



Small group discussion questions

March 2015

The marriage question

Cara Heafey, Paul Stokes and Neil Thorogood (p29)

1. In her first response, Cara says that, by not passing a resolution to allow churches to marry same-sex couples, the United Reformed Church has “damaged our mission and ministry”. What damage do you think Cara is referring to? What effect do you think passing this resolution would have on mission and ministry?
2. Paul, in his first response, says that Jesus “upholds marriage as a man-and-wife relationship”. Which sayings of Jesus do you think Paul is referring to? How do you understand those sayings?
3. Neil, in his first response, says that amidst different opinions on this matter he hears “powerfully, our call from Christ to be united one with another”. What makes unity important for Christians? Do you think it is possible to be united with people who disagree on this issue?
4. Cara quotes from the following verse in her second response: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). How do you understand this verse and what it has to say on the question of same-sex marriage?
5. In his second response, Paul says that “Bible-believing Christians” would be marginalised or excluded by a decision to allow marriages of same-sex couples. What do you think Paul means by this, and do you think it is a fair point?
6. Neil says, in his second response, that the URC allows local churches to have different practices for baptism and yet remains united. How does this relate to the question of marriage? Do you think the same principle applies in both cases?



7. Cara, in her third response, says that worshipping together despite our differences is costly but “how the body of Christ should be”. What makes this costly? Do you agree that this is how the Church should be?

8. Paul, in his third response, disagrees with Neil’s analogy between baptism and marriage. What is Paul’s objection? Do you think that the analogy works?

9. Neil suggests, in his third response, that discerning together, while living with our differences, is essential to what the URC is. Do you think that it is possible to find common ground on the question of same-sex marriage? How might the Church try?

10. Reading Cara’s final answer, how would you sum up what she says? What is your response to it?

11. Reading Paul’s final answer, how would you sum up what he says? What is your response to it?

12. Reading Neil’s final answer, how would you sum up what he says? What is your response to it?

For further reflection: “You must understand this, my beloved: Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.” James 1: 19

Prayer: God of us all, give us more wisdom than we have had before, we pray. Teach us the hard lesson of standing firm in the truth while listening humbly and generously. Help us to see your way, and to walk in it. Amen.