCC.

In light of the Supreme Court decision, let us affirm once again these seven biblical convictions for EFCC.

1. *We affirm that ...* **Jesus Christ is still Lord!** The Supreme Court can do many things, but one thing it cannot do is put Jesus back in the tomb! One day He will return and reign over earth as all of human history is moving, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:10, toward the "summation of all things in Christ." So there is to be no wringing of our hands or despairing for the future, as our hope is not in who sits in the White House nor does it rest on a legal decision made by our land's highest court. Our trust is in a living Savior, Jesus Christ, who is still Lord!
2. *We affirm that ...* **the Bible is still God's word, relevant and sufficient for every generation.** It is our sole rule for faith and practice and thus all values and decisions are filtered through its truth. Therefore, what the Bible calls right, we will call "right." What it declares wrong, we will call "wrong." What is true, "true." What is error, "error." What is holy, "holy." And what is sin, "sin." What it calls marriage we will call "marriage." So we as a church will continue to celebrate the biblical uniqueness of a father and mother as revealed in Matthew 19:4-6 and marriage as being between a "man" and "wife" for life. Jesus said that is the way it has been "from the beginning." This is our opportunity to speak of marriage, not just in terms of cultural values or as the foundation for civilization, but as the beautiful picture of Christ and the Church. No matter what the Supreme Court has decided, the Bible is still God's Word.
3. *We affirm that ...* **the Church is still God's "called out ones."** By definition, believers in Jesus of Nazareth have been called out of the world and into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we follow different values than "outsiders." It is not our responsibility to judge them, but rather to judge ourselves! (See 1 Corinthians 5:12) This decision therefore calls those of us who profess membership in the Church to testify, by the strength of our marriages and the godliness of our families and lifestyles, that God's ways are best. It starts with us! This is our chance more than ever to show that the Church is still God's "called out ones."

4. *We affirm that ...* **the “anger of man” still “does not achieve the righteousness of God”** (James 1:20). There is no room in our interaction with anyone for hatred, for pride and arrogance, for any sense of superiority and self-righteousness. Our biblical responsibility is to love our gay and lesbian neighbors who are now married according to the law of the land. They are not our enemies! They are souls for whom Christ died and are victims of our enemy just as we once were. Getting angry at them or at the government does not change or help anything. Whatever the future holds, love must be demonstrated in our responses, as the anger of man still does not achieve the righteousness of God.
5. *We affirm that ...* **the gospel can still flourish in a darkening culture.** The Supreme Court decision does not hinder the spread of the gospel. Rather, it may very well advance it as the light of the gospel always shows up best in dark places. This is evident in Paul’s ministry in both ancient Corinth and Rome, cultures that had more perverse views of human sexuality than we find today. In other words, the gospel doesn’t need a culture of biblical family values to thrive. If we are loving and kind, practicing the biblical principles we say we believe, people will notice and be drawn to the forgiveness and hope of the good news of Jesus Christ. Beloved, we were born for “such a time as this” into the “mission field” of America where the gospel can still flourish in a darkening culture.
6. *We affirm that ...* **America is still the land of the free!** Our forefathers fought and died so that we could have the First Amendment right of the free exercise of our religion and we intend to use that right, including the right of conscientious dissent, to speak to this and all other moral issues of our day. America is still the land of the free.
7. *We affirm that ...* **America is still our beloved country, but it’s not our eternal home!** As Paul told the ancient Philippians, “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). We are saddened by this week’s decision of the Supreme Court, but we are not despairing because one day Jesus will come back and take us to our eternal home in heaven where all things will be made right. Until that day, we affirm that America is still our beloved country, but we remember it is not our eternal home.

So let it suffice to say at this time, in this land that we love, in spite of what our leaders might decide or what the future holds, with all our hearts we affirm, **“In God we trust.”**

*(These biblical affirmations were delivered in the worship services of Emmanuel Faith by Pastor Dennis Keating, June 28-29, 2015.)*