

Myths About the Bible

Newsweek began 2015 with a [cover story on the Bible](#). In the lead article, we get a heavy dose of liberal theory and secular skepticism about the Bible. But the author is correct in arguing that [very few Americans are biblically literate](#). Many Christian ministries have documented this through various surveys as well as lots of anecdotal stories.

Two writers with *The Federalist* decided to follow the lead of *Newsweek* and write about [“The Eight Biggest Myths About the Bible.”](#) Here are just a few of the cultural myths so many have accepted.

Many people believe the Bible teaches: “money is the root of all evil.” That is not what Paul taught (in 1 Timothy 6:10) which says: “For the love of money is a root all kinds of evil.” The Bible does not condemn money or wealth, but does admonish us to be generous and not to make money an idol.

Another myth is the pervasive belief that Christians are never to make moral judgments. One of the most quoted verses these days is Matthew 7:1. Jesus says, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” He is not telling us not to make moral judgments. In the following verses, he explains that we are not to be hypocritical. We may only see the speck in another person’s eye and not notice the log in our own eye.

One of the current myths being spread by many atheists is that the Bible condones slavery. This is hard to accept if you just look at history. Most abolitionists in this country or Great Britain were Bible-believing Christians. Paul Copan has chapters in many of his books addressing the misunderstanding of the concept of debt-servanthood or indentured servitude that is nothing like slavery. He also addresses another one of the myths listed: that the God of the Old Testament is an Angry Tribal Deity.

Newsweek is correct that much of America is biblically illiterate. And the writers in *The Federalist* are right that many have accepted these cultural myths about the Bible. That is why we need to study God's Word and take the time to read some good books that destroy these myths.

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Faith and Charity

Here is an interesting fact. Families in San Francisco give almost exactly the same amount to charity each year as families in South Dakota. Arthur Brooks talked about this in his book, *Who Really Cares?* He went on to explain that these two communities were very different. They were separated by not only geography but by many cultural differences.

Their donations to charity also represented a significant difference due to income. The average San Francisco family made (back when the book was written) nearly twice as much each year as a family in South Dakota. Put another way, an average South Dakota family gave away 75 percent more of its household income each year than the average family in San Francisco. When Brooks asked an executive of a foundation in South Dakota why people in her state gave so much more, she had a simple answer: religion.

People of faith give much more than secular people. In his book, he divides Americans into four groups to show their differences in giving to charity.

Religious conservatives are the largest group of the four. They represent 24 percent of all Protestants, 19 percent of Catholics, along with a number of other religious groups. This

group is most likely to give money to charity and they give away the most money.

Religious liberals are the smallest of the four groups. They are almost as likely to give as religious conservatives. They are a little less likely to volunteer.

Secular conservatives are much less likely to give to charity. They are also much less likely to volunteer or help people in need. Secular liberals are the second largest group and have the highest average income. Nevertheless they are poor givers, even to secular charities they might be expected to support.

The obvious conclusion is that faith makes a big difference in whether someone gives time or money to a charity.

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Gay Agenda in Schools – A Christian Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson summarizes the efforts currently underway to implement a gay agenda in our public schools, identifying some of the negative consequences. Looking at this initiative from a biblical worldview perspective, he suggests actions that Christians should take in response to these actions.

Advancing the Gay Agenda in Schools

Since the early 1990s gay activists and various homosexual groups have been using strategies that provide them with

greater access to public schools. Usually the focus is upon making the schools a safer place for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual students, thereby justifying the introduction of topics and speakers on the subject of homosexuality. And the establishment of homosexual clubs on campus provides an ongoing program to continue to introduce homosexuality to students on campus.

Two key organizations are the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Both have been helpful in establishing a foothold for homosexual speakers, programs, and curricula.



Perhaps the most effective wedge used by gay activists to open the door to the public schools has been concern over student safety. Kevin Jennings, Executive Director for GLSEN, explained in a speech how the “safety” issue was a most effective strategy:

In Massachusetts, the effective reframing of this issue was the key to the success of the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. We immediately seized upon the opponent’s calling card—safety—and explained how homophobia represents a threat to students’ safety by creating a climate where violence, name-calling, health problems, and suicide are common. Titling our report “Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth,” we automatically threw our opponents onto the defensive and stole their best line of attack. This framing short-circuited their arguments and left them back-pedaling from day one.[\[1\]](#)

The strategy has obviously been successful because no one would want to be against making the schools a safer environment. It almost doesn’t matter whether the allegations are true. Once you raise the concern of safety, most administrators, teachers, and parents quickly fall in line.

There is an irony in all of this. Many of the behaviors that are taught and affirmed in these school programs and clubs are unsafe in term of public health. For example, *Pediatrics* (Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) reported on a Harvard study that found more than thirty risks positively associated with self-reported gay-lesbian-bisexual (GLB) orientation.[{2}](#) So it is indeed ironic that the idea of “safety” is often used as means to introduce teaching and discussion of behaviors that have been proven to be quite “unsafe.”

The Goals of GLSEN

The mission statement of GLSEN is straightforward: “The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.”[{3}](#) It is a growing, well-funded homosexual organization that promotes homosexual identity and behavior on campus. It has been very successful in gaining access on campus by working with such influential groups as the National Education Association.

Anyone who takes the time to read some of the materials recommended by GLSEN will quickly find that it condones sexual themes and information that would be disturbing to most parents. One researcher who has taken the time to review these materials and investigate various school programs came to the following seven conclusions:[{4}](#)

1. GLSEN believes the early sexualization of children can be beneficial. This means that virtually any sexual activity as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children, as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. “Coming out” (calling oneself or believing oneself to be

homosexual) and even beginning homosexual sex practices at a young age, is a normal and positive experience for youth which should be encouraged by teachers and parents, according to GLSEN.

3. Bisexuality, “fluid” sexuality and sexual experimentation is encouraged by GLSEN as a right for all students.

4. Meeting other “gay” and “questioning” youth, sometimes without parental knowledge, is a frequent theme in GLSEN materials. At these meetings, minors will come into contact with college-age people and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. In GLSEN material, the “cool” adults—parents, teachers and counselors—are those who encourage students to embrace homosexuality and cross-dressing. They also allow adult-level freedoms and let children associate with questionable teens or adults.

6. GLSEN resources contain many hostile, one-sided anti-Christian vignettes and opinions, as well as false information about Christianity and the Bible’s position on homosexuality. This encourages antagonism against biblical morality and increases the risk that youth will experiment with high-risk behavior.

7. The spirituality presented positively in GLSEN resources is heavily laced with occult themes and nightmarish images.

Goals of PFLAG and Gay Clubs

PFLAG is a national organization of parents, families, and friends that “promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.”^{5} It has been an active organization at the local level to promote its views of human sexuality into schools, churches, and various youth organizations. Although there is a strong emphasis on rights and tolerance, their message about sexuality would be

disturbing to most parents.

One researcher who has taken the time to review their brochures and other materials came to the following five conclusions:[{6}](#)

1. PFLAG believes in total sexual license for people of all ages. For children, this means that virtually any sexual activity, as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. "Coming out" (calling oneself homosexual or cross-dressing) at a very young age, and even beginning early homosexual sex practices, is a desirable goal in the world according to PFLAG.

3. Bisexuality, fluid sexuality, and sexual experimentation is encouraged by PFLAG. The group believes it's important for all students to learn about these options.

4. Meeting with other "gay" and "questioning" youth, usually without parental knowledge, is a frequent theme in PFLAG materials. At these community meetings, thirteen-year-olds will come into contact with college-age youth and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. PFLAG spreads false information about the Bible, religious faith, and restoration of heterosexuality through faith. This misinformation closes the door of change for many young people, and stirs up anti-Christian and anti-Jewish bias and hostility.

Another way the gay agenda is promoted in the public schools is through Gay-Straight Alliance clubs. In the mid-1990s, there were a few dozen Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in U.S. high schools. Today there are 3,200 GSA clubs registered.[{7}](#)

These student-run clubs provides a meeting place for student talk about homosexuality and homosexual behaviors. It is also provides a platform for outside speakers to address various topics and for students to organize a "Pride Week" on campus. Once a year, many of the students in these clubs also participate in "The Day of Silence." This is a day when students will remain silent all day as a way of acknowledging the silence induced by those who oppose homosexuality.

Legal Liability

Is there any legal liability when schools permit and even promote the teaching of homosexual education the campus? One group (Citizens for Community Values) believes there is a potential liability. The group has published a manual documenting the potential liability that schools, administrators, and teachers might face. The following is a brief summary of much more information that can be found in the document "The Legal Liability Associated with Homosexual Education in Public Schools."[\[8\]](#)

Life expectancy—The *International Journal of Epidemiology* found that gay and bisexual men involved in homosexual behavior cut off years from their lives. One study showed that "life expectancy at age 20 years for gay and bisexual men is 8 to 20 years less than for all men." They therefore concluded that if "the same pattern of mortality were to continue, we estimate that nearly half of gay and bisexual men currently aged 20 years will not reach their 65th birthday."[\[9\]](#)

Sexually transmitted diseases—The danger of various STDs, including HIV infection in homosexual relationships, has been well documented through many studies. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health says that "Homosexual men are at significantly increased risk of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, anal cancer, gonorrhea and gastrointestinal infections as a result of their sexual practices. Women who have sex with women are

at significantly increased risk of bacterial vaginosis, breast cancer and ovarian cancer than are heterosexual women.”[{10}](#)

Other health risk behaviors—A study by Harvard University of over four thousand ninth- to twelfth-grade students found that gay-lesbian-bisexual “youth report disproportionate risk for a variety of health risk and problem behaviors” and they found that they “engage in twice the mean number of risk behaviors as did the overall population.”[{11}](#)

Mental health—A study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* found those engaging in homosexual behavior have a much higher incidence of mental health problems. “The findings support the assumption that people with same-sex sexual behavior are at greater risk for psychiatric disorders.”[{12}](#)

Permitting and promoting homosexual activity through on-campus programs and clubs will certainly increase homosexual behavior among students. Administrators, teachers, and parents should reconsider the impact these programs, and the subsequent behavior, will have on the student body.

Biblical Response

When we talk about the issue of homosexuality, it is important to keep two biblical principles in tension. On the one hand we must stay true to our biblical convictions, and on the other hand we should reach out with biblical compassion. Essentially this is the balance between truth and love.

On the one hand, it is crucial for us to understand how the homosexual agenda threatens to normalize and even promote homosexuality within the schools. Moreover, gay activists are pushing an agenda in the courts, the legislature, the schools, and the court of public opinion that will ultimately threaten biblical authority and many of our personal and religious freedoms. Christians, therefore, must stand for truth.

I have provided a brief overview of the groups and programs that are promoting the gay agenda in the public schools. I encourage you to find out what is happening in your community. We have also documented the potential legal liability associated with many of the behaviors that are encouraged by these programs. Often administrators and teachers are unaware of the potential dangers associated with homosexual education in the schools. Take time to share this information with them.

On the other hand, it is also important for us to reach out to those caught in the midst of homosexuality and offer God's grace and redemption. We cannot let the hardened rhetoric of gay activists keep us from having Christ's heart toward homosexuals. As individuals and as the church, we should reach out to those caught in the sin of homosexuality and offer them hope and point them to Jesus Christ so that they will find freedom from the sexual sin that binds their lives.

It is important to remember that many in the homosexual lifestyle are there because of some emotional brokenness in their families. They may be trying to meet their emotional needs in ungodly ways. Youth in the public schools may be experimenting sexually and find themselves caught up in the homosexual lifestyle.

It is also important to remember that [change is possible](#). The testimony of hundreds of former homosexuals is proof that someone can change their sexual behavior. So are the various [studies](#) that document these same behavioral changes. And, most importantly, the Bible teaches that change is possible. Paul, writing to former homosexuals in the Corinthian church, noted that "such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In addressing the issue of the gay agenda in public schools, it is crucial to stay true to our biblical convictions (and stand for truth) while we also reach out with biblical compassion.

Notes

1. "'Governor's Commission for Gay Youth' Retreats to 'Safety' and 'Suicide'," *The Massachusetts News*, December 2000.
2. Robert Garofalo, et. al., "The Association Between Health Risk Behaviors and Sexual Orientation Among a School-based Sample of Adolescents," *Pediatrics*, 101 (5), May 1998, 895-902.
3. GLSEN website, www.glsen.org.
4. Linda Harvey, "Children at Risk: GLSEN, Corruption and Crime," Mission America, 2003, <http://www.missionamerica.com/oldagenda26.php>.
5. PFLAG website, www.pflag.org.
6. Linda Harvey, "The World According to PFLAG," Mission America, 2003, <http://www.missionamerica.com/stoppflag2.php>.
7. Marilyn Elias, "Gay teens coming out earlier to peers and family," *USA Today*, 8 February 2007, 1A.
8. "The Legal Liability Associated with Homosexual Education in Public Schools," Citizens for Community Values, www.ccv.org/Legal_Liability_of_Homosexuality_Education.htm.
9. R. S. Hogg, et. al., "Modeling the impact of HIV disease on mortality in gay and bisexual men," *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26 (1997), 657-661.
10. "Health Implications Associated with Homosexuality," Monograph published by *The Medical Institute for Sexual Health*, 1999.
11. Robert Garofalo, *Pediatrics*, 1998.
12. Theo G.M Sandfort, et. al., "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 58 (1) January 2001, 85-91.

Divorce – A Biblical Christian Perspective

Kerby Anderson examines the epidemic of divorce from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. He presents data on its impact on families and society and compares the trend with biblical teaching on the subject.

Families are experiencing many problems today, but the role of divorce in this picture has been frequently overlooked because its destructive effects have been subtle, yet insidious. When the divorce rate increased in the 1960s, few would have predicted its dire consequences three decades later. Yet divorce has changed both the structure and the impact of the family.

This is not just the conclusion of Christians, but also the conclusion of non-Christian researchers working in the field. Clinical psychologist Diane Medved set out to write a book to help couples facing transitions due to divorce. She begins her book with this startling statement:

I have to start with a confession: This isn't the book I set out to write. I planned to write something consistent with my previous professional experience helping people with decision making. . . . For example, I started this project believing that people who suffer over an extended period in unhappy marriages ought to get out...I thought that striking down taboos about divorce was another part of the ongoing enlightenment of the women's, civil- rights, and human potential movements of the last twenty-five years...To my utter befuddlement, the extensive research I conducted for this book brought me to one inescapable and irrefutable conclusion: I had been wrong."(1)

She titled her book *The Case Against Divorce*.

Until the 1960s, divorce has been a relatively rare phenomenon. Certainly there have always been some couples who have considered divorce an option. But fundamental changes in our society in the last few decades have changed divorce from being rare to routine.

During the 1970s, the divorce rate doubled (and the number of divorces tripled from 400,000 in 1962 to 1.2 million in 1981).(2) The increase in the divorce rate came not from older couples but from the baby boom generation. One sociologist at Stanford University calculated that while men and women in their twenties comprised only about 20 percent of the population, they contributed 60 percent of the growth in the divorce rate in the 1960s and early 1970s.(3)

This increase was due to at least two major factors: attitude and opportunity. The baby boom generation's attitude toward such issues as fidelity, chastity, and commitment were strikingly different from their parents'. Their parents would stay in a marriage in order to make it work. Baby boomers, however, were less committed to the ideal of marriage and quite willing to end what they felt was a bad marriage and move on with their lives. While their parents might keep a marriage going "for the sake of the kids," the baby boom generation as a whole was much less concerned about such issues.

Economic opportunities also seem to be a significant factor in divorce. The rise in divorce closely parallels the increase in the number of women working. Women with a paycheck were less likely to stay in a marriage that wasn't fulfilling to them. Armed with a measure of economic power, many women had less incentive to stay in a marriage and work out their differences with their husbands. A study of mature women done at Ohio State University found that the higher a woman's income in relation to the total income of her family, the more likely she was to seek a divorce.(4)

Divorce and Children

Divorce is having a devastating impact on both adults and children. Every year, parents of over 1 million children divorce. These divorces effectively cut one generation off from another. Children are reared without the presence of their father or mother. Children are often forced to take sides in the conflict. And, children often carry the scars of the conflict and frequently blame themselves for the divorce.

So what is the impact? Well, one demographer looking at this ominous trend of divorce and reflecting on its impact, acknowledged:

No one knows what effect divorce and remarriage will have on the children of the baby boom. A few decades ago, children of divorced parents were an oddity. Today they are the majority. The fact that divorce is the norm may make it easier for children to accept their parents' divorce. But what will it do to their marriages in the decades ahead? No one will know until it's too late to do anything about it.(5)

What little we do know about the long-term impact of divorce is disturbing. In 1971, Judith Wallerstein began a study of sixty middle-class families in the midst of divorce. Her ongoing research has provided a longitudinal study of the long-term effects of divorce on parents and children.

Like Diane Medved, Judith Wallerstein had to revise her previous assumptions. According to the prevailing view at the time, divorce was seen as a brief crisis that would resolve itself. Her book, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce*, vividly illustrates the long-term psychological devastation wrought not only on the children but the adults.(6) Here are just a few of her findings in her study of the aftershocks of divorce:

- *Three out of five children felt rejected by at least one parent.*
- *Five years after their parent's divorce, more than one-third of the children were doing markedly worse than they had been before the divorce.*
- *Half grew up in settings in which the parents were warring with each other even after the divorce.*
- *One-third of the women and one-quarter of the men felt that life had been unfair, disappointing and lonely.*

In essence, Wallerstein found that the emotional tremors register on the psychological Richter scale many years after the divorce.

In addition to the emotional impact is the educational impact. Children growing up in broken homes do not do as well in school as children from stable families. One national study found an overall average of one lost year of education for children in single-parent families.(7)

Divorce and remarriage adds another additional twist to modern families. Nearly half of all marriages in 1990 involved at least one person who had been down the aisle before, up from 31 percent in 1970.(8)

These changing family structures complicate relationships. Divorce and remarriage shuffle family members together in foreign and awkward ways. Clear lines of authority and communication get blurred and confused in these newly revised families. One commentator trying to get a linguistic handle on these arrangements called them "neo-nuclear" families.(9) The rules for these neo-nukes are complex and ever-changing. Children looking for stability are often insecure and frustrated. One futuristic commentator imagined this possible scenario:

On a spring afternoon, half a century from today, the Joneses are gathered to sing "Happy Birthday" to Junior.

There's Dad and his third wife, Mom and her second husband, Junior's two half brothers from his father's first marriage, his six stepsisters from his mother's spouse's previous unions, 100-year-old Great Grandpa, all eight of Junior's current "grandparents," assorted aunts, uncles-in-law and step-cousins. While one robot scoops up the gift wrappings and another blows out the candles, Junior makes a wish ...that he didn't have so many relatives.(10)

The stress on remarried couples is difficult enough, but it intensifies when step-children are involved. Conflict between a stepparent and stepchild is inevitable and can be enough to threaten the stability of a remarriage. According to one study, remarriages that involve stepchildren are more likely to end in divorce than those that don't.(11) Fully 17 percent of marriages that are remarriages for both husband and wife and that involve stepchildren break up within three years.(12)

No Fault Divorce

Historically the laws governing marriage were based upon the traditional, Judeo-Christian belief that marriage was for life. Marriage was intended to be a permanent institution. Thus, the desire for divorce was not held to be self-justifying. Legally the grounds for divorce had to be circumstances that justified making an exemption to the assumption of marital permanence. The spouse seeking a divorce had to prove that the other spouse had committed one of the "faults" recognized as justifying the dissolution of the marriage. In most states, the classic grounds for divorce were cruelty, desertion, and adultery.

This legal foundation changed when California enacted a statute in 1969 which allowed for no-fault divorce. This experiment has effectively led to what could now be called "divorce-on-demand." One by one, various state legislatures enacted no-fault divorce laws so that today, this concept has become the de facto legal principle in every state.

The fault-based system of divorce law had its roots in the view that marriage was a sacrament and indissoluble. The current no-fault provisions changed this perception. Marriage is no longer viewed as a covenant; it's a contract. But it's an even less reliable contract than a standard business contract.

Classic contract law holds that a specific promise is binding and cannot be broken merely because the promisor changes his/her mind. In fact, the concept of "fault" in divorce proceedings is more like tort law than contract law in that it implies an binding obligation between two parties which has been breached, thus leading to a divorce. When state legislatures implemented no-fault divorce provisions, they could have replaced the fault-based protections with contract-like protections. Unfortunately, they did not. In just a few decades we have moved from a position where divorce was permitted for a few reasons to a position in which divorce is permitted for any reason, or no reason at all.

The impact on the institution of marriage has been devastating. Marginal marriages are much easier to dissolve, and couples who may have tried to stick it out and work out their problems instead opt for a no-fault divorce.

But all marriages (not just marginal marriages) are at risk. After all, marriages do not start out marginal. Most marriages start out on a solid footing. But after the honeymoon, comes the more difficult process of learning to live together harmoniously. The success of the process is affected by both internal factors (willingness to meet each other's needs, etc.) and external factors (such as the availability of divorce). But even these factors are interrelated. If the law gives more protection to the marriage contract, a partner may be more likely to love sacrificially and invest effort in the marriage. If the law gives less protection, a partner may be more likely to adopt a "looking out for number one" attitude.

Biblical Perspective

The Bible speaks to the issue of divorce in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The most important Old Testament passage on divorce is Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

These verses were not intended to endorse divorce; just the contrary. The intention was to regulate the existing custom of divorce, not to put forth God's ideal for marriage. Divorce was allowed in certain instances because of human sinfulness (Matt. 19:8).

Divorce was widespread in the ancient Near East. The certificate of divorce apparently was intended to protect the reputation of the woman and provided her with the right to remarry. This public declaration protected her from charges of adultery. The Mishnah, for example, stated that a divorce certificate was not valid unless the husband explicitly said, "Thou art free to marry any man."(13)

Key to understanding this passage is the definition of "something indecent." It probably did not mean adultery since that was subject to the penalty of death (22:22), nor did it probably mean premarital intercourse with another man (22:20-21) since that carried the same penalty. The precise meaning of the phrase is unknown.

In fact, the meaning of this phrase was subject to some debate even during the time of Christ. The conservative school of Shammai understood it to mean a major sexual offense. The liberal school of Hillel taught that it referred to anything displeasing to the husband (including something as trivial as spoiling his food). The apparent purpose of this law was to prevent frivolous divorce and to protect a woman who was divorced by her husband. The passage in no way encourages divorce but regulates the consequences of divorce.

Another significant Old Testament passage is Malachi 2:10-16.

Have we not all one Father ? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?...Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel.

This passage deals with breaking a prior agreement or covenant. It specifically addresses the issue of illegal intermarriage and the issue of divorce. Malachi specifically teaches that husbands and wives are to be faithful to one another because they have God as their Father. The marriage relationship is built upon a solemn covenant. While God may tolerate divorce under some of the circumstances described in Deuteronomy 24, the instructions were given to protect the woman if a divorce should occur. This passage in Malachi reminds us that God hates divorce.

In the New Testament book of Matthew, we have the clearest teachings by Jesus on the subject of divorce.

It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a

woman so divorced commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31 32) I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery. (Matthew 19:9)

In these two passages, Jesus challenges the views of the two schools of Jewish thought (Shammai, Hillel). He teaches that marriage is for life and should not be dissolved by divorce.

Defining the word *porneia* (which is translated marital unfaithfulness) is a key element in trying to understanding these passages. While some commentators teach that this word refers to incestuous relationships or sexual promiscuity during the betrothal period, most scholars believe the word applies to relentless, persistent, and unrepentant adultery. Among those holding to this exception clause for adultery, some believe remarriage is possible while others do not.

The other significant section of teaching on divorce in the New Testament can be found in Paul's teaching on divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15.

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

In the first section, Paul addresses Christians married to one another. Paul was obviously aware of the prevalence of divorce in the Greek world and of the legal right that a wife has to initiate a divorce. He gives the command for believers to stay married.

In the next section, Paul addresses the issue of mixed marriages. He says that even in spite of religious incompatibility in such a marriage, Paul teaches that the believing spouse is not to seek divorce. Some divorces may have been initiated because of the command of Ezra to the Israelites in Jerusalem after the exile (Ezra 10:11) to divorce themselves from pagan spouses. Paul affirms the same biblical principle: do not seek divorce. However, if the unbelieving spouse insists on divorce, the believer may have to concede to those proceedings and is not bound in such circumstances.

Based on the preceding verses, we can therefore conclude that a Christian can acquiesce to divorce in cases of marital infidelity by the other spouse or in cases of desertion by an unbelieving spouse. Yet even in these cases, the church should not encourage divorce. Certainly in very troubling cases which involve mental, sexual, and/or physical abuse, legal separation is available as a remedy to protect the abused spouse. God hates divorce; therefore Christians should never be in the position of encouraging or promoting divorce. Instead they should be encouraging reconciliation.

One final question is whether a divorced person is eligible for a leadership position within the church. The key passage is 1 Timothy 3:2 which calls for a church leader to be above reproach and "the husband of one wife." Rather than prohibiting a divorced person from serving in leadership, the language of this verse actually focuses on practicing polygamists. Polygamy was practiced in the first century and found among Jewish and Christian groups. The passage could be translated "a one-woman man." If Paul intended to prohibit a

divorced person from leadership, he could have used a much less ambiguous term.

As Christians in a society where divorce is rampant, I believe we must come back to these important biblical principles concerning marriage. Christians should work to build strong marriages. Pastors must frequently preach and teach about the importance of marriage. We should encourage fellow Christians to attend various marriage enrichment seminars and ministries in our community.

As Christians I also believe we should reach out to those who have been through divorce. We must communicate Christ's forgiveness to them in the midst of their shattered lives. They need counseling and support groups. Many times they also need financial help and direction as they begin to put together the shattered pieces of their lives.

But as we reach out to those whose lives are shattered by divorce, we must be careful that our ministry does not compromise our theology. We must reach out with both biblical convictions and biblical compassion. Marriage for life is God's ideal (Genesis 2), nevertheless, millions of people have been devastated by divorce and need to feel care and compassion from Christians. Churches have unfortunately erred on one side or another. Most churches have maintained a strong stand on marriage and divorce. While this strong biblical stand is admirable, it should also be balanced with compassion towards those caught in the throes of divorce. Strong convictions without compassionate outreach often seems to communicate that divorce is the unforgivable sin.

On the other hand, some churches in their desire to minister to divorced people have compromised their theological convictions. By starting without biblically-based convictions about marriage and divorce, they have let their congregation's circumstances influence their theology.

Christians must simultaneously reach out with conviction and compassion. Marriage for life is God's ideal, but divorce is a reality in our society. Christians should reach out with Christ's forgiveness to those whose lives have been shattered by divorce.

Notes

1. Diane Medved, *The Case Against Divorce* (New York:Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1989), 1-2.
2. National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1983," *NCHS Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, vol. 34, no. 9, 26 December 1985, table 1.
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6. Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children A Decade After Divorce* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989).
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11. Arland Thornton and Deborah Freedman, "The Changing American Family," *Population Bulletin*, vol. 38, no. 4

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12. Lynn K. White and Alan Booth, "The quality and stability of remarriages: the role of stepchildren," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 50, no. 5, October 1985, 689-98.

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Arguments Against Abortion

Kerby Anderson helps us understand that concerns about abortion are more than just a fundamentalist backlash. He reviews arguments from a Christian, biblical perspective and then introduces arguments from medical, legal and philosophical points of views as well. He concludes, "The Bible and logic are on the side of the Christian who wants to stand for the sanctity of human life."

Biblical Arguments Against Abortion

In this essay we will be discussing arguments against abortion. The first set of arguments we will consider are biblical arguments.

That being said, we must begin by acknowledging that the Bible doesn't say anything about abortion directly. Why the silence of the Bible on abortion? The answer is simple. Abortion was so unthinkable to an Israelite woman that there was no need to even mention it in the criminal code. Why was abortion an unthinkable act? First, children were viewed as a gift or heritage from the Lord. Second, the Scriptures state—and the

Jews concurred—that God opens and closes the womb and is sovereign over conception. Third, childlessness was seen as a curse.

One of the key verses to understand in developing a biblical view of the sanctity of human life is Psalm 139. This psalm is the inspired record of David's praise for God's sovereignty in his life. He begins by acknowledging that God is omniscient and knows what David is doing at any given point in time. He goes on to acknowledge that God is aware of David's thoughts before he expresses them. David adds that wherever he might go, he cannot escape from God, whether he travels to heaven or ventures into Sheol. God is in the remotest part of the sea and even in the darkness. Finally David contemplates the origin of his life and confesses that God was there forming him in the womb:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (vv. 13-16).

Here David speaks of God's relationship with him while he was growing and developing before birth. Notice that the Bible doesn't speak of fetal life as mere biochemistry. The description here is not of a piece of protoplasm that becomes David: this is David already being cared for by God while in the womb.

In verse 13, we see that God is the Master Craftsman fashioning David into a living person. In verses 14 and 15, David reflects on the fact that he is a product of God's creative work within his mother's womb, and he praises God for

how wonderfully God has woven him together.

David draws a parallel between his development in the womb and Adam's creation from the earth. Using figurative language in verse 15, he refers to his life before birth when "I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth." This poetic allusion harkens back to Genesis 2:7 which says that Adam was made from the dust of the earth.

David also notes that "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance." This shows that God knew David even before he was known to others. The term translated *unformed substance* is a noun derivative of a verb meaning "to roll up." When David was just forming as a fetus, God's care and compassion already extended to him. The reference to "God's eyes" is an Old Testament term used to connote divine oversight of God in the life of an individual or group of people.

Next, we will consider additional Old Testament passages that provide a biblical argument against abortion.

Additional Old Testament Arguments Against Abortion

Now that we've looked at Psalm 139, the most popular argument against abortion, let's look at two other Old Testament passages.

Another significant passage is Psalm 51. It was written by David after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and records his repentance. David confesses that his sinful act demonstrated the original sin that was within him, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). David concludes that from his time of conception, he had a sin nature. This would imply that he carried the image of God from the moment of conception, including the marred image scarred from sin.

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6). Bearing the image of God is the essence of humanness. And though God's image in man was marred at the Fall, it was not erased (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). Thus, the unborn baby is made in the image of God and therefore fully human in God's sight.

This verse also provides support for what is called the traducian view of the origin of the soul. According to this perspective, human beings were potentially in Adam (Rom. 5:12, Heb. 7:9-10) and thus participated in his original sin. The "soulish" part of humans is transferred through conception. Therefore, an unborn baby is morally accountable and thus fully human.

Another argument against abortion can be found in the Old Testament legal code, specifically Exodus 21:22-25.

If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

The verses appear to teach that if a woman gives birth prematurely, but the baby is not injured, then only a fine is appropriate. However, if the child dies then the law of retaliation (lex talionis) should be applied. In other words, killing an unborn baby would carry the same penalty as killing a born baby. A baby inside the womb has the same legal status as a baby outside the womb.

Some commentators have come to a different conclusion because they believe the first verses only refer to a case of accidental miscarriage. Since only a fine is levied, they argue that an unborn baby is merely potential life and does

not carry the same legal status as a baby that has been born.

There are at least two problems with this interpretation. First, the normal Hebrew word for *miscarry* is not used in this passage (cf. Gen. 31:38; Exod. 23:26; Job 2:10; Hos. 9:14). Most commentators now believe that the action described in verse 22 is a premature birth not an accidental miscarriage. Second, even if the verses do describe a miscarriage, the passage cannot be used to justify abortion. The injury was accidental, not intentional (as abortion would be). Also, the action was a criminal offense and punishable by law.

Medical Arguments Against Abortion

Thus far in our discussion we have looked at biblical arguments against abortion. But what if someone doesn't believe in the Bible? Are there other arguments we can use? Yes, there are: medical arguments, for example. Let's look, then, at some of the medical arguments against abortion.

The medical arguments against abortion are compelling. For example, *at conception the embryo is genetically distinct from the mother*. To say that the developing baby is no different from the mother's appendix is scientifically inaccurate. A developing embryo is genetically different from the mother. A developing embryo is also genetically different from the sperm and egg that created it. A human being has 46 chromosomes (sometimes 47 chromosomes). Sperm and egg have 23 chromosomes. A trained geneticist can distinguish between the DNA of an embryo and that of a sperm and egg. But that same geneticist could not distinguish between the DNA of a developing embryo and a full-grown human being.

Another set of medical arguments against abortion surround *the definition of life and death*. If one set of criteria have been used to define death, could they also be used to define life? Death used to be defined by the cessation of heartbeat. A stopped heart was a clear sign of death. If the cessation of

heartbeat could define death, could the onset of a heartbeat define life? The heart is formed by the 18th day in the womb. If heartbeat was used to define life, then nearly all abortions would be outlawed.

Physicians now use a more rigorous criterion for death: brain wave activity. A flat EEG (electroencephalograph) is one of the most important criteria used to determine death. If the cessation of brain wave activity can define death, could the onset of brain wave activity define life? Individual brain waves are detected in the fetus in about 40-43 days. Using brain wave activity to define life would outlaw at least a majority of abortions.

Opponents to abortion also raise the controversial issue of fetal pain. Does the fetus feel pain during abortion? The evidence seems fairly clear and consistent. Consider this statement made in a British medical journal: "Try sticking an infant with a pin and you know what happens. She opens her mouth to cry and also pulls away. Try sticking an 8-week-old human fetus in the palm of his hand. He opens his mouth and pulls his hand away. A more technical description would add that changes in heart rate and fetal movement also suggest that intrauterine manipulations are painful to the fetus."[\[1\]](#)

Obviously, other medical criteria could be used. For example, the developing fetus has a unique set of fingerprints as well as genetic patterns that make it unique. The development of sonography has provided us with a "window to the womb" showing us that a person is growing and developing in the mother's womb. We can discern eyes, ears, fingers, a nose, and a mouth. Our visual senses tell us this is a baby growing and maturing. This is not a piece of protoplasm; this is a baby inside the womb.

The point is simple. *Medical science leads to a pro-life perspective rather than a pro-choice perspective.* If medical science can be used at all to draw a line, the clearest line

is at the moment of conception. Medical arguments provide a strong case against abortion and for life.

Legal Arguments Against Abortion

At this point in our discussion, we need to look at legal arguments against abortion.

The best legal argument against abortion can be seen in the case of *Roe v. Wade*. It violated standard legal reasoning. The Supreme Court decided not to decide when life begins and then turned around and overturned the laws of 50 different states.

Most of the Supreme Court's verdict rested upon two sentences. "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to an answer."

Although the sentences sounded both innocuous and unpretentious, they were neither. The Supreme Court's non-decision was not innocuous. It overturned state laws that protected the unborn and has resulted in over 30 million abortions (roughly the population of Canada) in the United States.

The decision also seems unpretentious by acknowledging that it did not know when life begins. But if the Court did not know, then it should have acted "as if" life was in the womb. A crucial role of government is to protect life. Government cannot remove a segment of the human population from its protection without adequate justification.

The burden of proof should lie with the life-taker, and the benefit of the doubt should be with the life-saver. Put another way: "when in doubt, don't." A hunter who hears rustling in the bushes shouldn't fire until he knows what is

in the bushes. Likewise, a Court which doesn't know when life begins, should not declare open season on the unborn.

The burden of proof in law is on the prosecution. The benefit of doubt is with the defense. This is also known as a presumption of innocence. The defendant is assumed to be innocent unless proven guilty. Again the burden of proof is on the entity that would take away life or liberty. The benefit of the doubt lies with the defense.

The Supreme Court clearly stated that it does not know when life begins and then violated the very spirit of this legal principle by acting as if it just proved that no life existed in the womb. Even more curious was the fact that to do so, it had to ignore the religious community and international community on the subject of the unborn.

Had the religious community really failed to reach a consensus? Although there were some intramural disagreements, certainly the weight of evidence indicated that a Western culture founded on Judeo-Christian values held abortion to be morally wrong. People with widely divergent theological perspectives (Jewish, Catholic, evangelical and fundamental Protestants) shared a common agreement about the humanity of the unborn.

The same could be said about the international legal community. Physicians around the world subscribed to the Hippocratic Oath ("I will not give a woman a pessary to produce abortion"). The unborn were protected by various international documents like the Declaration of Geneva and the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Just as there are solid medical arguments against abortion, so also there are legal arguments against abortion. *Roe vs. Wade* was a bad decision that needs to be overturned.

Philosophical Arguments Against Abortion

Finally, we will conclude our discussion by looking at philosophical arguments against abortion.

A third set of arguments against abortion would be philosophical arguments. A key philosophical question is where do you draw the line? Put another way, when does a human being become a person?

The Supreme Court's decision of *Roe v. Wade* separated personhood from humanity. In other words, the judges argued that a developing fetus was a human (i.e., a member of the species *Homo sapiens*) but not a person. Since only persons are given 14th Amendment protection under the Constitution, the Court argued that abortion could be legal at certain times. This left to doctors, parents, or even other judges the responsibility of arbitrarily deciding when personhood should be awarded to human beings.

The Supreme Court's cleavage of personhood and humanity made the ethical slide down society's slippery slope inevitable. Once the Court allowed people to start drawing lines, some drew them in unexpected ways and effectively opened the door for infanticide and euthanasia.

The Court, in the tradition of previous line-drawers, opted for biological criteria in their definition of a "person" in *Roe v. Wade*. In the past, such criteria as implantation or quickening had been suggested. The Court chose the idea of viability and allowed for the possibility that states could outlaw abortions performed after a child was viable. But viability was an arbitrary criterion, and there was no biological reason why the line had to be drawn near the early stages of development. The line, for example, could be drawn much later.

Ethicist Paul Ramsey frequently warned that any argument for

abortion could logically be also used as an argument for infanticide. As if to illustrate this, Dr. Francis Crick, of DNA fame, demonstrated that he was less concerned about the ethics of such logical extensions and proposed a more radical definition of personhood. He suggested in the British journal *Nature* that if “a child were considered to be legally born when two days old, it could be examined to see whether it was an ‘acceptable member of human society.’” Obviously this is not only an argument for abortion; it’s an argument for infanticide.

Other line-drawers have suggested a cultural criterion for personhood. Ashley Montagu, for example, stated, “A newborn baby is not truly human until he or she is molded by cultural influences later.” Again, this is more than just an argument for abortion. It is also an argument for infanticide.

More recently some line-drawers have focused on a mental criterion for personhood. Dr. Joseph Fletcher argues in his book *Humanhood* that “Humans without some minimum of intelligence or mental capacity are not persons, no matter how many of these organs are active, no matter how spontaneous their living processes are.” This is not only an argument for abortion and infanticide; it’s adequate justification for euthanasia and the potential elimination of those who do not possess a certain IQ. In other writings, Joseph Fletcher suggested that an “individual” was not truly a “person” unless he has an IQ of at least 40.

In conclusion, we can see that there are many good arguments against abortion. Obviously there are a number of biblical arguments against abortion. But there are also medical, legal, and philosophical arguments against abortion. The Bible and logic are on the side of the Christian who wants to stand for the sanctity of human life.

Endnote

1. H.P. Valman and J. F. Pearson, What the Fetus Feels, *British Medical Journal* (26 January 1980): 233-234.

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Note from Kerby Anderson:

So many people ask for more information on abortion; I suggest you check out the Abortion Facts Web site at www.abortionfacts.com.

Adultery

Staggering numbers of people are engaged in adultery, and grievously, this includes the church. Kerby Anderson explores several myths about adultery and offers sound suggestions for preventing adultery by meeting spouses' needs.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Adultery and Society

The seventh commandment says “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Nevertheless, this sin has been committed throughout history. Today, though, adultery seems more rampant than ever. While tabloid stories report the affairs of politicians, millionaires, and movie stars, films like “The English Patient,” “The Prince of Tides,” or “The Bridges of Madison County” feature and even promote adultery.

How prevalent is adultery? Two of the most reliable studies come to similar conclusions. The Janus Report on Sexual Behavior estimates that “More than one-third of men and one-quarter of women admit having had at least one extramarital sexual experience.”^{1} A survey by the National Opinion

Research Center (University of Chicago) found lower percentages: 25 percent of men had been unfaithful and 17 percent of women. Even when these lower ratios are applied to the current adult population, that means that some 19 million husbands and 12 million wives have had an affair.[{2}](#)

Whatever the actual numbers, the point to be made is that adultery is much more common than we would like to admit. Family therapist and psychiatrist Frank Pittman believes “There may be as many acts of infidelity in our society as there are traffic accidents.”[{3}](#) He further argues that the fact that adultery has become commonplace has altered society’s perception of it. He says, “We won’t go back to the times when adulterers were put in the stocks and publicly humiliated, or become one of those societies and there are many in which adultery is punishable by death. Society in any case is unable to enforce a rule that the majority of people break, and infidelity is so common it is no longer deviant.”[{4}](#)

Perhaps you are thinking, “This is just a problem with non-Christians in society. It can’t be a problem in the church. Certainly the moral standards of Christians are higher.” Well, there is growing evidence that adultery is also a problem in Christian circles. An article in a 1997 issue of *Newsweek* magazine noted that various surveys suggest that as many as 30 percent of male Protestant ministers have had sexual relationships with women other than their wives.[{5}](#)

The Journal of Pastoral Care in 1993 reported a survey of Southern Baptist pastors in which 14 percent acknowledged they had engaged in “sexual behavior inappropriate to a minister.” It also reported that 70 percent had counseled at least one woman who had had intercourse with another minister.

A 1988 survey of nearly 1000 Protestant clergy by *Leadership* magazine found that of the 300 pastors who responded, 12 percent admitted to sexual intercourse outside of marriage,

and that 23 percent had done something sexually inappropriate with someone other than their spouse. The researchers also interviewed nearly 1000 subscribers to *Christianity Today* who were not pastors. They found the numbers were nearly double: 45 percent indicated having done something sexually inappropriate, and 23 percent having extramarital intercourse. [{6}](#)

Adultery is in society and is now in the church. Next, we'll look at some of the myths surrounding extramarital affairs.

Myths About Adultery

Marital infidelity destroys marriages and families and often leads to divorce. Public sentiment against adultery is actually very strong as approximately eight out of ten of Americans disapprove of adultery. [{7}](#)

Yet even though most people consider adultery to be wrong and know that it can be devastating, our society still perpetuates a number of untruths about adultery through a popular mythology about extramarital affairs. At this point we want to examine some of the myths about adultery.

Myth #1: "Adultery is about sex." Often just the opposite seems the case. When a sexual affair is uncovered, observers often say, "What did he see in her?" or "What did she see in him?" Frequently the sex is better at home, and the marriage partner is at least as attractive as the adulterous partner.

Being pretty, handsome, or sensual is usually not the major issue. Partners in affairs are not usually chosen because they are prettier, more handsome, or sexier. They are chosen for various sorts of strange and nonsexual reasons. Usually the other woman or the other man in an adulterous relationship meets needs the spouse does not meet in the marriage. Dr. Willard Harley lists five primary needs for a man and five primary needs for a women in his book *His Needs, Her Needs:*

Building an Affair-Proof Marriage. He believes that unmet needs, by either partner, are a primary cause of extramarital affairs. He has also found that people wander into these affairs with astonishing regularity, in spite of whatever strong moral or religious convictions they may hold. A lack of fulfillment in one of these basic emotional areas creates a dangerous vacuum in a person's life. And, unfortunately, many will eventually fill that need outside of marriage.

Frank Pittman, author of the book *Private Lies: Infidelity and the Betrayal of Intimacy*, found in his own personal study that many of his patients who had affairs had a good sex life, but came from marriages with little or no intimacy. He concluded that, "Affairs were thus three times more likely to be the pursuit of a buddy than the pursuit of a better orgasm." {8}

Sex may not be involved in some affairs. The relationship may be merely an emotional liaison. Counselor Bonnie Weil warns that these so-called "affairs of the heart can be even more treacherous than the purely physical kind. Women, particularly, are inclined to leave their husbands when they feel a strong emotional bond with another man." {9}

Myth #2: "Adultery is about character." In the past, society looked down on alcoholics as having weak character because of their problem. Now we see it as an addiction or even a disease. While that doesn't excuse the behavior, we can see that can't be merely labeled as bad character.

There is growing psychological evidence that adulterous behavior in parents dramatically affects children when they reach adulthood. Just as divorce in a family influences the likelihood of the adult children to consider divorce, adulterous behavior by parents seems to beget similar behavior by their offspring. Is this not one more example of the biblical teaching that the sins of one generation being visited upon the next?

Myth #3: “Adultery is therapeutic.” Some of the psychology books and women’s magazines circulating through our culture promote extra-marital affairs as positive. This myth that an affair can revive a dull marriage is a devastating lie. Depending on which source you are reading, an affair will: make you a better lover, help you with your mid-life crisis, bring joy into your life, or even bring excitement back into your marriage. Nothing could be further from the truth. An affair might give you more sex, but it could also give you a sexually transmitted disease. It might bring your marriage more excitement, if you consider divorce court exciting. Remember that adultery results in divorce 65 percent of the time. “For most people and most marriages, infidelity is dangerous.”[\[10\]](#)

Myth #4: “Adultery is harmless.” Movies are just one venue in which adultery has been promoted positively. *The English Patient* received twelve Oscar nominations including best picture of the year for its depiction of an adulterous relationship between a handsome count and the English-born wife of his colleague. *The Bridges of Madison County* relates the story of an Iowa farmer’s wife who has a brief extra-marital affair with a *National Geographic* photographer that supposedly helped re-energize her marriage. *The Prince of Tides* received seven Oscar nominations and shows a married therapist bedding down her also-married patient.

Notice the euphemisms society has developed over the years to excuse or soften the perception of adultery. Many are not repeatable, but ones that are include: *fooling around, sleeping around, flings, affairs, and dalliances*. These and many other phrases perpetuate the notion the adultery is guilt-free and hurts no one. Some have even suggested that it’s just a recreational activity like playing softball or going to the movies. Well, don’t pass the popcorn, please.

Forbidden sex is an addiction that can—and usually does—have devastating consequences to an individual and a family.

Adultery shatters trust, intimacy, and self-esteem. It breaks up families, ruins careers, and leaves a trail of pain and destruction in its path. This potential legacy of emotional pain for one's children should be enough to make a person stop and count the costs before it's too late.

Even when affairs are never exposed, emotional costs are involved. For example, adulterous mates deprive their spouses of energy and intimacy that should go into the marriage. They deceive their marriage partners and become dishonest about their feelings and actions. As Frank Pittman says, "The infidelity is not in the sex, necessarily, but in the secrecy. It isn't whom you lie with. It's whom you lie to." [\[11\]](#) 1

Myth #5: "Adultery has to end in divorce." Only about 35 percent of couples remain together after the discovery of an adulterous affair; the other 65 percent divorce. Perhaps nothing can destroy a marriage faster than marital infidelity.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way. One counselor claims that 98 percent of the couples she treats remain together after counseling. Granted this success rate is not easy to achieve and requires immediate moral choices and forgiveness, but it does demonstrate that adultery does not have to end in divorce.

Preventing Adultery: Her Needs

How can a couple prevent adultery? Dr. Willard Harley in his book *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage* provides some answers. He has found that marriages that fail to meet a spouse's needs are more vulnerable to an extramarital affair. Often the failure of men and women to meet each other's needs is due to a lack of knowledge rather than a selfish unwillingness



to be considerate. Meeting these needs is critically important because in marriages that fail to meet needs, it is striking and alarming how consistently married people seek to satisfy their unmet needs through an extramarital affair. If any of a spouse's five basic needs goes unmet, that spouse becomes vulnerable to the temptation of an affair.

First, let's look at the five needs of a wife. The first need is for *affection*. To most women affection symbolizes security, protection, comfort, and approval. When a husband shows his wife affection, he sends the following messages: (1) I'll take care of you and protect you; (2) I'm concerned about the problems you face, and I am with you; (3) I think you've done a good job, and I'm so proud of you.

Men need to understand how strongly women need these affirmations. For the typical wife, there can hardly be enough of them. A hug can communicate all of the affirmations of the previous paragraph. But, affection can be shown in many ways such as: kisses, cards, flowers, dinners out, opening the car door, holding hands, walks after dinner, back rubs, phone calls—there are a thousand ways to say "I love you." From a woman's point of view, affection is the essential cement of her relationship with a man.

The second need is *conversation*. Wives need their husbands to talk to them and to listen to them; they need lots of two-way conversation. In their dating life prior to marriage, most couples spent time time showing each other affection and talking. This shouldn't be dropped after the wedding. When two people get married, each partner has a right to expect the same loving care and attention that prevailed during courtship to continue after the wedding. The man who takes time to talk to a woman will have an inside track to her heart.

The third need is *honesty and openness*. A wife needs to trust her husband totally. A sense of security is the common thread woven through all of a woman's five basic needs. If a husband

does not keep up honest and open communication with his wife, he undermines her trust and eventually destroys her security. To feel secure, a wife must trust her husband to give her accurate information about his past, the present, and the future. If she can't trust the signals he sends, she has no foundation on which to build a solid relationship. Instead of adjusting to him, she always feels off balance; instead of growing toward him, she grows away from him.

Financial commitment is a fourth need a wife experiences. She needs enough money to live comfortably: she needs financial support. No matter how successful a career a woman might have, she usually wants her husband to earn enough money to allow her to feel supported and to feel cared for.

The fifth need is *family commitment*. A wife needs her husband to be a good father and have a family commitment. The vast majority of women who get married have a powerful instinct to create a home and have children. Above all, wives want their husbands to take a leadership role in the family and to commit themselves to the moral and educational development of their children.

Preventing Adultery: His Needs

Now, let's look at the five needs husbands have. The first is *sexual fulfillment*. The typical wife doesn't understand her husband's deep need for sex anymore than the typical husband understands his wife's deep need for affection. But these two ingredients can work very closely together in a happy, fulfilled marriage. Sex can come naturally and often, if there is enough affection.

The second need for a man is *recreational companionship*. He needs her to be his playmate. It is not uncommon for women, when they are single, to join men in pursuing their interests. They find themselves hunting, fishing, playing football, and watching sports and movies they would never have chosen on

their own.

After marriage wives often try to interest their husbands in activities more to their own liking. If their attempts fail, they may encourage their husbands to continue their recreational activities without them. But this option is very dangerous to a marriage, because men place surprising importance on having their wives as recreational companions. Among the five basic male needs, spending recreational time with his wife is second only to sex for the typical husband.

A husband's third need is *an attractive spouse*. A man needs a wife who looks good to him. Dr. Harley states that in sexual relationships most men find it nearly impossible to appreciate a woman for her inner qualities alone—there must be more. A man's need for physical attractiveness in a mate is profound.

The fourth need for a man is *domestic support*. He needs peace and quiet. So deep is a husband's need for domestic support from his wife that he often fantasizes about how she will greet him lovingly and pleasantly at the door, about well-behaved children who likewise act glad to see him and welcome him to the comfort of a well-maintained home.

The fantasy continues as his wife urges him to sit down and relax before taking part in a tasty dinner. Later the family goes out for an evening stroll, and he returns to put the children to bed with no hassle or fuss. Then he and his wife relax, talk together, and perhaps watch a little television until they retire at a reasonable hour to love each other. Wives may chuckle at this scenario, but this vision is quite common in the fantasy lives of many men. The male need for his wife to "take care of things"—especially him—is widespread, persistent, and deep.

The fifth need is *admiration*. He needs her to be proud of him. Wives need to learn how to express the admiration they already feel for their husbands instead of pressuring them to greater

achievements. Honest admiration is a great motivator for men. When a woman tells a man she thinks he's wonderful, that inspires him to achieve more. He sees himself capable of handling new responsibilities and perfecting skills far above those of his present level.

If any of a spouse's five basic needs go unmet, that person becomes vulnerable to the temptation of an affair. Therefore, the best way to prevent adultery is to meet the needs of your spouse and make your marriage strong.

Notes

1. Samuel Janus and Cynthia Janus, *The Janus Report on Sexual Behavior* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1993), 169.
2. Joannie Schrof, "Adultery in America," *U.S. News and World Report*, 31 Aug. 1998, 31.
3. Frank Pittman, *Private Lies: Infidelity and the Betrayal of Intimacy* (New York: Norton, 1989), 117.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.
5. Kenneth Woodward, "Sex, Morality and the Protestant Minister," *Newsweek* (28 July 1997), 62.
6. "How Common Is Pastoral Indiscretion?" *Leadership* (Winter 1988), 12.
7. In this poll Americans were asked: "What is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than his or her spouse? Their answers: 79% answered "always wrong" and another 11% answered "almost always wrong." Cited in "Attitudes on Adultery," USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll, 1997.
8. Pittman, 122.
9. Bonnie Eaker Weil, *Adultery: The Forgivable Sin* (Norwalk, Conn.: Hastings House, 1994), 9.
10. Pittman, 37.
11. *Ibid.*, 53.

Capital Punishment: A Christian View and Biblical Perspective

Kerby Anderson provides a biblical worldview perspective on capital punishment. He explores the biblical teaching to help us understand how to consider this controversial topic apply Christian love and biblical principles.

Should Christians support the death penalty? The answer to that question is controversial. Many Christians feel that the Bible has spoken to the issue, but others believe that the New Testament ethic of love replaces the Old Testament law.

Old Testament Examples

Throughout the Old Testament we find many cases in which God commands the use of capital punishment. We see this first with the acts of God Himself. God was involved, either directly or indirectly, in the taking of life as a punishment for the nation of Israel or for those who threatened or harmed Israel.

One example is the flood of Noah in Genesis 6-8. God destroyed all human and animal life except that which was on the ark. Another example is Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19), where God destroyed the two cities because of the heinous sin of the inhabitants. In the time of Moses, God took the lives of the Egyptians' first-born sons (Exod. 11) and destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea (Exod. 14). There were also punishments such as the punishment at Kadesh-Barnea (Num.

13-14) or the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16) against the Jews wandering in the wilderness.

The Old Testament is replete with references and examples of God taking life. In a sense, God used capital punishment to deal with Israel's sins and the sins of the nations surrounding Israel.

The Old Testament also teaches that God instituted capital punishment in the Jewish law code. In fact, the principle of capital punishment even precedes the Old Testament law code. According to Genesis 9:6, capital punishment is based upon a belief in the sanctity of life. It says, "Whoever sheds man's blood by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, He made man."

The Mosaic Law set forth numerous offenses that were punishable by death. The first was murder. In Exodus 21, God commanded capital punishment for murderers. Premeditated murder (or what the Old Testament described as "lying in wait") was punishable by death. A second offense punishable by death was involvement in the occult (Exod. 22; Lev. 20; Deut 18-19). This included sorcery, divination, acting as a medium, and sacrificing to false gods. Third, capital punishment was to be used against perpetrators of sexual sins such as rape, incest, or homosexual practice.

Within this Old Testament theocracy, capital punishment was extended beyond murder to cover various offenses. While the death penalty for these offenses was limited to this particular dispensation of revelation, notice that the principle in Genesis 9:6 is not tied to the theocracy. Instead, the principle of *Lex Talionis* (a life for a life) is tied to the creation order. Capital punishment is warranted due to the sanctity of life. Even before we turn to the New Testament, we find this universally binding principle that precedes the Old Testament law code.

New Testament Principles

Some Christians believe that capital punishment does not apply to the New Testament and church age.

First we must acknowledge that God gave the principle of capital punishment even before the institution of the Old Testament law code. In Genesis 9:6 we read that "Whoever sheds man's blood by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, He made man." Capital punishment was instituted by God because humans are created in the image of God. The principle is not rooted in the Old Testament theocracy, but rather in the creation order. It is a much broader biblical principle that carries into the New Testament.

Even so, some Christians argue that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus seems to be arguing against capital punishment. But is He?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not arguing against the principle of a life for a life. Rather He is speaking to the issue of our personal desire for vengeance. He is not denying the power and responsibility of the government. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking to individual Christians. He is telling Christians that they should not try to replace the power of the government. Jesus does not deny the power and authority of government, but rather He calls individual Christians to love their enemies and turn the other cheek.

Some have said that Jesus set aside capital punishment in John 8 when He did not call for the woman caught in adultery to be stoned. But remember the context. The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus between the Roman law and the Mosaic law. If He said that they should stone her, He would break the Roman law. If He refused to allow them to stone her, He would break the Mosaic law (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Jesus' answer avoided the conflict: He said that he who was without sin should cast the first stone. Since He did teach that a stone be thrown

(John 8:7), this is not an abolition of the death penalty.

In other places in the New Testament we see the principle of capital punishment being reinforced. Romans 13:1-7, for example, teaches that human government is ordained by God and that the civil magistrate is a minister of God. We are to obey government for we are taught that government does not bear the sword in vain. The fact that the Apostle Paul used the image of the sword further supports the idea that capital punishment was to be used by government in the New Testament age as well. Rather than abolish the idea of the death penalty, Paul uses the emblem of the Roman sword to reinforce the idea of capital punishment. The New Testament did not abolish the death penalty; it reinforced the principle of capital punishment.

Capital Punishment and Deterrence

Is capital punishment a deterrent to crime? At the outset, we should acknowledge that the answer to this question should not change our perspective on this issue. Although it is an important question, it should not be the basis for our belief. A Christian's belief in capital punishment should be based upon what the Bible teaches not on a pragmatic assessment of whether or not capital punishment deters crime.

That being said, however, we should try to assess the effectiveness of capital punishment. Opponents of capital punishment argue that it is not a deterrent, because in some states where capital punishment is allowed the crime rate goes up. Should we therefore conclude that capital punishment is not a deterrent?

First, we should recognize that crime rates have been increasing for some time. The United States is becoming a violent society as its social and moral fabric breaks down. So the increase in the crime rate is most likely due to many other factors and cannot be correlated with a death penalty that has been implemented sparingly and sporadically.

Second, there is some evidence that capital punishment is a deterrent. And even if we are not absolutely sure of its deterrent effect, the death penalty should be implemented. If it is a deterrent, then implementing capital punishment certainly will save lives. If it is not, then we still will have followed biblical injunctions and put convicted murderers to death.

In a sense, opponents of capital punishment who argue that it is not a deterrent are willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the criminal rather than to the victim. The poet Hyman Barshay put it this way:

The death penalty is a warning, just like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. We hear about shipwrecks, but we do not hear about the ships the lighthouse guides safely on their way. We do not have proof of the number of ships it saves, but we do not tear the lighthouse down.”(1)

If capital punishment is even a potential deterrent, that is a significant enough social reason to implement it.

Statistical analysis by Dr. Isaac Ehrlich at the University of Chicago suggests that capital punishment is a deterrent.(2) Although his conclusions were vigorously challenged, further cross-sectional analysis has confirmed his conclusions.(3) His research has shown that if the death penalty is used in a consistent way, it may deter as many as eight murders for every execution carried out. If these numbers are indeed accurate, it demonstrates that capital punishment could be a significant deterrent to crime in our society.

Certainly capital punishment will not deter all crime. Psychotic and deranged killers, members of organized crime, and street gangs will no doubt kill whether capital punishment is implemented or not. A person who is irrational or wants to commit a murder will do so whether capital punishment exists or not. But social statistics as well as logic suggest that

rational people will be deterred from murder because capital punishment is part of the criminal code.

Capital Punishment and Discrimination

Many people oppose capital punishment because they feel it is discriminatory. The charge is somewhat curious since most of the criminals that have been executed in the last decade are white rather than black. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of ethnic minorities (African-American, Hispanic-American) are on death row. So is this a significant argument against capital punishment?

First, we should note that much of the evidence for discrimination is circumstantial. Just because there is a higher percentage of a particular ethnic group does not, in and of itself, constitute discrimination. A high percentage of whites playing professional ice hockey or a high percentage of blacks playing professional basketball does not necessarily mean that discrimination has taken place. We need to look beneath the allegation and see if true discrimination is taking place.

Second, we can and should acknowledge that some discrimination does take place in the criminal justice system. Discrimination takes place not only on the basis of race, but on the basis of wealth. Wealthy defendants can hire a battery of legal experts to defend themselves, while poor defendants must rely on a court-appointed public attorney.

Even if we acknowledge that there is some evidence of discrimination in the criminal justice system, does it likewise hold that there is discrimination with regard to capital punishment? The U.S. Solicitor General, in his amicus brief for the case *Gregg vs. Georgia*, argued that sophisticated sociological studies demonstrated that capital punishment showed no evidence of racial discrimination.(4) These studies compared the number of crimes committed with the

number that went to trial and the number of guilty verdicts rendered and found that guilty verdicts were consistent across racial boundaries.

But even if we find evidence for discrimination in the criminal justice system, notice that this is not really an argument against capital punishment. It is a compelling argument for reform of the criminal justice system. It is an argument for implementing capital punishment carefully.

We may conclude that we will only use the death penalty in cases where certainty exists (e.g., eyewitness accounts, videotape evidence). But discrimination in the criminal justice system is not truly an argument against capital punishment. At its best, it is an argument for its careful implementation.

In fact, most of the social and philosophical arguments against capital punishment are really not arguments against it at all. These arguments are really arguments for improving the criminal justice system. If discrimination is taking place and guilty people are escaping penalty, then that is an argument for extending the penalty, not doing away with it. Furthermore, opponents of capital punishment candidly admit that they would oppose the death penalty even if it were an effective deterrent.⁽⁵⁾ So while these are important social and political issues to consider, they are not sufficient justification for the abolition of the death penalty.

Objections to Capital Punishment

One objection to capital punishment is that the government is itself committing murder. Put in theological terms, doesn't the death penalty violate the sixth commandment, which teaches "Thou shalt not kill?"

First, we must understand the context of this verse. The verb used in Exodus 20:13 is best translated "to murder." It is

used 49 times in the Old Testament, and it is always used to describe premeditated murder. It is never used of animals, God, angels, or enemies in battle. So the commandment is not teaching that all killing is wrong; it is teaching that murder is wrong.

Second, the penalty for breaking the commandment was death (Ex.21:12; Num. 35:16-21). We can conclude therefore that when the government took the life of a murderer, the government was not itself guilty of murder. Opponents of capital punishment who accuse the government of committing murder by implementing the death penalty fail to see the irony of using Exodus 20 to define murder but ignoring Exodus 21, which specifically teaches that government is to punish the murderer.

A second objection to capital punishment questions the validity of applying the Old Testament law code to today's society. After all, wasn't the Mosaic Law only for the Old Testament theocracy? There are a number of ways to answer this objection.

First, we must question the premise. There is and should be a relationship between Old Testament laws and modern laws. We may no longer be subject to Old Testament ceremonial law, but that does not invalidate God's moral principles set down in the Old Testament. Murder is still wrong. Thus, since murder is wrong, the penalty for murder must still be implemented.

Second, even if we accept the premise that the Old Testament law code was specifically and uniquely for the Old Testament theocracy, this still does not abolish the death penalty. Genesis 9:6 precedes the Old Testament theocracy, and its principle is tied to the creation order. Capital punishment is to be implemented because of the sanctity of human life. We are created in God's image. When a murder occurs, the murderer must be put to death. This is a universally binding principle not confined merely to the Old Testament theocracy.

Third, it is not just the Old Testament that teaches capital punishment. Romans 13:1-7 specifically teaches that human government is ordained by God and that we are to obey government because government does not bear the sword in vain. Human governments are given the responsibility to punish wrongdoers, and this includes murderers who are to be given the death penalty.

Finally, capital punishment is never specifically removed or replaced in the Bible. While some would argue that the New Testament ethic replaces the Old Testament ethic, there is no instance in which a replacement ethic is introduced. As we have already seen, Jesus and the disciples never disturb the Old Testament standard of capital punishment. The Apostle Paul teaches that we are to live by grace with one another, but also teaches that we are to obey human government that bears the sword. Capital punishment is taught in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Notes

1. Hyman Barshay, quoted in "On Deterrence and the Death Penalty" by Ernest van den Haag, *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science* no. 2 (1969).
2. Isaac Ehrlich, "The Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment: A Question of Life and Death," *American Economic Review*, June 1975.
3. *Journal of Legal Studies*, January 1977; *Journal of Political Economy*, June 1977; *American Economic Review*, June 1977.
4. Frank Carrington, *Neither Cruel nor Unusual: The Case for Capital Punishment* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington, 1978), 118.
5. Further discussion of these points can be found in an essay by Ernest van den Haag, "The Collapse of the Case Against Capital Punishment," *National Review*, 31 March 1978, 395-407.

A more complete discussion of capital punishment can be found in chapter 10 of *Living Ethically in the 90s* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1990), available from Probe Ministries.

Globalization and the Internet – A Christian Considers the Impact

Kerby Anderson looks at the growth and role of the Internet through a Christian worldview perspective. It is important that we continue to understand its capabilities and its dangers.

Introduction

More than one billion people use the Internet and benefit from the vast amount of information that is available to anyone who connects. But any assessment of the Internet will show that it has provided both surprising virtues and unavoidable vices.

Contrary to the oft-repeated joke, Al Gore did not invent the Internet. It was the creation of the Department of Defense that built it in case of a nuclear attack, but its primary use has been during peace. The Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency created a primitive version of the Internet known as ARPAnet. It allowed researchers at various universities to collaborate on projects and conduct research without having to be in the same place.

The first area network was operational in the 1980s, and the Internet gained great popularity in the 1990s because of the availability of web browsers. Today, due to web browsers and search engines, Internet users in every country in the world have access to vast amounts of online information.

The Internet has certainly changed our lives. Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World is Flat*, talks about some of these

changes.^{1} For example, we used to go to the post office to send mail; now most of us also send digitized mail over the Internet known as e-mail. We used to go to bookstores to browse and buy books; now we also browse digitally. We used to buy a CD to listen to music; now many of us obtain our digitized music off the Internet and download it to an MP3 player.

Friedman also talks about how the Internet has been the great equalizer. A good example of that is Google. Whether you are a university professor with a high speed Internet connection or a poor kid in Asia with access to an Internet café, you have the same basic access to research information. The Internet puts an enormous amount of information at our fingertips. Essentially, all of the information on the Internet is available to anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

The Internet (and the accompanying digital tools developed to use it) has even changed our language. In the past, if you left a message asking when your friend was going to arrive at the airport, usually you would receive a complete sentence. Today the message would be something like: AA 635 @ 7:42 PM DFW. Tell a joke in a chat room, and you will receive responses like LOL (“laughing out loud”) or ROFL (“rolling on the floor laughing”). As people leave the chat room, they may type BBL (“be back later”). Such abbreviations and computer language are a relatively new phenomenon and were spawned by the growth of the Internet.

I want to take a look at some of the challenges of the Internet as well as the attempt by government to control aspects of it. While the Internet has certainly provided information to anyone, anywhere, at any time, there are still limits to what the Internet can do in the global world.

The Challenge of the Internet

The Internet has provided an opportunity to build a global information infrastructure that would link together the world's telecommunications and computer networks. But futurists and governmental leaders also believed that this interconnectedness would also bring friendship and cooperation, and that goal seems elusive.

In a speech given over a decade ago, Vice-President Al Gore said, "Let us build a global community in which the people of neighboring countries view each other not as potential enemies, but as potential partners, as members of the same family in the vast, increasingly interconnected human family."[{2}](#)

Maybe peace and harmony are just over the horizon because of the Internet, but I have my doubts. The information superhighway certainly has connected the world together into one large global network, but highways don't bring peace. Highways connected the various countries in Europe for centuries, yet war was common and peace was not. An information superhighway connects us with countries all over the world, but global cooperation hasn't been the result, at least not yet.

The information superhighway also has some dark back alleys. At the top of the list is pornography. The Internet has made the distribution of pornography much easier. It used to be that someone wanting to view this material had to leave their home and go to the other side of town. The Internet has become the ultimate brown wrapper. Hard core images that used to be difficult to obtain are now only a mouse click away.

Children see pornography at a much younger age than just a decade ago. The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is eleven years old.[{3}](#) Sometimes this exposure is intentional, usually it is accidental. Schools, libraries, and

homes using filters often are one step behind those trying to expose more and more people to pornography.

But the influence of the Internet on pornography is only one part of a larger story. In my writing on personal and social ethics, I have found that the Internet has made existing social problems worse. When I wrote my book *Moral Dilemmas* back in 1998, I dealt with such problems as drugs, gambling, and pornography. Seven years later when I was writing my new book, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I noticed that every moral issue I discussed was made worse by the Internet. Now my chapter on pornography had a section on cyberporn. My chapter on gambling had a section dealing with online gambling. My chapter on adultery also dealt with online affairs.

Internet Regulation

All of these concerns lead to the obvious question: Who will regulate the Internet? In the early day of the Internet, proponents saw it as the cyber-frontier that would be self-regulating. The Internet was to liberate us forever from government, borders, and even our physical selves. One writer said we should “look without illusion upon the present possibilities for building, in the on-line spaces of this world, societies more decent and free than those mapped onto dirt and concrete and capital.”[{4}](#)

And for a time, the self-government of the Internet worked fairly well. Internet pioneers were even successful in fighting off the Communications Decency Act which punished the transmission of “indecent” sexual communications or images on the Internet.[{5}](#) But soon national governments began to exercise their authority.

Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu, in their book, *Who Controls the Internet?*, describe the various ways foreign governments have exercised their authority.[{6}](#)

- France requires Yahoo to block Internet surfers from France so they cannot purchase Nazi memorabilia.[{7}](#)
- The People's Republic of China requires Yahoo to filter materials that might be harmful or threatening to Party rule. Yahoo is essentially an Internet censor for the Communist party.[{8}](#)
- The Chinese version of Google is much slower than the American version because the company cooperates with the Chinese government by blocking search words the Party finds offensive (words like Tibet or democracy).

Even more disturbing is the revelation that Yahoo provided information to the Chinese government that led to the imprisonment of Chinese journalists and pro-democracy leaders. Reporters Without Borders found that Yahoo has been implicated in the cases of most of the people they were defending.[{9}](#)

Columnist Clarence Page points out that "Microsoft cooperates in censoring or deleting blogs that offend the Chinese government's sensibilities. Cisco provides the hardware that gives China the best Internet-blocking and user-tracking technology on the planet."[{10}](#)

All of this censorship and cooperation with foreign governments is disturbing, but it also underscores an important point. For years, proponents of the Internet have argued that we can't (or shouldn't) block Internet pornography or that we can't regulate what pedophiles do on the Internet. These recent revelations about Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft show that they can and do block information.

The book *Who Controls the Internet?* argues that the last decade has led to the quiet rediscovery of the functions and justification for territorial government. The Internet has not replaced the legitimate structure of government with a self-regulated cyber-frontier. The Internet may change the way some of these territorial states govern, but it will not diminish

their important role in regulating free societies.

Government and Intermediaries

Governments have been able to exercise control over the Internet in various ways. This should not be too surprising. The book *Who Controls the Internet?* points out that while some stores in New York's Chinatown sell counterfeit Gucci bags and Rolex watches, you don't find these same products in local stores. That is because the "most important targets of the laws against counterfeits—trademark laws—are local retailers."[\[11\]](#)

The U.S. government might not be able to go after manufacturers in China or Thailand that produce these counterfeits, but they certainly can go after retail stores. That's why you won't find these counterfeit goods in a Wal-Mart store. And while it is true that by controlling Wal-Mart or Sears doesn't eliminate counterfeit goods, government still can adequately control the flow of these goods by focusing on these intermediaries.

Governments often control behavior through intermediaries. "Pharmacists and doctors are made into gatekeepers charged with preventing certain forms of drug abuse. Bartenders are responsible for preventing their customers from driving drunk."[\[12\]](#)

As the Internet has grown, there has also been an increase in new intermediaries. These would include Internet Service Providers (ISPs), search engines, browsers, etc. In a sense, the Internet has made the network itself the intermediary. And this has made it possible for governments to exert their control over the Internet. "Sometimes the government-controlled intermediary is Wal-Mart preventing consumer access to counterfeit products, sometimes it is the bartender enforcing drinking age laws, and sometimes it is an ISP

blocking access to illegal information.”[{13}](#)

More than a decade ago, the German government raided the Bavarian offices of Compuserve because they failed to prevent the distribution of child pornography even though it originated outside of Germany.[{14}](#) In 2001, the British government threatened certain sites with criminal prosecution for distributing illegal adoption sites. The British ISPs agreed to block the sites so that British citizens could not access them.[{15}](#)

Internet Service Providers, therefore, are the obvious target for governmental control. In a sense, they are the most important gatekeepers to the Internet.[{16}](#)

Governmental control over the Internet is not perfect nor is it complete. But the control over intermediaries has allowed territorial governments to exercise much greater control and regulation of the Internet than many of the pioneers of cyberspace would have imagined.

Globalization and Government

In [previous articles](#) we have addressed the issue of globalization and have recognized that technology (including the Internet) has made it much easier to move information around the world. There is no doubt that the Internet has accelerated the speed of transmission and thus made the world smaller. It is much easier for people around the world to access information and share it with others in this global information infrastructure.

Those who address the issue of globalization also believe that it diminishes the relevance of borders, territorial governments, and geography. Thomas Friedman believes that the Internet and other technologies are [flattening the world](#) “without regard to geography, distance, or, in the near future, even language.”[{17}](#)

In one sense, this is true. The lower costs of moving information and the sheer amount of information exchanged on the Internet have made it more difficult for governments to suppress information they do not like. The explosive growth of blogs and web pages have provided a necessary outlet for opinion and information.

It is also true that there has been some self-governing behavior on the Internet. Friedman, for example, describes eBay as a “self-governing nation-state—the V.R.e., the Virtual Republic of eBay.” The CEO of eBay even says, “People will say that eBay restored my faith in humanity—contrary to a world where people are cheating and don’t give people the benefit of the doubt.”[\[18\]](#)

But it also true that territorial governments work with eBay to arrest and prosecute those who are cheaters or who use the website in illegal ways. And it also relies on a banking system and the potential of governmental prosecution of fraud.

We have also seen in this article that governments have also been able to exert their influence and authority over the Internet. They have been able to use the political process to alter or block information coming into their country and have been able to shape the Internet in ways that the early pioneers of the Internet did not foresee.

Goldsmith and Wu believe that those talking about the force of globalization often naively believe that countries will be powerless in the face of globalization and the Internet. “When globalization enthusiasts miss these points, it is usually because they are in the grips of a strange technological determinism that views the Internet as an unstoppable juggernaut that will overrun the old and outdated determinants of human organization.”[\[19\]](#)

There is still a legitimate function for government (Romans 13:1-7) even in this new world of cyberspace. Contrary to the

perceived assumption that the Internet will shape governments and move us quickly toward globalization, there is good evidence to suggest that governments will in many ways shape the Internet.

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4. Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace," *Village Voice*, 23 Dec. 1993, 37.
5. Communications Decency Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, tit. v, 110 Stat. 56, 133-143.
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11. Goldsmith and Wu, *Who Controls the Internet?*, 67.
12. *Ibid.*, 68.
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15. John Carvel, "Prison Terms for Illegal Adoptions: Internet Babies Case Prompts Tough New Sanctions," Guardian (UK), 15 March 2001.
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17. Friedman, The World is Flat, 176.
18. Ibid., 455.
19. Goldsmith and Wu, Who Controls the Internet?, 183.

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Gambling – Is It Good for Society? A Christian Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at the harmful effects of both legal and illegal gambling. He considers the negative impacts on society, government policy, and the economy when gambling is prevalent in a culture. From a Christian worldview perspective, he considers how gambling introduces problems such as covetousness, poor work ethics, and destroyed family units.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Gambling used to be what a few unscrupulous people did with the aid of organized crime. But gambling fever now seems to affect nearly everyone as more and more states are legalizing various forms of it.

Thirty years ago, gambling was a relatively rare phenomenon with casinos operating only in the distant Nevada desert and a few states with lotteries or pari-mutuel betting. Today, legalized gambling is permitted in forty-seven states and the District of Columbia. More Americans are gambling than ever before, and they are also gambling more money.[\[1\]](#)

The momentum seems to be on the side of those who want legalized gambling as a way to supplement state revenues. But these states and their citizens often ignore the costs that are associated with legalized gambling.

Types of Gambling

Gambling comes in many forms. Perhaps the most popular type of gambling is state-sponsored lotteries. This would include the weekly lottery games, as well as the daily lottery numbers and scratch-off ticket games.

A second type of gambling would be casinos. Gambling in this venue would include jackpot slot machines, video card game machines, various casino card games such as poker and blackjack, and other casino games such as roulette.

Sports betting is a third type of gambling. Someone can bet on the outcome of a sporting event or a particular part of a sporting event. Usually, bets are placed on a bookmaker's odds so that the actual bet is against the point spread. Sports betting would also include illegal office pools and even weekend golfers who bet dollars or cokes for each hole.

Pari-mutuel betting (horse racing, dog racing, and jai alai) is another form of sports gambling. Horse racing is legal in 43 states with over 150 racetracks in the United States.

Convenience gambling (also called retail gambling) includes stand-alone slot machines, video poker, video keno, and other games. These are usually found in bars, truck stops, and convenience stores.

Online gambling represents a new frontier in the spread of gambling. The availability and accessibility of Internet gambling appears to have greatly increased the number of people gambling on a regular basis.

Bad Social Policy

Legalized gambling is bad social policy. At a time when Gamblers Anonymous estimates that there are at least 12 million compulsive gamblers, it does not make a lot of sense to have the state promoting gambling. State sponsorship of gambling makes it harder, not easier, for the compulsive gambler to reform. Since about 96 percent of those gamblers began gambling before the age of fourteen,^{2} we should be especially concerned about the message such a policy sends to young people.

The economic costs that gamblers themselves incur are significant. The average compulsive gambler has debts exceeding \$80,000.^{3} And this figure pales in comparison with other social costs that surface because of family neglect, embezzlement, theft, and involvement in organized crime. Compulsive gamblers affect the lives of family, friends, and business associates. Some of the consequences of gambling are marital disharmony, divorce, child abuse, substance abuse, and suicide attempts.

Proponents argue that state lotteries are an effective way to raise taxes painlessly. But the evidence shows that legalized gambling often hurts those who are poor and disadvantaged. A national task force on gambling found that those in the lowest income bracket lost more than three times as much money to gambling (as a percentage of income) as those at the wealthiest end of the spectrum.^{4} One New York lottery agent reports that “seventy percent of those who buy my tickets are poor, black, or Hispanic.”^{5} And a National Bureau of Economic Research “shows that the poor bet a much larger share

of their income.”{6} The study also found that “the less education a person has, the more likely he is to play the lottery.”{7}

A major study on the effect of the California lottery came to the same conclusions. The Field Institute’s California poll found that 18 percent of the state’s adults bought 71 percent of the tickets. These heavy lottery players (who bought more than twenty tickets in the contest’s first forty-five days) are “more likely than others to be black, poorer and less educated than the average Californian.”{8}

Studies also indicate that gambling increases when economic times are uncertain and people are concerned about their future. Joseph Dunn, director of the National Council on Compulsive Gambling, says, “People who are worried about the factory closing take a chance on making it big. Once they win anything, they’re hooked.”{9}

The social impact of gambling is often hidden from the citizens who decide to legalize gambling. But later these costs show up in the shattered lives of individuals and their families. One study in *The Journal of Social Issues* found that as gambling increases, there is an increase in “(a) proportion of divorce and separation; (b) disagreement about money matters with one’s spouse; (c) lack of understanding between marital partners; and (d) more reported problems among children of gamblers.”{10}

Psychologist Julian Taber warns, “No one knows the social costs of gambling or how many players will become addicted . . . the states are experimenting with the minds of the people on a massive scale.”{11} Families are torn apart by strife, divorce, and bankruptcy. Boydon Cole and Sidney Margolius in their book, *When You Gamble—You Risk More Than Your Money*, conclude, “There is no doubt of the destructive effect of gambling on the family life. The corrosive effects of gambling attack both the white-collar and blue-collar families with

equal vigor.”[{12}](#)

The impact on crime is also significant. The crime rate in gambling communities is nearly double the national average.[{13}](#) Researchers calculate that for every dollar the state received in gambling revenues, it costs the state at least three dollars in increased social costs (for criminal justice and social welfare).[{14}](#)

Bad Governmental Policy

Legalized gambling is also bad governmental policy. Government should promote public virtue, not seduce its citizens to gamble in state-sponsored vice. Government is supposed to be servant of God according to Romans 13, but its moral stance is compromised when it enters into a gambling enterprise.

Citizens would be outraged if their state government began enticing its citizens to engage in potentially destructive behavior (such as taking drugs). But those same citizens see no contradiction when government legalizes and even promotes gambling. Instead of being a positive moral force in society, government contributes to the corruption of society.

Ross Wilhelm, professor of business economics at the University of Michigan, says,

State lotteries and gambling games are essentially a “rip-off” and widespread legalization of gambling is one of the worst changes in public policy to have occurred in recent years. . . . The viciousness of the state-run games is compounded beyond belief by the fact that state governments actively advertise and promote the games and winners.[{15}](#)

The corrosive effect legalized gambling has on government itself is also a cause for concern. As one editorial in *New York Times* noted, “Gambling is a business so rich, so fast, so

powerful and perhaps inevitably so unsavory that it cannot help but undermine government.”[{16}](#)

Legal and Illegal Gambling

One of the standard clichés used by proponents of legalized gambling is that by instituting legal gambling, illegal gambling will be driven out. This argument makes a number of faulty assumptions. First, it assumes that people are going to gamble anyway; and so the state might as well get a piece of the action. Second, it assumes that given the choice, people would rather gamble in a state-sponsored program because it will be regulated. The state will make sure that the program is fair and that each participant has an equal chance of winning. Third, it assumes that if the state enters the gambling arena, it will drive out illegal gambling because it will be a more efficient competitor for gamblers’ dollars.

While the arguments seem sound, they are not. Although some people do gamble illegally, most citizens do not. Legalized gambling entices people to gamble who normally would not gamble at all. Duke University researchers have found that the lottery is a “powerful recruiting device” because one-fourth of those who otherwise would not gamble at all do bet on lotteries.[{17}](#)

Second, legal gambling does not drive out illegal gambling. If anything, just the opposite is true. As legalized gambling comes into a state, it provides additional momentum for illegal gambling. The Organized Crime Section of the Department of Justice found that “the rate of illegal gambling in those states which have some legalized form of gambling was three times as high as those states where there was not a legalized form of gambling.”[{18}](#) And one national review found that

In states with different numbers of games, participation rates increase steadily and sharply as the number of legal

types of gambling increases. Social betting more than doubles from 35 percent in states with no legal games to 72 percent in states with three legal types; the illegal gambling rate more than doubles from nine percent to 22 percent; and commercial gambling increases by 43 percent, from 24 to 67 percent. [{19}](#)

Legalized gambling in various states has been a stimulator of illegal gambling, not a competitor to it.

The reasons for the growth of illegal gambling in areas where legalized gambling exists are simple. First, organized crime syndicates often use the free publicity of state lotteries and pari-mutuel betting to run their own numbers games. The state actually saves them money by providing publicity for events involving gambling. Second, many gamblers would rather bet illegally than legally. When they work with a bookie, they can bet on credit and do not have to report their winnings to the government, two things they cannot do if they bet on state-sponsored games. This explains why illegal gambling thrives in states with legalized gambling.

Another important issue is the corrupting influence legalized gambling can have on society. First, legalized gambling can have a very corrupting influence on state government. In the last few years there have been numerous news reports of corruption and fraud in state lotteries. Second, there is the corrupting influence on the citizens themselves. Gambling breeds greed. Research has shown that the number of compulsive gamblers increases between 100 and 550 percent when legalized gambling is brought into an area. [{20}](#) Every day, otherwise sane people bet large amounts of money in state lotteries because they hope they will win the jackpot. Moreover, states and various gambling establishments produce glitzy ads that appeal to people's greed in order to entice them to risk even more than they can afford.

Government should be promoting positive social values such as thrift and integrity rather than negative ones such as greed and avarice. They should be promoting the public welfare rather than seducing citizens to engage in state-sponsored vice.

Economic Costs

Legalized forms of gambling (state lotteries, pari-mutuel betting, and casinos) are often promoted as good economic policy. Proponents say they are painless ways of increasing billions of dollars in state revenue. But there is another economic side to legalized gambling.

First, the gross income statistics for legalized gambling are much higher than the net income. State lotteries are one example. Although about half the states have lotteries and the figures vary from state to state, we can work with some average figures. Generally, the cost of management, advertising, and promotion is approximately sixty cents of each dollar. In other words, for every dollar raised in a lottery, only forty cents goes to the state budget. By contrast, direct taxation of the citizens costs only about one cent on the dollar, so that for every dollar raised by taxes, ninety-nine cents goes to the state.

Second, gambling adversely affects a state economy. Legalized gambling depresses businesses because it diverts money that could have been spent in the capital economy into gambling that does not stimulate the economy. Boarded-up businesses surrounding casinos are a visible reminder of this, but the effect on the entire economy is even more devastating than may be at first apparent. Money that could be invested, loaned, and recycled through the economy is instead risked in a legalized gambling scheme.

Legalized gambling siphons off a lot of money from the

economy. More money is wagered on gambling than is spent on elementary and secondary education (\$286 billion versus \$213 billion in 1990).[\[21\]](#) Historian John Ezel concludes in his book, *Fortune's Merry Wheel*, "If history teaches us anything, a study of over 1,300 legal lotteries held in the United States proves . . . they cost more than they brought in if their total impact on society is reckoned."[\[22\]](#)

Biblical Perspective

Even though the Bible does not directly address gambling, a number of principles can be derived from Scripture. First, the Bible emphasizes a number of truths that conflict with gambling. The Bible, for example, emphasizes the sovereignty of God (Matt. 10:29–30). Gambling, however, is based on chance. The Bible admonishes people to work creatively and for the benefit of others (Eph. 4:28), while gambling fosters a something-for-nothing attitude. The Bible condemns materialism (Matt. 6:24–25) while gambling promotes it.

Gambling breeds a form of covetousness, whereas the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17) admonishes people not to covet. Coveting, greed, and selfishness are the base emotions that entice individuals to gamble. Christians should be concerned about gambling if for no other reason than the effect it has on the "weaker brother" and how it will affect the compulsive gambler. State-sponsored gambling makes it more difficult for compulsive gamblers to reform. Legalized gambling becomes an institutionalized form of greed.

Second, gambling destroys the work ethic. Two key biblical passages deal with the work ethic. In Colossians 3:23–24 the apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." And in 2 Thessalonians 3:7,10, he stated, "For you yourselves know how

you ought to follow our example. . . . For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

The Twentieth Century Fund research group commented, “Gambling’s get-rich-quick appeal appears to mock capitalism’s core values: disciplined work habits, thrift, prudence, adherence to routine, and the relationship between effort and reward.”^{23} These core values of the work ethic are all part of the free enterprise system and are part of the Christian life. Gambling corrupts these values, and replaces them with greed and selfishness. Rather than depending on hard work, gamblers depend on luck and chance.

Third, gambling destroys families. Gambling is a major cause of family neglect. Many of the social costs associated with gambling come from a get-rich-quick mindset. As people get caught up in a gambling frenzy, they begin to neglect their families. Money spent on lottery tickets or at racetracks is frequently not risk capital but is income that should be spent on family needs. According to 1 Timothy 5:8, a person who refuses to care for his family is worse than an unbeliever. Parents must provide for their children (2 Cor. 12:14) and eat the bread of their labors (2 Thess. 3:12). When gambling is legalized, it causes people to neglect their God-mandated responsibility to care for their families, and many of those families then often end up on welfare.

Fourth, gambling is a form of state-sponsored greed. Romans 13:4 teaches that government is to be a servant of God, providing order in society and promoting public virtue. Legalized gambling undercuts government’s role and subverts the moral fabric of society through greed and selfishness promoted by a state-sponsored vice.

Since gambling undermines the moral foundations of society and invites corruption in government, Christians must stand against attempts to legalize gambling.

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"John 8 is a Condemnation of Capital Punishment!"

In [your commentary on capital punishment](#) you completely miss the point of John 8:1-11. This passage is a condemnation of capital punishment and the hypocrisy that is inherent in it. You say, "Since He did teach that a stone be thrown (John 8:7), this is not an abolition of the death penalty." Jesus knew that none of them were without sin, just as none of us are without sin. Jesus knew that his answer would lead to no stones being thrown, just as he intends for us (today) to not throw stones. An example of "throwing stones" today, is sitting on a jury and sentencing someone to death (since we don't stone criminals today). You seem to think this passage is in the Bible simply to illustrate Jesus' craftiness at conflict avoidance.

Thank you for writing about my radio program on capital punishment. Although I taped that radio program back in 1992, it amazes me that I still receive e-mails about the transcript posted on the Probe website.

I believe this is the first time I have received a response to my passing comment on John 8. When you are doing a radio program with a set time limit, words are at a premium. So I welcome the opportunity to elaborate on my very short comment in the midst of a week of radio programs devoted to the issue of capital punishment.

First, I should point out that this passage in John 8 is a disputed text. There are very few disputed texts in the New Testament. This is one of them. The passage is not found in any of the important Greek texts. So I think it would be fair to say that most Bible scholars do not believe it was in the original.

Whether you believe it was or was not in the original, I think you would have to admit that it is a disputed text. And a basic principle of biblical exegesis is to never build a doctrine on a disputed text. In other words, I wouldn't use this passage in John 8 to argue for or against capital punishment.

Second, I only mentioned the passage in passing because there are a number of opponents of capital punishment who have tried to use this biblical passage to argue against capital punishment. It does not. In fact, you can make the point (as I did) that it argues just the opposite.

Third, I am not the first person to point out that Jesus did not set aside capital punishment in this passage since "He did teach that a stone be thrown." In one of his early books on ethics, Dr. Charles Ryrie makes a similar point. He argued that since Jesus said a stone should be thrown, he was not forbidding the Old Testament practice of capital punishment.

Dr. Ryrie is the author of the *Ryrie Study Bible* and former professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary. I think it is safe to say that Dr. Ryrie knows more about New Testament theology and exegesis than both of us combined.

Finally, the Pharisees were indeed trying to trap Jesus between the Roman law and the Mosaic law. If Jesus said that they should stone her, He would break the Roman law. If He refused to allow them to stone her, He would break the Mosaic law. I don't believe that the passage is (to use your words) about "Jesus' craftiness at conflict avoidance." But I do believe it shows His response to a deliberate trap set by His enemies.

This passage does not forbid capital punishment, despite what some opponents might try to make it say. Since it is a disputed passage in the Bible, I would not base a doctrine on it anyway. But even if you accept its authenticity, the passage doesn't teach what you say it does.

Kerby Anderson
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