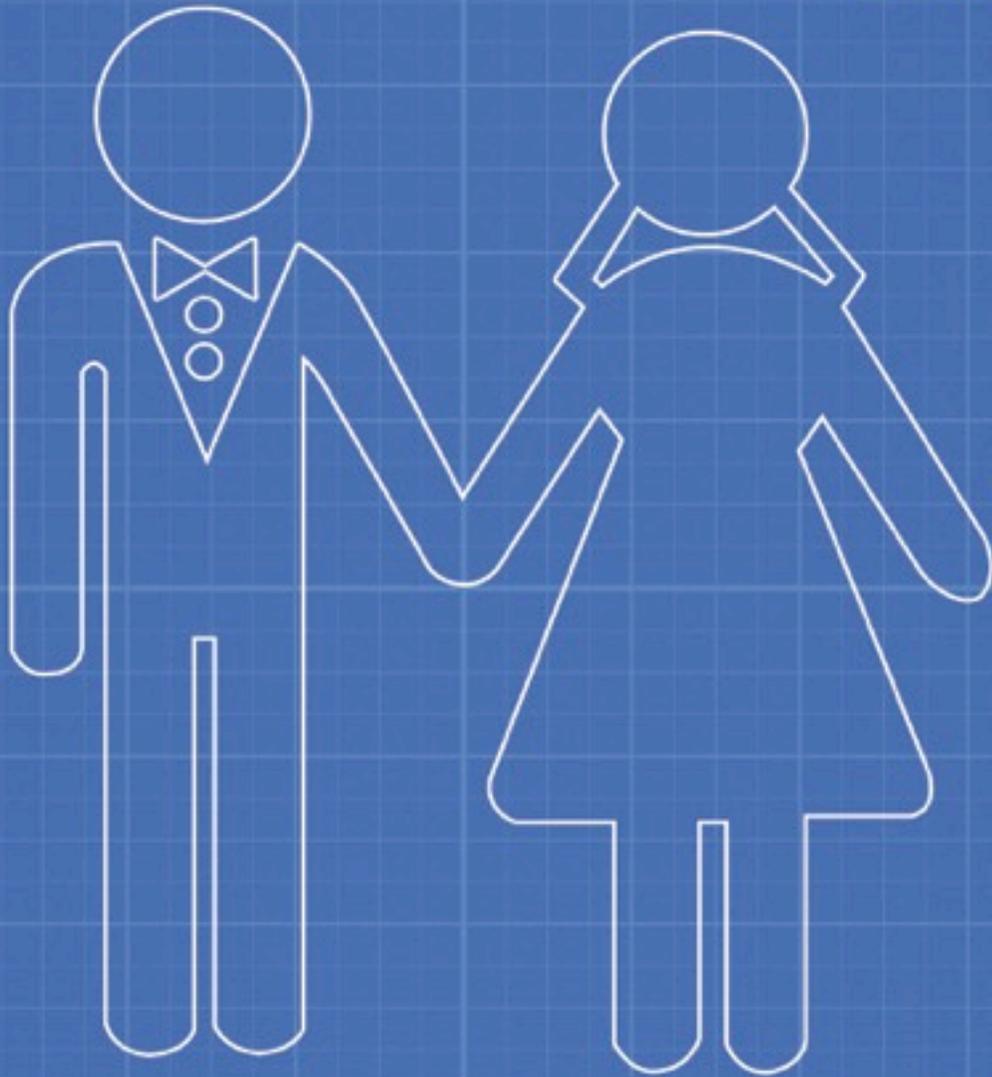


PERSPECTIVE

AUGUST 2015



**BEING "FOR" MARRIAGE
IN A SAME-SEX WORLD**

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Being “For” Marriage in a Same-Sex World

For most of human history there has been enormous cultural pressure on men to act like men and women to act like women. I say “cultural” pressure because many of these forces are not biblical. For example, when I grew up a boy would be mocked for wearing a pink shirt and a girl would be made fun of for wearing overalls. A boy could be teased for enjoying cooking and friends might wonder why a girlfriend signed up for shop class. Sadly, in a fallen world, sinful human beings are always on the lookout for ways to ridicule each other. Those who didn’t fit nicely into the cultural, gender-box were targets of ungodly abuse.

But are there real gender differences that we need to accept and embrace? Are there gender differences that are hardwired into our nature and affect who we choose as a mate and how we present ourselves to the world? Christians believe there are. We understand gender to be the state of being male or female. The implications of our gender affect everything from the clothes we own, how

we wear our hair, the makeup we use (or avoid), and what we name our kids.

In short, gender matters. Traditionally, this has played out in America’s legal system where sexual “crimes against nature” were once punishable by law. There was once a widely-agreed opinion that certain sexual activities ran counter to the laws of gender and were, therefore, harmful to society. Prior to 1962, consensual, homosexual sex was illegal in every state. Two individuals caught in the act could be arrested, charged and sentenced to imprisonment or hard labor. In Idaho a sodomy charge could lead to life imprisonment. Up until 1973, the American Psychological Association considered homosexuality a psychological disease and listed it as such in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

However, by the late 1970s, the landscape had changed. Two Christian authors could observe a “philosophical revolution” that “resulted in a completely new consensus in our society.” They noted how “divorce is now more easily obtained [and] abortion and homosexuality are legal.”¹ Almost. It took twenty more years for homosexuality to be legalized in every state and finally, in 2015, same-sex marriage became the law of the land.

As Christians, it is not our duty to uphold the tenets of history. Much of the church, after all, was wrong on slavery. Our concern is fidelity to God and his Word. What does the Bible say about sexuality? Is homosexuality a sin? Now, more than ever, Christians need to know how to answer these questions.

Before I answer, a word of caution. Our goal must not be to win the debate, but to model Christ—in word and deed (see Brad’s article from last month’s *Perspective*). As the world sees God’s character on display in our actions and through our words, many will want God to be their heavenly Father. Jesus put it this way:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

Let us show our “good works” by setting forth in both conduct and speech a picture of biblical sexuality. With that in mind, I’d like to lay out six truths about God’s design for marriage:

SIX TRUTHS ABOUT GOD’S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

First, marriage is God’s design.

The Bible begins with the marriage of a man and a woman. After God made Adam and Eve he united them in marriage. This union pleased Adam so much he cried out with joy, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23). Countless men on their wedding night have expressed similar delight.

Eve pleased Adam, at least in part, because God designed her to be “a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:20). This is why Christians often talk about the way a husband and wife complement each other. The two can do together what neither can do apart. Adam and Eve had charge of all of God’s creation. God wanted them to produce a family. These families would become the building blocks of societies that lived under God’s command and ruled over God’s creation.

The first marriage wasn’t to be the only marriage. It wasn’t a fluke or a flash-in-the-pan idea. Adam and Eve set a pattern for humanity to follow: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

If we believe in God as a good and wise Creator, we must embrace his plan for marriage. We are called to believe that his design is a good design. The pattern he established in the Garden of Eden is a pattern we ought to follow today.

Second, sin disrupted God’s design for marriage.

Christians don’t only believe in God. We believe in sin. That is to say, we believe that men and women are prone to reject God’s good authority, including his plan for marriage. When we start reading through the Bible, we can’t help but notice how marriage and sexuality now fall so far short of God’s design.

Take Abraham and Sarah, for example. They had a troubled marriage. After fleeing to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan, Abraham feared for his life. Because Sarah was so pretty Abraham believed she’d be taken from him and he’d be murdered. So what did Abraham do? He sent her to Pharaoh’s household and told her to lie by telling everyone they were siblings. That way even if someone decided to sleep with Sarah they’d have no reason to get rid of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-16). Talk about a failure of manhood!

The Bible does not present Abraham as an example of wisdom or integrity. He is no pinnacle of virtue. His pathetic action proves that marriage in a fallen world is in trouble. The fact that Abraham truly believed in the promises of God is wonderful evidence that God saves the worst of sinners.

One of the clearest examples of sin disrupting God’s design for marriage is the rampant existence of polygamy in the Old Testament. Because of sin, God’s people followed the sexual practices of the surrounding nations instead of the pattern God gave them in Adam and Eve. King Solomon, for example, turned away from the Lord by taking 700 wives and 300 concubines. Scripture does not commend his actions. Far from it, “Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done” (1 Kings 11:6).

It is quite possible that later in his life, Solomon recognized that polygamy is a distortion of God’s design. Many believe he wrote the Old Testament book, Song of Songs. It is a love poem about a husband and a wife. It’s the romantic and, at times, erotic story of a couple pursuing God’s design for marriage in a fallen world.

At the end of the poem, Solomon puts these words in the wife’s mouth: “Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.” The wife is describing Solomon’s harem. He was a man who

refused to be satisfied by one wife. The entire kingdom knew about his insatiable sexual greed. The wife of the Song of Songs knows a better way. Notice what she says: “My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand.” In other words, “Solomon, you keep your harem. It’s enough for me that I have one husband, and it’s enough for him that he has one wife, me!” In the Song of Songs we have a clear repudiation of polygamy.

Whether it is Abraham failing to serve his wife or Solomon failing to be satisfied with one wife the Bible is full of failed marriages. Since the entrance of sin into the world men and women have distorted God’s design for marriage. But there is one distortion we need to specifically address: homosexuality.

Third, the Old Testament describes homosexuality as a particular distortion of God’s design.

Several passages stand out. The first is Genesis 18-19, the passage about Sodom and Gomorrah. A group of men leave Abraham to visit the city of Sodom, a place famous for its wickedness. The men (angels in disguise) meet up with Lot at the gate of the city. Lot invites them to his home where they are accosted by “the men of Sodom, both young and old” (Genesis 19:4). These brutish citizens pound on Lot’s door ordering the host to release his guests so that the men of Sodom “may know them” (19:5). The text is quite clear: they are demanding to gang rape Lot’s guests. God’s judgment rained down on Sodom for a number of reasons—homosexual sin being one of them.ⁱⁱ

The law of God addresses many sexual sins. In Leviticus 18 and 20 God prohibits bestiality (Leviticus 18:23) and adultery (18:20). But he also condemns homosexuality: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (18:22). A couple chapters later the prohibition is repeated: “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them” (20:13).

Careful readers of the Bible will note that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17-20). As a result, it is important for us to read every Old Testament command in light of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Through his teaching we discover some Old Testament laws are done away with. It is, for example, no longer a sin to eat pork because Jesus made all foods clean (Mark 7:19). Furthermore, in the Old Testament, God’s people lived in a political state and had the responsibility to enforce God’s law physically. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, no one has the same authority. We may exclude someone from membership

in a church for refusing to repent of a sin, but the church does not practice corporal punishment.ⁱⁱⁱ

Kevin DeYoung, in his helpful book, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* explains why these passages from Leviticus are relevant today. However we apply these laws, we can’t simply dismiss them:

Anyone who has studied the Bible as a serious discipline understands that navigating the relationships between the Old and New Testament can be tricky business. We don’t simply adopt the Mosaic covenant as our church membership covenant. Nor do we simply dismiss God’s gracious self-disclosure in the Torah because of a gag line about eating shellfish. Leviticus was part of the Bible Jesus read, the Bible Jesus believed, and the Bible Jesus did not want to abolish. We ought to take seriously how the Holiness Code reveals to us the holy character of God and the holy people we are supposed to be. Even on this side of the cross the commands in Leviticus still matter.^{iv}

The question must be asked, why does God care so much about who has sex with whom? Regardless how we apply Leviticus to our day and age, we may wonder why were the consequences of breaking this law so steep? We must remember that God is a holy God and he calls his creatures to be holy too. Part of holiness is living according to God’s design. God saw fit to decree that marriage is between a man and a woman. We honor God by living according to this plan. To reject his plan is to reject him. Whenever we sin against God’s design we are sinning against God. We are saying to him, “I think my way of life is better than your plan for me.” In the Old Testament God told his people what kind of life brought him glory and honor. He said marriage is between a man and a woman and he therefore prohibited men from having sex with men and women from having sex with women. Because God is holy, the punishment for their disobedience was steep.

Fourth, the New Testament describes homosexuality as a particular distortion of God’s design.

In Romans 1, we have the first and clearest New Testament passage that specifically addresses homosexuality. Paul carefully explains the sinful inclinations of a fallen world. Men and women God made to worship him in holiness have, instead, foolishly chosen to follow their own, sinful desires. This is idolatry. By living life on our own terms and not on God’s terms we make gods out of people instead of worshipping the one, true God.

God hates idolatry, and part of his judgment against it is actually handing people over to it. Think of a parent whose judgment on a greedy child is to let him eat too much ice cream, knowing very well his stomach is going to hurt. Sometimes, when God sees our foolishness, he simply gives us what we want. Paul put it this way:

God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passions for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error (Romans 1:26-27).

Some have tried to argue that Paul is not prohibiting *all* homosexual relationships, just the kind where a stronger person exploits a weaker person. But such a reading fails to do justice to the text. The sin Paul describes is mutual. He is talking about persons who are consumed “with passions *for one another*.” It won’t do to say Paul approves of homosexuality but opposes abuse—he rejects both.^v

There are a couple of other places in the New Testament that explicitly address homosexuality:

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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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 (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Notice a couple of things from this passage. First of all, homosexuality is one of many sins that Paul lists. Sometimes people accuse Christians of making homosexuality the chief of sins. Paul didn’t do that. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. He doesn’t mention sorcery here as he did in Galatians 5:20, but certainly Paul considered sorcery to be offensive to God (no offense to Harry Potter!). Paul wants the members of the church in Corinth to know what godliness looks like. Sometimes, to explain godliness you have to define ungodliness. That’s what Paul is doing in these verses.

Second, notice that Paul writes in verse 11, “And such were some of you.” These aren’t a list of abstract sins. These are sins the members of the church in Corinth really struggled with. Paul knew his audience and he knew their background. He knew how they lived in the past and how they would be tempted to live in the future. He shares this list of sins so they know on what ground

the battle for their soul will be waged. They will be tempted in these areas. Therefore, it’s important for them to be ready.

In writing to Timothy, Paul brings up homosexuality again.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Notice in this passage Paul makes it absolutely clear that this list is not exhaustive. He is telling them not to practice anything that “is contrary to sound doctrine.” Christians are charged to carefully read the Bible, determine how the doctrine in the Bible would have them act, and seek to faithfully obey God by living in a way that pleases him in light of this doctrine. For those wondering what such a life might look like, Paul helpfully gives several examples.

In both of these passages homosexuality is forbidden, just as God forbade it in the Old Testament. Commentator John Stott observed that in the Greek, the word for homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 is related to the prohibition on homosexuality found in Leviticus:

The Greek word *arsenokoites*, which occurs only [in 1 Timothy 1:10] and in 1 Corinthians 6:9, is a combination of *arsen* (male) and either *koite* (bed) or *keimai* (to lie). It probably refers back to the Leviticus texts which prohibit ‘lying with a man as one lies with a woman’; it denotes practising male homosexuals.^{vi}

It is evident that when it comes to homosexuality, the Bible is clear. It is important to notice that the Bible prohibits those who “practice homosexuality.” In the church there will be those who struggle with same-sex attraction. That, in and of itself, is not a sin anymore than it is sinful for a man to be tempted to lust after a woman or a woman to be tempted to lust after a man. At issue is how we respond to our temptations and what we do with those desires.

Fifth, God designed marriage to be good for society.

Marriage is good for society. Our world will be a better place to live if governments protect and promote the idea that marriage is a life-long covenant union between one and one woman. This is because children learn something about commitment, fortitude, and love when they see imperfect couples persist in marriage. Not only that, children have things to learn from a mother that they can't learn from a father and vice versa. This does not mean that the children of divorced parents are destined to grow up troubled. But it does mean that being raised in a divorced home is not ideal, nor is it ideal to be raised by two committed men or two committed women. Perhaps I should add that being raised in a home in a mixture of three, four, or five "committed" adults is not ideal either. Children learn something important about the exclusivity of love when they see *one* man and *one* woman who only have eyes and bodies for each other.

It is important for Christians to be able to explain why they think marriage is good not just for the church, but for society as a whole. In their book, *Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage*, Sean McDowell and John Stonestreet summarize some truths that we can no longer take for granted:

Sex makes babies; society needs babies; and babies deserve mothers and fathers. Historically, marriage is the institution by which societies have recognized and managed these three truths, both culturally and legally. Thus, marriage is a reality that transcends time and cultures. It commits mothers and fathers to each other and to any children who result from their sexual activity. This, in turn, perpetuates society.^{vii}

In other words, we are on solid ground when we advocate marriage as a life-long covenant union between one man and one woman. Christians aren't against same-sex marriage because we are against gays. Far from it! We are against same-sex marriage because we are convinced that redefining marriage as anything other than a life-long covenant union between one man and one woman is, in the long run, bad for society as a whole.

Sixth, God designed marriage as a picture of the gospel.

I remember years ago when a missionary couple visited my church to share about their ministry overseas. They worked in a Muslim country and they said something that surprised me. Their evangelism was most effective in the context of their home where their Muslim neighbors could see them interact as husband and wife. The Islam they witnessed encouraged wives to be treated as second-class citizens in the state, the mosque, and the home. The women are trained to wait on their husbands hand and

foot. There is no real give and take—the wives are simply told to give.

But when these Muslim families visited my missionary friends they observed a husband willing to clear the table, to talk with his wife as an equal, and to demonstrate kindness and affection. It was not uncommon for the Muslims to ask why they acted this way. The answer is the gospel.

We see what a Christian marriage ought to look like in Ephesians 5:25-27:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

Paul saw a husband's role as the natural implication of the age-old definition of marriage given by God himself: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31). And though these words clearly refer to the marriage of a husband and a wife, Paul said they mysteriously refer to more than that; they refer to the gospel. Marriage is a picture of Christ, the groom, laying down his life for his wife, the church: "This mystery [of marriage] is profound, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32).

Christians should define marriage as a life-long covenant union between a man and a woman because it is good for society as a whole. But more than that, we should recognize that God has given us in physical marriage a tangible picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus literally gave his life so that the church could live forever. There is not greater act of love than this selfless service. Societies that encourage divorce, that same-sex marriage, and look away at spousal abuse are undermining not just marriage but the gospel itself.

Many of our family and friends are going to have a hard time understanding why we, as Christians, are so vocal in our opposition to same-sex marriage. They may understand why we, personally, resist it, but why would we strive to force our opinion regarding marriage on others? There is no quick answer to that question, but the above six points are the categories of thought we need to have to even engage the question. Much the way we would say a human life is not ours to take—every human belongs to God—we could say that marriage is not ours to redefine—the definition of marriage belongs to God. We redefine marriage at our peril. Our friends

and neighbors won't quickly appreciate the connection we make between marriage and the gospel, but that's okay. The conversation is well worth having.

ONE LAST WORD

I'm hearing many people say the church is against same-sex marriage. This is true. But let's remember how easy it is to talk a lot about what we are against. Our creeds and our conviction make it quite clear that we believe same-sex marriage is unbiblical and wrong. And yet, let's remember that, fundamentally, we are *for* marriage. Author Rosaria Butterfield pointed out how "many Christians cannot defend biblical marriage because we cannot define biblical marriage."^{viii} She's right. We need a positive vision for what marriage is before we can successfully defend it in the public square.

Our God is a wonderfully creative God. I sit in stunned silence when I see the way the ocean waves lap against the white sand or even the way a ladybug crawls along a green leaf. It's almost as if the wave and sand and the ladybug and leaf were paired together for my pleasure! And yet nothing is more beautiful, stunning, or mysterious than the way of a man with a woman. The author of Proverbs said it first: "Three things are two wonderful for me; for I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin" (Proverbs 30:19).

We have lost something as a culture when we are unable to appreciate the unique, natural beauty of a husband and a wife being united. Gender matters. I'm not the man I ought to be, but I am a man and there are ways large and small God would have me lead my wife. My wife would be the first to admit that she is not the woman she ought to be, but she is a woman and I can personally attest to the numerous ways her nurturing, gentle touch have made our house a home. God designed us differently and it's our differences that make marriage, marriage.

As Christians we are for marriage because we are for God, not because we are sure God wants for us a spouse who will love us when we are old. He may have that for us; he may not. We are for marriage because through marriage we learn that God is for us. He is for coming to us, living for us, dying in our place, and rising in our stead. In marriage we learn that God loved us enough not to commit to us for a few weeks or months until we could be separated by "irreconcilable differences." No, God loves us with a forever-kind-of love, a love that never grows old or cold. In marriage we learn that God is the only object of our affection just as the church is the apple of his eye. In marriage we learn that that God is united to us in a mysterious, beautiful way, like the way

of a man with a virgin—and this is a unity that only becomes real when a man and a woman become one. This is what it means to be *for* marriage.

~Aaron Menikoff

ⁱ Ronald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human* (IVP, 1978), 170.

ⁱⁱ Some modern day critics have tried to argue that God's judgment fell on Sodom for the citizens' lack of hospitality. Not only does this interpretation fail to read the text plainly, it ignores Judges 19 where a similar situation takes place and homosexuality is, once again, condemned.

ⁱⁱⁱ It takes some work to understand how Old Testament commands are to be interpreted in light of Jesus' ministry. For a helpful explanation see Tim Kellers' article, "Making Sense of Scriptures 'Inconsistency.'" Found at <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/making-sense-of-scriptures-inconsistency>.

^{iv} Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Crossway, 2015), 46-47.

^v If you haven't already, do buy DeYoung's book which is available in our bookstore. He discusses this issue on pages 52-52. For an even more detailed critique of some who profess to be Christians but argue the Bible approves of committed, homosexual relationships, read Tim Keller, "The Bible and Same Sex Relationships: A Review Article," found at http://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article.

^{vi} John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (IVP, 1996), 49.

^{vii} Sean McDowell & John Stonestreet, *Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage* (Baker, 2014), 45.

^{viii} Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Crown & Covenant, 2015), 184.

50 Resources for Equipping the Church on Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage

The Gospel Coalition recently published a list of articles to help the church think through the subjects of same-sex marriage and homosexuality. We are providing a list of those articles below in the hope that some of them will be a valuable asset as you think through this issue and speak with friends and family about the subject.

To search for the article:

Log onto www.thegospelcoalition.org

In the upper right corner, click on the “search” button. Type “50 resources same sex” into the search box.

Understanding the Supreme Court’s Same-Sex Marriage Decision

[Explainer: What You Should Know About The Supreme Court’s Same-Sex Marriage Ruling](#)

Joe Carter, TGC

The Supreme Court issued its ruling on the case of Obergefell v. Hodges. Here is what you should know about this historic legal decision on marriage.

[50 Key Quotes from the Supreme Court’s Same-Sex Marriage Ruling](#)

Joe Carter, ERLC

In the ruling and four dissents—which total 103 pages—there are dozens of interesting and important quotes. Here are 50 key passages you should know about.

[How the Supreme Court Found a Constitutional Right to Same-Sex Marriage](#)

Joseph Williams, Canon & Culture

What exactly does the 14th Amendment protect and how did five Supreme Court justices determine that it includes same-sex marriage?

[9 Things You Should Know About The Supreme Court’s Same-Sex Marriage Cases](#)

Joe Carter, TGC

What you should know about the Supreme Court’s historic ruling on two same-sex marriage cases.

How Christians Can Respond Right Now

[Why the Church Should Neither Cave Nor Panic About the Decision on Gay Marriage](#)

Russell Moore, The Washington Post

The Court now has disregarded thousands of years of definition of the most foundational unit of society, and the cultural changes here will be broad and deep. So how should the church respond?

[Can Evangelicals See Themselves in the LGBT Movement?](#)

Alastair Roberts, TGC

As we come to realize the faults in the LGBT community, we may find we’re seeing a mirror image of the faults in ourselves.

[Something Greater Than Marriage](#)

Rosaria Butterfield and Christopher Yuan, TGC

If singleness is unfair, then it’s no wonder marriage has become a right.

[Christopher Yuan on How to Engage Today’s Gay Marriage Debate](#)

Ryan Troglin, TGC

Christopher Yuan encourages the church to see those in the LGBT community not as opponents to be defeated, but as broken sinners who need the life-giving message of Jesus.

Preparing for What Comes Next

How Christians Can Show Countercultural Resolve On Marriage

Jennifer A. Marshall, TGC

What happened between Friday and Monday is a window into the future for the issues of marriage and religious liberty. Here's what Christians need to do next.

Same-Sex Marriage and the Future

Russell Moore, TGC

In some form or another, your church will have to address the marriage revolution. Here's how to be prepared.

Lessons for the Marriage Debate from the Pro-Life Movement

Russell Moore, TGC

Four years ago, our current President said he personally opposed same-sex marriage. Today, the Supreme Court has found a Constitutional right to same-sex marriage, contra all recorded sociopolitical, religious, and human history.

Same-Sex Marriage and Christian Higher Education

Albert Mohler, ERLC

We are living in the midst of an unprecedented sexual revolution, one that presents particular challenges to Christians and those committed to religious liberty.

How To Win The Public On Homosexuality

Collin Hansen, TGC

Regaining the ground Christians have lost on homosexuality will require widespread repentance, painful self-examination, and new resolve to pursue self-denying holiness.

Talking to Family and Friends

40 Questions For Christians Now Waving Rainbow Flags

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

If you consider yourself a Bible-believing Christian, a follower of Jesus whose chief aim is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, here are important questions I hope you will consider before picking up your flag and cheering on the sexual revolution.

Four Appeals to Christians Embracing Gay Marriage

Gavin Ortlund, Soliloquium

To my friends in the church embracing gay marriage, I offer these four "appeals." I don't expect those who have studied this issue thoroughly and landed squarely in that camp will necessarily find these appeals new or convincing. But I'm also seeing a lot of Christians, particularly younger millennials, whose openness to gay marriage seems to me more impulsive, emotional, uncaring.

Talking to Your Children About Sex, Marriage, and Same-Sex Marriage

Various, ERLC

A roundtable discussion with Jani Ortlund, Stephanie Goeke, Krissie Inserra, Trillia Newbell, and Jena Starke.

Sam Allberry on Ministering to Same-Sex Attracted Friends

Joe Carter, TGC

In a series of short videos, Sam Allberry explains how you can minister to your friends and church members who are same-sex attracted.

Dear Christian Friends: Remember You Are Not Home

Erik Raymond, TGC

In talking with a number of Christians last week I was struck by how the Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage brought such an unsettling clarity to their perspective.

Responding to Questions About Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage

Why Not Gay Marriage?

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

The challenge before the church is to convince ourselves as much as anyone that believing the Bible does not make us bigots, just as reflecting the times does not make us relevant.

Why Can't the Church Just Agree to Disagree on Homosexuality?

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

When the Bible uniformly and unequivocally says the same thing about a serious sin, it seems unwise to find a third way which allows for some people (in a church, organization, or denomination) to be for the sin and other people to be against the sin.

Isn't the Christian View of Sexuality Dangerous and Harmful?

Sam Allberry, TGC

The gospel shows us there is forgiveness for all who have sinned sexually, and it liberates us from the mindset that sex is intrinsic to human fulfillment.

On The Wrong Side of History?

Matt Smethurst, TGC

In this video, Tim Keller, John Piper, and Don Carson consider an increasingly aggressive line of questions.

Is Sexual Orientation Analogous To Race?

Joe Carter, TGC

An examination of the question of whether whether race and sexual orientation are similar and equally deserving of legal protections.

Answering Four Street-Level Arguments for Sexual Immorality

Matt Chandler, TGC

As fallen human beings, we tend to explain away or excuse our sin. It's part of our desires to justify ourselves apart from the blood of Christ.

How Can Homosexuality Be Wrong If It Doesn't Harm Anyone?

Matt Smethurst, TGC

In this video, Russell Moore, J. D. Greear, and Voddie Baucham tackle this complex and critical topic.

How Can the Gospel Be Good News to Gays?

Sam Allberry, TGC

What we give up for Jesus does not compare to what he gives back. If the costs are great, the rewards are even greater, even in this life.

Why Do They Always Ask If Homosexuality Is a Sin?

Erik Raymond, TGC

Recently my teenage son came home telling me of a conversation with an unbelieving friend about the gospel. He was encouraged to have been able to talk through specifics of what the truth of the gospel is and how someone becomes a Christian.

Legal and Religious Liberty Implications

What Your Church Needs to Know—and Do—About the Court's Marriage Ruling

Erik Stanley, TGC

The threat from these non-discrimination laws will materialize in numerous ways as same-sex couples marry. But there are proactive steps your church can take to protect itself.

The Supreme Court and Religious Liberty: Reason for Concern

Andrew Walker, ERLC

In the aftermath of today's Supreme Court ruling, attention is turning to how the Court's ruling will affect the religious liberty of those who disagree with its redefinition of marriage.

How Same-Sex Marriage Threatens Christian Schools

Joe Carter, TGC

With seven words—“It is going to be an issue”—the U.S. government signaled to orthodox Christian colleges and universities that if they don’t drop their opposition to same-sex marriage they will lose their tax exempt status.

Providing a Pastoral Response

The Bible and Same-Sex Relationships: A Review Article

Tim Keller, TGC

Tim Keller engages five common arguments in gay-affirming literature.

Audio FAQ with D. A. Carson on the Supreme Court Same-Sex Marriage Decision

Justin Taylor, TGC

On the Desiring God Ask Pastor John podcast, Tony Reinke asks New Testament scholar and TGC president Don Carson about same-sex marriage.

A Note to Pastors in Light of the Scotus Decision on Same-Sex Marriage

Russell Moore, Moore to the Point

How to preach in light of the SCOTUS decision.

Ministering in the New Normal

Dean Inserra, ERLC

This has gotten complicated, and the Supreme Court ruling just made things worse. Being a pastor in 2015—a world in which whatever you feel, you are—makes communicating a biblical sexual ethic difficult.

Five Commitments to Those Struggling with Same-Sex Attraction in Our Midst

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

Those of us who believe in biblical marriage must also be careful to speak in a way that acknowledges the growing number of men and women in evangelical churches who have desires for persons of the same sex and know that God does not want them to act on those desires.

“Will I Be Fully Accepted at Your Church as a Gay Man?”

David Prince, ERLC

Below is my response to an e-mail I received that asked the following question: “I believe church should be for all of God’s children. No exceptions. I am a gay man. My question is, would I be fully accepted with no judgment and fully welcome and able to serve at Ashland Avenue Baptist Church?”

The Gospel for a Gay Friend

Garrett Kell, TGC

In the end, we aren’t trying to make people straight, we want people to be saved.

Letter to a Struggling Gay Christian

Augustus Nicodemus Lopes, TGC

Conversion doesn’t mean perfection, and it doesn’t mean the absence of temptation—including homosexual desire.

But What Does the Bible Say?

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

The Bible says the Lord alone is God and we should have no other gods before him. Not the state, not the Supreme Court, not our families, not our friends, not our favorite authors, not our cultural cache. No gods but God.

Practical Advice for Loving Your Homosexual Neighbors

Should I Attend a Same-Sex Wedding?

Matthew Hosier, TGC

Probably sooner than later, every Christian must decide whether or not you will attend a same-sex wedding.

Should a Christian Photographer Work at a Same-Sex Wedding Ceremony?

Russell Moore, TGC

I would argue that the situation is very different from photographing some other event, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the clients' sexual or marital context. The fact that this is a wedding means there's a different moral question for you.

"We Are All Messy": Rosaria Butterfield on Loving Our Gay and Lesbian Friends

Matt Smethurst, TGC

Watch Rosaria Butterfield discuss how to understand and love our gay and lesbian friends.

Background on Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage

9 Things You Should Know About Same-Sex Marriage

Joe Carter, TGC

Here are nine things you should know about this controversial topic.

The New Purpose of Marriage

Collin Hansen, TGC

Marriage based on needs and affection will struggle to endure when the needs change and the affection fades.

What You Should Know About "Monogamish" Relationships

Joe Carter, TGC

What you should know about the redefinition of monogamy and same-sex relationships.

The Roots of Marriage's Redefinition: How We Got Where We Are Today

Andrew Walker, ERLC

How did we reach a point where an institution older than recorded history could be redefined and altered by an idea unknown before the year 2000?

Gay Is Not the New Black

Voddie Baucham, TGC

There is no legal, logical, moral, biblical, or historical reason to support same-sex 'marriage.'

How I Wish the Homosexuality Debate Would Go

Trevin Wax, TGC

Just once, I'd like to see a TV interview go more like this.

How Denominations Come To Tolerate, Accept, and Then Endorse Homosexuality

Kevin DeYoung, TGC

Tom Oden, writing in his book *Requiem* way back in 1995, explains how it happens.

Sexual Freedom Always Curtails Other Freedoms

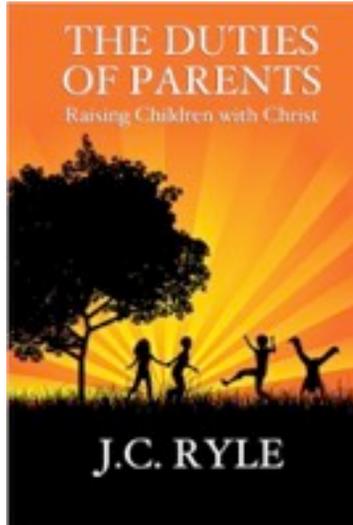
Trevin Wax, TGC

Interact with people in our society about issues related to sex, and you'll quickly discover how everyone seems to be a libertarian.

The Duties of Parents: Raising Children with Christ

Written by J.C. Ryle

Bookstall Price \$6



John Charles Ryle, the first Bishop of Liverpool, was a vigorous preacher and prolific writer in 19th century England. Charles Spurgeon described him as “an evangelical champion. One of the bravest and best of men.” Known especially for his doctrinal works such as *Holiness* and *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, he was renowned for his relentless dedication to Scripture. But J.C. Ryle was not just a passionate evangelical preacher and prolific writer, he was also the father and parent of five children. He combined his passion for Scripture and his role

as a parent to produce a wonderfully relevant, clear, and concise book providing godly counsel for the parenting and discipling of children. In *The Duties of Parents*, Ryle uses Proverbs 22:6 as the central theme running through what he humbly calls a “few hints about right training.” In reality, he lays out 17 profound principles, or duties, that Christian parents should follow in raising their children in the way they should go—to walk with God.

You may be wondering how the writings of an English preacher from 127 years ago can possibly help you today with your children. After all, he writes such old-fashioned things as, “Let there be no questioning, and reasoning, and disputing, and delaying, and answering again. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done. Obedience is the only reality. It is faith visible, faith acting, and faith incarnate. It is the test of real discipleship among the Lord’s people.” Old-fashioned perhaps, but Ryle’s 17 duties of parents still resonate today because they are solidly grounded in the Word of God. He reminds you that, as Christian parents, your main concern is the eternal soul of your children, not just their physical well-being. And he does it in that beautiful, expressive 1800’s style of writing with a clarity and a brevity that will have you reading this book over and over. *The Duties of Parents* should be a resource for all Christian parents just as it has been an excellent resource for Mount Vernon’s Equipping Matters class on Discipleship in the Home.

– RECOMMENDED BY RICK HUTCHINS

Excerpts from the Book

1

“I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I know also that God says expressly, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go,’ and that He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform.”

– Much Depends on You, p. 15

2

“Tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His work for our salvation— the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession: you will discover there is something not beyond them in all of this.”

– A Knowledge of the Bible, p. 20

3

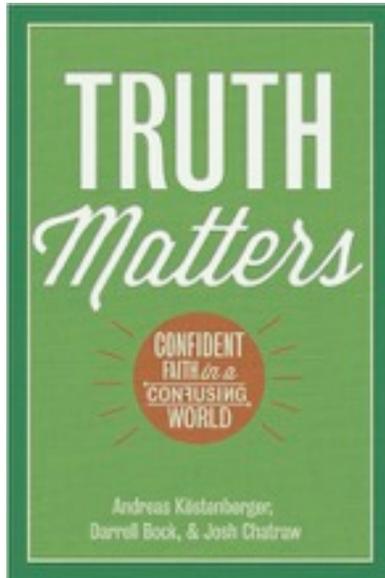
“Fathers and mothers, I charge you solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, take every pain to train your children in the way they should go. I charge you not merely for the sake of your children’s souls; I charge you for the sake of your own future comfort and peace. Truly it is your interest so to do. Truly your own happiness in great measure depends on it. Children have ever been the bow from which the sharpest arrows have pierced man’s heart.”

– Continual Prayer for Blessing, p. 56

Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World

Written by Andreas J. Köstenberger, Darrell Bock, & Josh Chatraw

Bookstall Price \$11



How can you be sure that the Bible is reliable and not a forgery; that it wasn't handcrafted by power-hungry men with petty agendas? How do you explain all the Bible's seeming contradictions—the existence of a just God in a suffering world, or which books made the cut into the New Testament?

Religious skeptics like Bart Ehrman, Professor of Religious Studies at U.N.C. Chapel Hill, have asked these and a host of other questions meant to challenge Christian orthodoxy and shake the believer's faith. Their

prime targets are the minds of Christian students, vulnerable or confident, questioning or affirmed. Their advantage is a lifetime spent developing rational, structured arguments against Christianity while the average church student hasn't seriously considered these questions even once.

Truth Matters was written to such Christian students hungering for rationality, mystified by church history, and struggling to fit an infinitely complex Creator-God into a worldview that makes sense. This audience (like all believers) have at least wondered about these matters, been tempted to skepticism, shied from evangelism fearing their own ignorance if an unsaved neighbor asked hard questions. I confess to all the above and wish I had *Truth Matters* in my arsenal years sooner.

The authors provide simple, biblical bases for God's existence and authority, Scripture's historical reliability, truth's continuity in church history, and the skeptic's thinly-veiled and militant attempts to deny all. They present scriptural, logical, historical, and textual arguments in a manner accessible and helpful for laymen. *Truth Matters* bolstered my faith, and will do the same for any believer who wants to be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). I especially recommend this to book for students preparing for college or new jobs where you'll face this challenge more than ever before.

– RECOMMENDED BY ANTHONY DIPRIMA

Excerpts from the Book

1

"The Bible doesn't ask us to adopt BLIND faith but a REASONED faith—a faith that can honestly ask the hard questions then go out in search of real, measurable, credible answers."

– The Skeptical Mystique, p.12

2

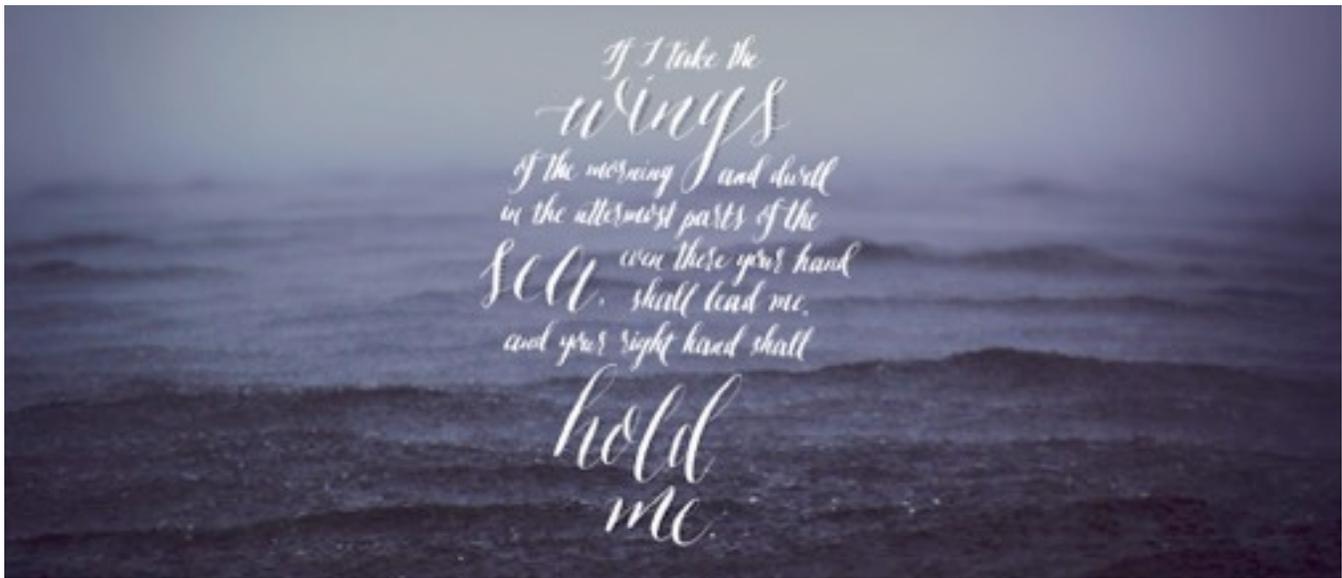
"These things matter. The truth stands up...knowing what you believe and why you believe it can add an element of real courage to your heart of Christian faith and love."

– Preface, p.xix

3

"When people already know that the answers they want to find don't exist in real life, and yet those answers are the only ones they're willing to accept, then they're not actually hunting for truth anymore with an open, receptive, inquisitive mind. They're being doubtful skeptics"

– Is God There? Does God Care?, p.31



If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the
sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.

– Psalm 139:9-10

We are now in the fourth month of our journey to memorize Psalm 139. God’s omniscience and omnipresence has been David’s focus. These attributes are not shared with his creation. They are, as theologians say, his incommunicable attributes. But David reminds us that God exercises them for our well-being, and that should lead us to worship.

In verse 8, David questioned if it was possible to escape God’s presence at the most extreme places on the vertical axis: heaven and hell. Now in verse 9, he means the two polar opposites on the horizontal axis: east and west. The sun rises in the morning in the east. Can he fly like birds to the farthest place in the east and escape God’s presence? No. Nor can he go to the farthest point in the west (“uttermost parts of the sea” refers to the Mediterranean Sea west of Jerusalem)? No. North, south, east, and west – we cannot escape the Lord’s presence. Why? Because the Lord always leads and upholds his people by his right hand (v.10).

Christian, you walk with the Lord by faith and faith alone. You cannot see the Lord upholding and leading you; but he is. Do you feel adrift or floating aimlessly through life right now? Believe by faith that the Lord has

not forgotten or abandoned you. His hand has not slipped or grown tired in upholding and directing your ways. His sovereign power has not atrophied. He has not chosen to care less about your ways than the ways of another one of his children. He continues to go to the farthest extremes, where you are, to lead and uphold his people.

Though your walk is by faith, your faith is equipped by God’s Word, prayer, and his people. These are the means the Spirit uses to uphold and lead his people. Have you, who are adrift in heart and soul, neglected these means? When did you last pray, search the Word, or ask God’s people for direction in your life? Do not be like Jonah, who tried to run from the presence of the Lord. Seek the Lord in his Word, prayer, and people. For you will find him there leading and upholding you.

– BRAD THAYER

Graphic courtesy of The Verses Project. For more devotional material and memorization tools, visit www.theversesproject.com.



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