SAME-SEX MARRIAGE:
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

1. WHAT IS SOCIETY SAYING?

1.1. At present in Australia the Marriage Act defines marriage as “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life” (Subsection 5(1) of the Marriage Act 1961).

1.2. New Zealand is the latest country to legalize gay marriage (19/8/13), making same-sex marriages legal in 13 countries around the world (as of Sept. 2013).¹ The new Marriage Act amended the old one established in 1955 and now defines marriage as “the union of 2 people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.”² In a speech being hailed as “one of the greatest speeches ever delivered at a marriage equality debate,” A NZ MP explained (before the vote) why people should allow same-sex marriage:³

A huge amount of the opposition was from moderates, from people who were concerned, who were seriously worried what this might do to the fabric of our society. I respect their concern. I respect their worry. They were worried about what it might do to their families, and so on.

Let me repeat to them now: All we are doing with this bill is allowing two people who love each other to have that love recognized by way of marriage.

That is all we are doing. We are not declaring nuclear war on a foreign state. We are not bringing a virus in that could wipe out our agricultural sector forever. We are allowing two people who love each other to have that recognized, and I can't see what's wrong with that for love nor money.

I give a promise to those people who are opposed to this bill right now. I give you a watertight guaranteed promise; the sun will still rise tomorrow, your teenage daughter will still argue back with you as if she knows everything, your mortgage will not grow, you will not have skin diseases or rashes or toads in your bed. The world will just carry on.

1.3. Here in Australia, Kevin Rudd has changed his mind on this issue:

I've been thinking about the meaning of marriage for a long, long time, and I won't hide the fact that it's been a difficult journey for me. But here is what I know – we are at our best when we give all Australians the same dignity, the same opportunity for happiness. I believe that no matter whom we love, we all should

be able to make the same promise that I will able to make [his wife] Thérèse over thirty years ago. That all of us should be allowed to marry the one we love. . . . I believe the church can retain its own arrangements for marriage between a man and a woman but we the secular state should provide an opportunity for marriage equality for all.”

• Note: ultimately Rudd bases his conclusions on the fundamental principal that gay people don’t chose their sexual orientation, they are born that way (this last Monday night, 2/09/13, on ABC’s Q&A). When asked why he did not believe the words of Jesus concerning marriage (e.g., Matt. 19) he replied by saying that if he believed Jesus then he would have to say that slavery was still a valid institution based on what Paul said: “slave submit to your masters.” The overarching truth of the Bible, according to Rudd, is “universal love.”

2. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

• Genesis 9:20-27 (Ham’s sin may have been homosexual/incestuous relations; Schreiner).

• Genesis 19:4-8 4Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. 5They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with [Heb. = “know”] them.” 6Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him 7and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. 8Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”

• Leviticus 18:22 Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.

• Leviticus 20:13 If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

• Judges 19:22 While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, “Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.”

• Romans 1:26-27 26Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

• 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 9Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

• 1 Timothy 1:9-11 9We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 11that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.
3. A NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN RESPONSE?

3.1. Justin Lee is the executive director of the Gay Christian Network and gives what I think is probably the best argument for gay marriage from a Christian viewpoint.4 “I’m fairly conservative in my theological views. I believe that the Bible is morally authoritative, that sex is for marriage, and that promiscuity is harmful to everyone involved. For many years of my life, I also believed that all homosexual behavior was wrong . . . I believed, based on what I had read in the Bible, that even the most loving and monogamous of same-sex relationships was evil in God’s eyes. But as I studied the Bible, my view on that subject changed. I now believe that homosexual behavior is appropriate within the confines of a committed, loving, monogamous, lifelong, Christ-centered relationship. Essentially, I’m arguing that a Christ-centered marriage is a good thing, regardless of the gender of the people involved . . . a growing number of Christians believes the church has made a mistake and that the church’s position ought to be reformed.”

3.2. Lee’s interpretation of biblical passages: “I still believe that the vast majority of homosexual behavior throughout history has been sinful . . . I think that the Biblical writers were absolutely correct to condemn the homosexual behaviors they witnessed in their cultures — not only because those behaviors were connected with other sinful behaviors (such as idolatry), but also because the specific acts themselves were wrong.”

“The passages that mention those acts . . . could be interpreted in two ways. They might condemn only those specific acts and situations, or they might condemn all homosexual behaviors for all time, regardless of situation. For instance, when the Bible speaks negatively of ‘tax collectors,’ we realize that it’s not talking about modern IRS agents. Tax collectors in Jesus’ day were frequently corrupt and cheated people out of more money than they owed. So when the Bible talks about ‘tax collectors,’ it’s not condemning all tax collectors for all time; it’s condemning the specific behaviors of the tax collectors at that time.”

“Are ‘homosexual offenders’ condemned for the same reason as tax collectors, or are all same-sex relationships condemned for all time?” Concerning these passages specifically Lee says:

1) “[Rom. 1:26-27] speaks negatively of homosexual behavior . . . Paul does say homosexuality is ‘shameful’ and ‘unnatural,’ but he says the same thing (using the same Greek words)5 about men with long hair in 1 Corinthians 11:14, and we generally consider that to be cultural. Is this a prohibition for all time, or is it a matter of context, like with the tax collectors? Based on what we’ve seen so far, it’s tough to say. I wouldn’t put too much faith in either reading without something a lot more concrete to back it up.”

2) “The most likely explanation [of 1 Cor. 6: 9 and 1 Tim. 1:10] is that Paul is referring to a practice that was fairly common in the Greek culture of his day — married men who had sex with male youths on the side.”

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4 The following (summarized) response is from Justin Lee, executive director of the Gay Christian Network (http://www.gaychristian.net), who believes that God blesses same-sex marriages. You can find the entire response at http://www.gaychristian.net/justins_view.php.

5 Paul uses the terms atimia (dishonor) in 1 Cor. 11:14 and Rom. 1:26 and physis (nature) in 1 Cor. 11:14 and phusikos in Rom. 1:16-27. Paul does use in aschêmosynê (shameful) Rom. 1:27 but not in 1 Cor. 11:14.
3) “[In Lev. 18–20] God gives Moses a long list of rules for the Israelites. Some of these are rules we still follow today; others we don’t. The most famous of all is in 18:22, which says, ‘Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman’ (NIV [84]). The NIV [1984] translation follows this with, ‘that is detestable’ . . . [which] in Hebrew refers to anything forbidden for the Israelites. For instance, Leviticus 11 says that eagles are an abomination [KJV], and so are owls, storks, various types of water creatures, ‘and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth,’ just to name a few. . . . God tells us why He’s giving these rules [in Lev. 18–20] — because He wants to keep the Israelites pure and separate from the polytheistic cultures surrounding them (Lev. 18:1-4). This helps explain why the Israelites are forbidden to shave (Lev. 19:27), get tattoos (Lev. 19:28), wear clothing made of mixed fabrics (Lev. 19:19), or have sex during a woman’s period (Lev. 18:19). . . . sacrificing children to Molech (Lev. 18:21) . . . eating fruit too quickly from a tree (Lev. 19:23) . . . but nothing at all is said about sex outside of marriage or having multiple sexual partners. Outside of the context of keeping the Israelites separate, it would be a very odd collection of rules. I’ve heard people quote Leviticus to forbid homosexuality and tattoos, but other than that, people generally don’t turn to Leviticus for moral guidance. There’s something very haphazard about that approach to the Bible, picking and choosing passages like side dishes at a buffet.”

3.3. Summary: “As we look at these passages, we’re faced with a dilemma. On one hand, here are three examples of homosexual behaviors being condemned — in Leviticus, in Romans, and in the vice lists [1 Cor. 6: 9; 1 Tim. 1:10]. On the other hand, both of the New Testament examples describe situations that even Reformers like myself would consider sinful, and the Leviticus passage requires some major selective reading to make it work. Unfortunately, this is where the argument usually stops. It’s not very satisfying, is it? We’re left with a bunch of questions, some half-baked ‘maybes,’ and very few real answers. . . . But let’s be honest with ourselves. If we’re going to seriously . . . follow Christ at all costs, how can we approach the Bible with a constantly changing standard, always trying to adapt it to fit our preconceived ideas? That’s exactly what the church has done for many, many years.”

3.4. Other arguments from Lee:

1) The Romans 13 (vv. 8-10) problem: “[T]he very definition of the Traditional View says that even when two relationships are equally loving — even when they’re motivated by the exact same selfless desires and the exact same servant hearts — that one of them can be ruled sinful just because of a person’s gender. Traditionalists say that this command is from God. But if it’s from God, then why does it contradict the rule Paul gives us here [in Rom. 13:8-10] — a rule that applies to every other commandment?” Lee gives the following scenario:

Let’s say we know two couples — one gay, and one straight. These couples are both Christian couples, and they’re both equally devoted to Christ. Both couples have made commitments to stay together and be faithful to one another for the rest of their lives. Both couples have a certain sense of complimentarity, so that each person’s strengths and weaknesses help to balance out their

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6 Lee gives examples of not following what the Bible says on issues like slavery, women in the church, hair length, and money lending.
partner. Both couples pray together; both couples serve together; in fact, in every respect, these couples are identical. The only difference is that one is gay and the other is straight. According to the Traditional View, we’re supposed to celebrate and admire one of these couples, while we condemn the other one as an evil thing in God’s sight.”

2) **Jesus and the Sabbath:** “Jesus himself gives us the best example of how to understand the Scriptures on this subject. For the Jews, one of the all-time most important commandments was the commandment to keep the Sabbath, which meant doing no work at all from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Throughout the Old Testament, God uses the Sabbath as a sort of measuring stick for determining whether God’s people are living the way they should. . . . What’s surprising . . . is that Jesus [in Matt. 12:1-12] implicitly accepts the Pharisees’ contention that he’s violating the Sabbath law, but then he makes the argument that sometimes it’s okay to violate the letter of the law!”

3) **There are times when it’s okay to break the law:** “Killing another human being, for example, is both a sin and a terrible crime. But there are situations in which we would not hold someone accountable for killing, such as if it was in self-defense. There might even be times we would approve of their actions. If you think about it, I’m sure you can come up with many examples of behaviors that would be wrong in one situation but right in another.”

“As Jesus made clear through the Sabbath incident, God judges our actions on a case-by-case basis, taking into account our heart, our motives, and the specifics of the situation, not just mindlessly applying a set of rigid rules.”

“God’s standards sometimes seem to change as the cultural situations change, even though God Himself is changeless.”

4) **Circumcision as an example:** “In the early church, the hot topic of debate between Christians was circumcision. It’s hard for us to understand now why circumcision was such a big deal to them, but at the time, the church was splitting, tempers were flaring, and many feared the new faith wouldn’t survive if the other side got their way. Sound familiar?”

“The Scriptures could hardly have been clearer in demanding circumcision for all who would worship God. So when the early Christians began to reach Gentiles with the gospel, they naturally expected these Gentiles to do the same thing God had demanded of all the past converts. The issue at stake wasn’t whether Gentiles could become Christians; it was whether Gentiles could become Christians without first having to be circumcised.”

“The Gentiles were in the position many modern-day gay people are in. I doubt they had much theological knowledge or understanding of Scripture to back them up; all they knew was they were trusting this Jesus guy, and they were NOT about to let someone take a knife to them. The pro-circumcision group was probably a lot more pious and a lot better at quoting Scripture passages to back themselves up, and I imagine they made a lot of good arguments about tradition and the need to endure sacrifice and suffering for Christ’s sake. Yet somehow, they were wrong.”

5) **Galatians 3:28:** “If you look at the original Greek text, what the passage actually says is this: *There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor*
free; there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. It’s a strange choice of words. Paul doesn’t say ‘neither male nor female’ as he does with the other two groups; he says ‘no male and female.’ Why does he say ‘and’ instead of ‘nor’? . . . The phrase ‘male and female’ dates back to Genesis, where God creates Adam and Eve as the first couple . . . Many Traditionalist Christians have taken to quoting that phrase, saying that if God created them ‘male and female’ then that means that every couple for the rest of humanity should be male and female, and that any deviation from that is sinful. It’s a common argument . . .”

6) 1 Tim. 4:1-6: “I’m not suggesting that Paul had same-sex marriage in mind when he wrote this passage. But I do think it’s interesting that he says he has received specific instruction from the Holy Spirit that in later times, Christians will be forbidding people to marry and will need to have their errors pointed out to them” [Lee is referring here to those who forbid gay people not to marry].
4. MY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

4.1. Christians who oppose same-sex marriage respond in various ways:

1) They deserve God’s judgment (see e.g., http://www.dennyburk.com/justified-censure-of-a-fundamentalist-pastor/).
   • Yes but…fails to recognize that all sin is equally abhorrent to God (e.g., Rom. 1:29-30; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Cor. 6:9-10 list among other things: greed, envy, gossip, arrogance, boasting, disobeying parents, unloving, merciless, impure, hate, discord, jealousy, fits of anger, selfish ambition, division, abuse) and that apart from God’s grace we all deserve God’s judgment.
   • Also fails to recognize that God is just as much against wrong-spirited judging as he is against same-sex relationships (e.g., Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1-5).
   • “Repentance needs to begin with the household of God. The evangelical church has a massive pornography problem and unacceptably high adultery and divorce rates. . . .”

2) The Scriptures are the battleground.
   • Yes but…fails to recognize that Scripture can be interpreted more than one way on this subject (e.g., Justin Lee above). Furthermore, we need to learn to respond skillfully without Scripture in order to win those who don’t acknowledge the Bible.
   • However, having said that this does not mean we should abandon the Bible. But we do need to be ingenious, recognizing 1) not all interpret Scripture in the same way, and 2) not all pay any attention to what the Bible says.

When Christians make only biblical arguments for the nature of marriage . . . we give the impression that a traditional view of marriage is some uniquely or parochially Christian thing; to put it

7 “Yes but…” but there is no “yes” at all with reference to this sermon (above).
9 Compare R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Homosexual Marriage as a Challenge to the Church: Biblical and Cultural Reflections, in Sex and the Supremacy of Christ, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 118: “There can be no question that the Bible comprehensively and candidly identifies homosexual acts—and even homosexual desire—as sin. Put plainly, if the Bible does not speak clearly to the issue of homosexuality, it does not speak clearly to anything” (see also p. 120).
10 Mohler, Homosexual Marriage, 118-119: “Where would we be if we did not have the Bible? As Paul tells us in Romans 2, we cannot trust our conscience. Corrupted by sin, the conscience arbitrarily excuses and condemns us in a continuous cycle of rationalization and self-deception. Even though the law of God is written in the structure of the universe, we have corrupted that knowledge and we no longer see what was so evident in Eden.

“We cannot say anything of significance about homosexual marriage or anything else without absolute dependence on the Bible. Do we acknowledge legal, sociological, anthropological, cultural, political, and various other dimensions to this issue? Of course we do. Nevertheless, everything we understand about human sexuality is directly derived from the knowledge God has given us in the Bible.”
another way, we give the impression that people who do not profess belief in the Bible have no reason to support traditional marriage.\(^{11}\)

Mere preaching and moralizing are probably not going to be compelling, yet silence doesn’t seem right either. How can we speak up in a way that’s listened to, respected, and heeded? I suggest an approach that makes a different kind of moral point. Don’t argue from the perspective of your morality. Argue, instead, from the perspective of the public good.\(^{12}\)

3) \textit{Why are we talking about this; we’ve lost the battle so let’s move on.}

- Yes but…fails to recognize the church’s role in society—going back to Genesis 2—to uphold the institution of marriage (e.g., Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 7; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
- Note Hebrews 13:4-“Let marriage be held in honor among all.”\(^{13}\)

The term ‘honoured’ which is emphatically placed first in the original, means ‘of exceptional value, or highly prized’. . . The adjective also refers to ‘the precious blood of Christ’ by which men and women are redeemed from their empty way of life (1 Pet. 1:19). Members of the community are to value highly this divinely ordained union and to support in every way those who are married.\(^{13}\)

4) \textit{We shouldn’t be surprised; Paul predicted it.}

- Yes but…fails to recognize that Paul, in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, is talking about professing Christians. His advice on how Christians should relate to non-Christians is quite different (1 Cor. 5:9-13).
- Furthermore, this does not mean that because it was predicted we should not do anything (people have been “appointed for eternal life” [Acts 13:48] but Paul does not take that to mean that he should not seek to speak “effectively” [Acts 14:1]).


\(^{12}\) Gregory Koukl, “Morality and the Public Good,” http://www.theologyweb.com/campus/archive/index.php/t-9250.html. See also the following, which was sent to me by Tom Schreiner (without sources): Increase # of homosexuals; Increased disease and health costs; 25-30 year lower life expectancy; Much higher chance of suicide; Greater mental disabilities: depression; Increase incidence of pedophilia: most homosexuals are not pedophiles, but on average homosexuals molest children 7 to 8 x more than heterosexual pedophiles; Greater sexual promiscuity (Homosexuals rarely have monogamous relationships. Their track record is far worse than the general population; 80% of white male homosexuals and 77% of black males in one study had more than 50 partners in their lifetimes. Not as high for lesbians, but still high; Homosexual men 2 to 6 x more partners than heterosexual men, while lesbians 3 to 4 x more; The sexual desire of men is civilized and domesticated by women and children and w/o such it runs wild); Removal of sexual distinctions in society; Public marginalizing of those who oppose homosexuality; Most important: the homosexual suffers in his/her relation to God.

In support of some of the things that Schreiner is saying here, see Bill Muehlenberg, \textit{Strained Relations: The Challenge Of Homosexuality} (Melbourne: Freedom Publishing, 2011). Thanks to my colleague Phil Wilson for the Koukl and Muehlenberg references. It will weaken marriages

\(^{13}\) William L. Lane, \textit{Hebrews 1–8}, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1991), 516: “The fact of marriage must be respected εν πατρισι (“by everyone”). Although in principle the writer would undoubtedly desire that society as a whole valued fidelity in marriage, his immediate concern is for those in the redeemed community.”

\(^{14}\) Peter T. O’Brien, \textit{The Letter To The Hebrews} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 509.
5) Leave the issue alone; salvation is the issue not behavior.
• Yes but…fails to recognize that the issue isn’t just among those unsaved outside the church.

6) Spend every waking minute campaigning against it.
• Yes but…fails to recognize that marriage is designed to glorify God, not the other way round.

4.2. The church must embody the gospel and walk the fine line of truth and grace. Albert Mohler writes, “The question of homosexual marriage presents the church with a monumental challenge.”

We need to recognize:

4.2.1. Truth and grace/love always go together (John 1:14, 17; Eph. 4:15, 25–5:1; Col. 1:6; 1 John 3:18; 2 John 3; see Paul’s own example of how he speaks truth and love in Rom. 9:1-3). Again, Mohler writes:

As Christians, we are charged with the difficult task of compassionate truth-telling. This has never been easy . . . Compassionate truth-telling requires the church to speak from its deepest convictions while demonstrating the love of Christ—speaking truth that will be heard as a hard message while demonstrating the love of Christ through the very act of telling the truth. Compassionate truth-telling means, not only the accurate presentation of biblical truth, but the prayerful and urgent hope that the individuals to whom we speak will be transformed by that truth and respond to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. . . .

Christians must resist the temptation to speak the truth in a manner that falls short of the good, the beautiful, and the true. We betray the truth when we speak of it with an ugly spirit, or attach it to base arguments or mean-spirited impulses.  

15 R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Homosexual Marriage as a Challenge to the Church: Biblical and Cultural Reflections, in Sex and the Supremacy of Christ, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 107.
16 Mohler, Homosexual Marriage, 108-09.
1) Live by the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12).

2) How would you respond to your son/daughter or someone close to you who revealed to you that they were gay?

3) Apart from God’s grace we would all be completely lost (Rom. 3:9-11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-4 along with 1 Cor. 4:7; 9:10). This should illicit compassion rather than judgment. We all struggle with sin. If only the church would react to gluttony and gossip the way it has reacted to homosexuality.

4) Jesus often socialized with people the Pharisees condemned.

The [US] Supreme Court cannot dictate what marriages pastors perform, but it might offer us unprecedented opportunities to minister to a population in desperate need of hearing Christians speak the truth in love. I could not in good conscience perform gay marriage. But I would be honored to spend time in dialogue with gay couples.17

5) Realize that the way we treat others reflects whether we love religion and rules or whether we love Jesus (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46).

6) We, the church, need to live out our belief in salvation by grace. That is, God does not judge those who are in Christ and that truth should set us free to be open about our struggles without the fear of being judged by others (James 5:17; even if they do judge us, we can be satisfied in the fact that Christ does not). We are all sinners saved by grace—and yet people struggling with pornography, lust, same-sex attraction, etc., etc., fear being found out. The church out of all the places on earth should be a place where we can come out of hiding (Gen. 3:7-10) and be embraced by those who love unconditionally (John 13:35). “Many of those with SSA [same-sex attraction] would grow if they were drawn into a group of guys who knew about their struggle and nonetheless accepted them as an equal” (Schreiner).

7) Here are two letters addressed to Christians struggling with same-sex attraction:

Dear Joe,

I hope this letter finds you well. I met your pastor last week, and he was very upset. He told me you mentioned giving up faith in Christ and leaving the church because, even five years after your conversion, you continue to experience same-sex attraction. He also told me that Rita, your wife, has suffered a lot, though you’ve been honest with her and haven’t been unfaithful.

As you know, your pastor was my student in seminary. He asked me to write you since I helped you in the first days after your conversion. I hope this letter will be used by God to encourage you amid your struggle and to remind you of your unshakeable status in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember when I warned you that trusting in Christ doesn’t mean immediate liberty from all spiritual, psychological, and mental consequences? Sin—homosexual or otherwise—leaves deep scars in our lives, branding our consciousness with images, impressions, experiences, tastes, and desires that often take many years to overcome.

Your pastor told me you’ve been reading books that claim homosexuals, once converted, are radically free not only from same-sex relationships but also from same-sex attraction. I don’t doubt in some cases this can happen; in fact, I know a few specific cases where it has. But this is not always the case. Please understand,

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17 Emig, “If the Supreme Court Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage” (http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2013/april/next-marriage-trend.html).
Joe, that continuing homosexual desire post-conversion neither renders your conversion illegitimate nor suggests the Lord has failed you. I fear you’re forgetting something basic about the Christian life, my friend: the distinction between sin and temptation. Same-sex attraction isn’t the same thing as same-sex relations. The first is temptation; the second is sin. Every believer this side of heaven has a heart corrupted by sin, a sinful nature at war with the presence of the Spirit of God. Our hearts daily stir up carnal and corrupt desires, leading us to dwell on godless thoughts and intentions. These temptations happen within ourselves, not to mention those brought about by the world, by others, and by Satan himself.

Every day, married Christian men are tempted to look a second time at women who aren’t their wife. But being tempted isn’t the same as fantasizing about these relationships or having them in reality. Joe, true Christians repress these desires, saying “no” over and over and over again. They think about their wife, their kids, and especially their God who hates adultery and their Savior who died for sin. Every resistance in the face of temptation, then, is a momentous occasion of victory and liberation.

The same applies to every sinful desire in the heart of a Christian. Joe, conversion to Jesus doesn’t mean perfection, and it doesn’t mean the absence of temptation. This you must understand.

Let’s go back to one of those Bible studies I shared with you at the beginning of your Christian life. The process God established to free people from sin is accomplished in three distinct stages. Remember the picture I drew for you?

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<td>Power of sin</td>
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The first step, justification, is an act of God whereby he considers us righteous on the merits of his Son. It’s a legal declaration made once for all, and it is the basis for all that follows.

The second step, sanctification, is our deliverance from sin’s power. This process begins after justification and continues our entire life. Sanctification does not entail complete eradication of our fallen nature, but it does help to subdue and slay it. This is the stage of salvation in which all Christians presently live.

The Lord provides us means of grace like biblical meditation, prayer, and fellowship with other believers to harness the Spirit’s sanctifying power. It’s also vital to pray specifically for the spiritual fruit of self-control.

Joe, this fight is a fierce and seemingly endless struggle, but the fight itself is not sin. Temptation only becomes sin when we yield to it. Victory, however, comes when we say “no,” hour after hour, by the Spirit’s power.

The final step, glorification, is our ultimate freedom from sin’s indwelling presence. It will occur when we die or when our King returns. There will be a resurrection of the dead and a transformation of believers still alive. All God’s children will become like God’s Son in immaculate, immortal, imperishable, glorified bodies. Only then, Joe, will you and I be finally freed from the fleshly desires that reside within our hearts.

I think you’re unnecessarily discouraged because you were led to think turning to Christ would bring full deliverance from prior desires. To that end, I hope this brief letter brings true liberation.

So stay strong and continue practicing the spiritual disciplines, talking with Rita, and enjoying the fellowship of your church. We’re all sinners-in-progress. And above all, Joe, don’t give up. Never stop trusting Christ’s work as full and complete. Though God never promised freedom from all temptation and sin the moment you embraced Christ, he has promised forgiveness. Indeed, your justification was only the beginning of your deliverance, the tiny spark at the genesis of a devouring flame.

“For sin will not have dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

Your brother and friend,
Augustus

18 Personally, I would not phrase this sentence this way—“true Christians repress these desires.” To think of repressing our desires is, I believe, unbiblical and fraught with all sorts of problems. The problem is the word “repress.” It gives the impression that our desires are like a jack-in-the-box and all we need to do is keep a lid on them. To think this way, I believe, is dangerous; because we can’t keep a lid on our desires, they are there whether we like it or not. To repress them is like trying to hold a life jacket under water; it’ll eventually come up. The Psalms show us that we are not to repress our desires but honestly acknowledge them before God and allow him to transform them.

19 Augustus Nicodemus Gomes Lopes is a Presbyterian minister, theologian, professor, international conference speaker, and bestselling author. Augustus holds a BA in theology from North Presbyterian Seminary in Recife, Brazil, a ThM in New Testament from the Reformed University of Potchefstroom, South Africa, and a PhD in biblical interpretation from Westminster Theological...
Dear ____________, you know that we love you deeply and you mean so much to us . . . I say all that because even though I love you so much I cannot agree with what I have read from this man [referring to a interpretation of Lev. 18:22]. So on the one hand I love you and on the other hand I disagree with what I’m reading and seeing you endorsing. I’m trying to be like Jesus, “grace and truth,” albeit probably very imperfectly. Jesus somehow managed both perfectly without balancing them. He was just 100% grace and 100% truth, not 50/50. So my 100% grace to you is that I love you unconditionally and will do so forever. Nothing will ever change that. The decisions you make will not alter that. The theology you have will not alter that. I have never felt anything different since the first day I met. However, it’s also because of how I feel about you that I need to also try and be 100% truth. I hope you can then listen to my reasons why I disagree. Ideally I would rather talk about these and may be we can do that. But it’s easier to get them down on paper first of all in an articulated form. The first thing I would say is that I’m not swayed with the discussions that go on with verses like Leviticus 18:22. The amount of space that these verses take up in Scripture is so small that any final and definitive decision cannot, in my mind, be made from looking at these verses alone. In fact, I think that all these debates on these verses achieve is just more endless debate and discussion that never actually achieve anything. Both sides simply remain unchanged in their opinion and both sides will simply bring up another point to try and win their argument. But we must remember that these verses are part of a larger story, God’s story: the story of redemption that begins in Genesis 1 and ends in Revelation 22. If we look at this larger story then what we find is some undeniable points . . . [some of these points I have mentioned above under “truth”]

__________, I love you, I really do. I do not like writing all of this. It’s not pleasant because I wonder how you will react. I certainly am concerned that you will be hurt. I want you to know that we are here for you though. I can’t stress that enough. Please, do not write us off because of this. Please do not lump us in with those who despise and judge gays, etc. Unfortunately those kinds of people do exist and the problem is that it makes it very hard for anybody to speak the truth without being branded a gay-hater. It would be a lot easier for me to leave this ________ and just not write it or send it. But I simply can’t do that, I love you and I love God too much to sweep it under the carpet. I’m not sure what the next step is from here. I know that Jesus means what he says, “He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never go thirsty” (John 6:35). There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

I know that you yourself are concerned for those [gay people] who are being judged and thus this is one of the main reasons you are endorsing some of these things. But ____________, I don’t think it is helpful. No one needs to be affirmed in what their flesh wants; they need to be affirmed in the fact that God created them and wants to have a relationship with them. We simply cannot talk about God and his salvation without talking about sin. It’s uncomfortable I know. I can shy away from it but God never does. Jesus did say that we were not to judge but he only meant that we were not to judge hypocritically. Paul said that we were to judge those on the inside of the church (1 Corinthians 5:13) but not hypocritically, but in humility and love. Once again, ____________, I am not saying that you are in sin but there are those out there who are. Somehow we need to learn to dialog with them like Jesus would have with the tax-collectors and prostitutes in his day. He was gracious, yes, but he also did not condone their sin. He died for it. Please let me know how you feel about this ____________. I know it’s long and some parts may require reading repeatedly to fully understand it, I’m sorry. But we’re always here, our boys love you and miss you lots and Kathleen and I do too.

Lots of love

Alan

Dr. Alan Stanley
Same-Sex Marriage: A Christian Response
Sept. 4, 2013

Seminary in Philadelphia. He is also an associate pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Santo Amaro in São Paulo. This letter can be found at http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2013/08/26/letter-to-a-struggling-gay-christian/?comments#comments.
1) The issue of same-sex marriage is first and foremost a discussion about the nature of marriage. In other words, depending on the nature of the discussion we are having, we need to be careful about what truth we are trying to get across: is the issue marriage or homosexuality?

- Sherif Girgis argues, “same-sex marriage sees marriage as primarily a deep emotional bond.” However, basing marriage on love—and equality—means that marriage eventually loses its objectivity. If these principles of love and equality are applied consistently, then marriage cannot be restricted even to same-sex relationships. Feasibly, anything goes. People in any kind of relationship could claim to have a right to be married. In the end marriage becomes purposeless and the whole point of the current debate is that marriage does have a purpose, namely, it provides people with an emotional bond and equality.

- Furthermore, does the proposed new definition of marriage provide an emotional bond and equality for children? We need to be consistent. Basing things on emotional bonds and equality could create a world of possibilities that most sane people would want nothing to do with.

2) If you get into a discussion with anyone who holds a different point of view to you on this topic, first ask if they are open to other views. The point is that you want to avoid being labeled judgmental after you share your view. Everyone who has a view is making a judgment.

3) The creation establishes that marriage is for everyone, that is, whether one believes in God or doesn’t (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25) and it’s confirmed with Noah (Gen. 9:1, 7)—“in both contexts, for the human race universally.”

And if we seriously believe that God has ordained marriage as part of the created order, then we should also believe that there is evidence in this world [and not just the Bible] for the reality and usefulness of marriage. To call attention to that evidence in the public square is a way of communicating that marriage is not a uniquely Christian thing, but a human thing, and that all people have an interest in getting marriage policy correct.

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21 Note: I have not read Girgis’ book though I have listened to him on this issue here (http://www.acl.org.au/media/the-political-spot/) and here (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0ldAoClYBk). This quote is from an interview he did here in Australia which can be accessed at http://www.acl.org.au/media/the-political-spot/.

22 The comment about objectivity is from a review by David VanDrunen (Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Westminster Seminary California) that can be found at http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/what-is-marriage-man-and-woman-a-defense.php.

23 Thanks to my colleague Phil Wilson for this point. If asked for your opinion on this issue Phil says, ‘You know, this is actually a very personal question you’re asking, and I’d be glad to answer. But before I do, I want to know if you consider yourself a tolerant or an intolerant person. Is it safe to give my opinion, or are you going to judge me for my point of view? Do you respect diverse points of view, or do you condemn others for convictions that differ from yours?’

4) God’s image means that he creates two sexes (Gen. 1:26-28): Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness. . . . So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” One of my former students put it like this:

This passage [Gen. 1:26-27], I think at least, seems to be saying there is a way in which man and woman together . . . more fully reflect the image of God, than man or woman alone, or man and man/woman and woman together. To fully reflect the relational image of the triune God, God had to create two very different but complimentary creatures, man and woman, and together in marriage we reflect something of the image of God, that no other human relationship can.

5) Adam looks for a suitable “helper” for himself among the animals “But for Adam, no suitable helper was found” (Gen. 2:20). Then one is found, a woman (Gen. 2:22). Why is she suitable over an animal? Verse 24 suggests the answer: “and they become one flesh.” Admittedly this is not limited to physical sexual union but nevertheless becoming one flesh does at least concern sexual union.

6) Hence what we see here is akin to 1 Corinthians 11:14—“Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him.” The same can be said of sexual relationships. There is such a thing as “natural” sexual relations and “unnatural” ones (Rom. 1:26-27)—in accordance with nature versus contrary to nature.

7) Following the fall God spells out the consequences of sin assuming heterosexual relationships: pain in childbearing (going back to increase and multiply in Gen. 1:28) and tension between husbands and wives (Genesis 3:16).

8) The point is that this plan does not change. Whenever we read about marriage in the Old Testament it is between a man and a woman (e.g., Adam’s children marry wives; Noah marries a wife; Abraham has a wife as does Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses . . . David and all the kings, etc.). Trying to restrict passages like Gen. 19; Lev. 18:22; 20:23 to culture, even if true, still does not prove anything: heterosexual marriage is the only example that occurs. Plus, it is highly unlikely that we can take these passages in the way that Justin Lee proposes.

• Concerning Genesis 19, see Jude 7 and 2 Pet. 2:6-10 (Schreiner).
• Concerning Leviticus 18:22; 20:13, note the context: first, Leviticus 18:19 is the only practice with a question mark today; second, the term “abomination” (KJV) is used in other contexts to refer to something that is morally wrong (Deut. 7:25-26; 18:9-12; 22:5; 23:18; Ezek. 18:6; 22:10-11; though Ezek. 18:6; 22:10 refers to intercourse during menstruation); third, the Leviticus passages are not restricted to Israel as Lee suggests (Lev. 18:26; 20:2).

25 Mohler, Homosexual Marriage, 111: “Significantly, it was the Creator who declared Adam’s need for a complement—a “helper suitable for him.” This was not the result of Adam’s self-recognition. This was no dawning consciousness that came upon Adam; it was his Creator’s declaration.”


27 Louw & Nida 58.9 ϕυσικός.
9) Jesus follows the same pattern. When discussing divorce he speaks in terms of husbands and wives. Concerning divorce, he says that it’s been this way from the beginning (Matt. 19:8). In other words, he goes back to Genesis 2 and says in effect, “that’s the pattern.” He does not even entertain the possibility that marriage or divorce might occur between two people of the same sex. Rather he says:

> Haven’t you read . . . at the beginning the Creator “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. (Matt. 19:5-7)

10) Paul and Peter both tell wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to love their wives (Eph. 5:21-25; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

- Paul even cites Genesis 2:24 about man and woman becoming “one flesh” and says that this mystery is analogous to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).
- Peter says that wives make themselves beautiful on the inside for their husbands and this is how the wives of old used to live (1 Pet. 3:4-6).

11) The thing that is significant about all of these examples is that they are all getting discussed the same way: marriage is between a husband and a wife. No other kind of relationship is ever considered or envisaged. This means that the burden of proof must be on those who say that the Bible (forgetting for a moment those who don’t acknowledge the Bible) supports same-sex marriage. But there is no proof:

- Romans 1:26-27 makes the point that same-sex relationships are first, unnatural, and second, linked with Rom. 1: 29-31, suggesting a universal application.

James Dunn writes:

> “Paul’s attitude to homosexual practice is unambiguous. The third appearance of the word ‘changed’ (cf vv 23 and 25) seems to imply that the action described (‘changing the natural use to that which is contrary to nature’) is of a piece with and direct result of the basic corruption of the glory and truth of God in idolatry, a similar turning from the role of creature to what is simply a perversion of the creature’s share in creating. But more striking still is his use of a sequence of words whose import is unmistakable. Homosexuality is seen as a passion which is ‘worthy of no respect.’ Homosexual practice is characterized with the emphasis of repetition as ‘unnatural,’ where Paul . . . in effect appeals to his own readers’ common sense to recognize that homosexual practice is a violation of the natural order (as determined by God). . . . Paul could not help but be thinking here of Lev 18 and 20, which include the homosexual act within the category of illicit sexual relationships, as one of the ‘abominations’ of the surrounding peoples which Israel should avoid . . .”

- The evidence suggests that Paul was thinking of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 when he wrote 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10. Note that the arsenokoité does not seem to occur before Paul and therefore Paul may have coined the word himself by joining arsēn and koité. Plus, in saying that they shall not inherit the kingdom

of God (1 Cor.), Paul is in line with Moses saying cut off from God’s people (Lev.).

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<tr>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
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<td><strong>Lev. 18:22</strong> You shall not lie with a male (arsenos) as in the bed of (koitēn) a woman; it is an abomination. . . . 24 Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things . . . 29 For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. 30 So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.”</td>
<td><strong>1 Cor. 6:9</strong> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality (arsenokoitai) . . . But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.</td>
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<td><strong>Lev. 20:13</strong> If a man lies with a male (arsenos) as in the bed of (koitēn) a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.</td>
<td><strong>1 Tim. 1:10</strong> Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality (arsenokoitais) enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.</td>
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12) What about the cultural argument (e.g., the OT forbids cutting beards [Lev. 19:27] and wearing clothes made of two different kinds of materials [Lev. 19:19])? Could not we argue the same for same-sex relationships as we do for slavery, for example). Four responses:

a) The key thing to recognize is that many aspects of the law functioned as a “dividing wall” and thereby excluded Gentiles (Eph. 2:14; e.g., food laws, circumcision, Sabbath observance, etc.). These laws in particular have now been abolished. 30 It matters little whether we take this to mean the whole law of Moses or parts of it since the New Testament clearly demonstrates that Christians are still under the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; compare Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 8:4). In other words, what we find in the New Testament is that the moral laws of the Old Testament are carried over (e.g., 9 of the ten commandments).

b) This is precisely how we should read Gal. 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”). The context surrounding v. 28 is concerned with saying that everyone regardless of race, social status, or gender, is able to belong to God’s family. That is, the distinctions still remain (Jew/Gentile; slave/free—at least opposition to homosexuality seems to derive from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.” On the 1 Timothy passage, see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 38-39.

in the 1st cent.—male/female) but they are not important when it comes to *salvation*.

c) Slavery has since been abolished but we must remember two things: 1) slavery in the 1st century was not the harsh and oppressive slavery that we are used to thinking of; 2) Homosexuality is different from slavery because the former is an institution invented by people whereas marriage was ordained by God (Schreiner).

d) In response to Kevin Rudd’s comment concerning Jesus and marriage versus Paul and slavery. What Rudd and others fail to recognize is that Jesus establishes the permanence of marriage between a man and a woman by going back to Genesis 2:24 (see Matt 19:4-6) and thereby overthrows the “cultural” norm of divorce brought in under the Law of Moses.

13) Does God’s love contradict what the Bible says about homosexuality? “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16); not “Love is God.” This means that we must start with God when we define love. Most people start with love and then define God.
   • What’s more, in the context of 1 John, and the Bible, God being love means that he sent his Son into the world to die and save us from our sins (1 John 4:10-“This is love...he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”; 1 John 4:14).  

14) Ultimately the problem with this debate is that without acknowledgement of the Bible our opinions are distorted by virtue of what happened in Gen. 3 (cf. Gen. 1:4, etc. with Gen. 3:6). Genesis shows us that it’s meant to be all about God (e.g., Ps. 19:1-6; Rev. 4:11) whereas Gen. 3 shows us that it’s now all about us.
   • The crux of the matter, according to Gen. 3:6, is that our decision-making criteria, is no longer driven by what God says is good but rather what we think is “good.”
   • The result is that we are now playing God. God made marriage to be between a man and a woman but we are changing it—and what’s worse we are using the Bible to support it.
   • This means that whether people are born with or chose a particular sexual orientation is completely irrelevant since everyone is born in the state of sin (Rom. 5:12-14).  

15) We should not forget that while Jesus is appealed to for his promotion of universal love (Rudd), he was brutally honest about sin (e.g., Matt. 5:27-30), and

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32 Cf. Mohler, *Homosexual Marriage*, 121: “Christians have often sinned against homosexuals by arguing that homosexuality is simply a ‘chosen’ form of behavior and lifestyle. Clearly, participation in homosexual behavior is a matter of choice, but the underlying desire is often not experienced by homosexuals as a matter of choice at all.

The biblical understanding of sin helps us to understand that every human being is a sexual sinner and every profile of individual desire is corrupted by sin’s effects. Even as our bodies show the effects of sin as we age, decay, and die, our affections show the corruption of sin because we desire what should not be desired. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ must stand before the world and acknowledge that we often do not even understand our own desires and inclinations.”
he was so because of his love for us. That’s the point of the cross; the cross doesn’t wipe sin under the carpet, the cross says “come to me and stop playing God with your life.”

- Jesus promises change to those who believe (John 6:35). Do we believe him? Part of the problem, I think, for Christians is that we are doubtful of Jesus’ power to change because we don’t see ourselves being changed. (Now as to why this is is a discussion for another time). But the message of the gospel is that God is for us (Rom. 8:32).

- “Change is not equal to removal of all temptation” (Schreiner).

16) Therefore, in the end it comes down to what glorifies God. That hasn’t changed (see 1 Cor. 10:31). I think this is the biggest issue of all. This means that our lives should be a showpiece to the world that God is glorious. The only way that God can get the glory is when he is seen to be glorious in our life (e.g., Matt. 5:16).

- This means that marriage should glorify God. So the real question that we need to answer is this: does same-sex marriage glorify God?

- The answer is clear from two passages:

  a) Romans 1:18-32: people have exchanged the glory of God for the glory of created things and the result is same-sex relationships (Rom. 1:26-27). This means that same-sex relationships (along with everything else mentioned in Rom. 1:28-32) are the result of Gen. 3:6—human beings decided that the things of this creation were more glorious and worthy of worship than God.

  b) Ephesians 5:1-2, 31-32:

  1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. . . . 26Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . 31Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church (ESV)

This passage is saying that we are to imitate God and the way we do that is to love one another as Christ has loved us. Marriage is a mini-community where this can occur. But notice how God is imitated, not only by husbands loving their wives, but also by the husband and wife becoming “one flesh.” How though does that imitate or glorify God? The answer is that marriage is a “union” between two people just as Christ and the church, as the bride, are in union. Hence, “A Christian marriage . . . bears living witness to the meaning of ‘two becoming one’. It reproduces in miniature the beauty shared between the Bridegroom and the Bride. And through it all, the mystery of the

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33 Mohler, Holmosexual Marriage, 110, comes to the same conclusion on how to approach the same-sex marriage issue: “we must reconceive every single question in terms of how God’s glory will be most clearly manifested in his creation.”

34 See also Mohler, Homosexual Marriage, 119-120.
gospel is unveiled." Given that Paul cites Gen. 2:24 and what he says in 1 Cor. 11:3 ("I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God") I cannot imagine Paul thinking that same-sex relationships would refer to Christ and the church. Plus, how would a same-sex marriage imitate God in light of 1 Cor. 11:3?

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35 O'Brien, Ephesians, 434.
Embody the Gospel in our Marriages

1) *Embodying the gospel means less words and more conduct in line with the gospel.*

I think 1 Pet. 3:1-2 is paradigmatic for how the church should conduct itself on this occasion. That doesn’t mean we never speak but we must always keep in mind what Peter says a few verses later:

\[15\text{But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,}\ 16\text{keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Pet. 3:15-16)}\]

Many times, words have very little impact, that’s why God didn’t write a letter from heaven, he sent his Son.

... how shall we approach issues related to homosexual marriage? I have grown increasingly convinced that most of our approaches focus on what homosexuals would have to rethink in order to see this issue with clarity and understand the error of their lifestyle and social agenda. We often assume that the real issue is what kind of people homosexuals would have to be in order to hear our message and receive its truth. While this is an important consideration, I am convinced that the more urgent challenge for the church is to clarify our own self-identity and our understanding of the gospel. What kind of people must we be, if we are to address the challenge of homosexual marriage with faithfulness and Christian love?

2) *Embodying the gospel means focusing on our own marriages.* We need to not lose focus. We husbands are called to love our wives as Christ loved the church and we wives are called to submit to our husbands as the church submits to Christ. In short, we are called to display Christ to the world through our marriages. But, “When we exclude and ostracize, we only make it more difficult for these men and women to hear the call of the God who made them in his image and for his glory.”

“The pagan world of the first century was every bit as sexually promiscuous as the Western world of the twenty-first century, and Christians are called today, as they were then, to stand out, to be deeply counter-cultural, at this point.”

A genuinely Christian response to the challenge of homosexual marriage would go back to marriage itself and to the gift of gender, demonstrating the rightness and the perfection of marriage as a picture in miniature of the kingdom of God. Every marriage, every domestic household, is to be a little picture of the kingdom of God in the right ordering of all things and in the creatures’ grateful reception of the Creator’s gifts. This little picture—this little domestic portrait that centers in the covenant of marriage—presents a picture more powerful than anything the world can ever distort.

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37 Timothy Dalrymple, “If the Supreme Court Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage.”
3) **Embodying the gospel means being humble and avoiding hypocrisy.** President of Focus on the Family, Jim Daly, writes:

We must also humbly confess the damage we have done to marriage by our own careless treatment of it. Though the divorce rate among committed Christians is lower than among the general populace, it remains far too high. The single greatest argument we can present to the world on this issue is to live out marriage in all its God-ordained fullness and radiant beauty. We must approach this sacred institution with profound seriousness. We must offer—even mandate—robust premarital counseling for church members. We should raise an army of marriage mentors, experienced couples who have weathered the storms, to walk alongside and show the way to younger couples, and to serve as a lifeline to those struggling to stay afloat. Let us also lift up and celebrate those couples who have endured through decades, and make those examples known to a younger generation, many of whom have not seen marriage successfully modeled in their families of origin.

This gives Christian churches the opportunity to do what Jesus called us to do with our marriages in the first place: to serve as a light in a dark place. Permanent, stable marriages with families with both a mother and a father may well make us seem freakish in 21st-century culture. But is there anything more “freakish” than a crucified cosmic ruler? Is there anything more “freakish” than a gospel that can forgive rebels like us and make us sons and daughters? Let’s embrace the freakishness, and crucify our illusions of a moral majority.

That means that we must repent of our pathetic marriage cultures within the church. For too long, we’ve refused to discipline a divorce culture that has ravaged our churches. For too long, we’ve quieted our voices on the biblical witness of the distinctive missions of fathers and mothers in favor of generic messages on “parenting.”

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40 Jim Daly, “If the Supreme Court Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage.”
5. **FURTHER RESOURCES**

5.1. **Same-Sex Sites**


- “Gay Voices”: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gay-voices/. Useful online news forum from a gay perspective.

- Gay Christian Network (GCN): http://www.gaychristian.net. Founded in 2001, the Gay Christian GCN is a nonprofit Christian ministry dedicated to building bridges and offering support for those caught in the crossfire of one of today’s most divisive culture wars.

5.2. **Websites Defending Traditional Marriage**


- Timothy J. Dailey, “The Slippery Slope of Same-Sex ‘Marriage’” (Family Research Council): http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=bc04c02. Dailey is Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Marriage and Family Studies of the Family Research Council in the US.

- Andrew Errington, “Same-Sex marriage- what is really at issue” (ABC: 30th April 2013): http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/04/30/3747877.htm. Errington is an Anglican minister in NSW.

5.3. **Struggling with gay feelings**


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42 Thanks to Beth Gaukroger for tracking down many of these references for me.
5.4. Books or Essays

- John Corvino and Maggie Gallagher, *Debating same-sex marriage* (Point/Counterpoint, 2012). Corvino is pro same-sex marriage and Gallagher is against it.