Future Husbands and Cheerleaders: A Review of OMI’s Cheerleader and Meghan Trainor’s “Dear Future Husband”

Meghan Trainor’s song “Dear Future Husband” and OMI’s song “Cheerleader” have striking similarities. Musically they are both fun and upbeat songs. Both songs engage with the idea of marriage and outline what they expect and value in their potential spouse. However, the two songs offer conflicting ideas of what a good husband and wife look like. It is almost comical that “Cheerleader,” from a man’s perspective, describes the potential wife as a mere cheerleader and “Dear Future Husband,” from the woman’s perspective even if only satirically, describes the potential husband as a mere servant. That brings me to the final comparison: both songs expect the spouse to be an aid in providing whatever the artist desires.

However, there are some truths hidden in these songs about the role of husband and wife in marriage that can best be understood and even celebrated through a biblical understanding of marriage.

**Marriage as a Deal**

Meghan Trainor’s song “Dear Future Husband” is basically a list of criteria that a man must accomplish or agree to before he is allowed to marry her. The song introduces the list by remarking “Here’s a few things you’ll need to know if you wanna be my one and only all my life.” Trainor spells out examples of what she expects from her husband including taking her on dates, telling her she is beautiful, not correcting her, apologizing, buying her a ring, opening doors for her, and even letting her sleep on the left side of the bed. Then of course she adds the catch—all requests such as “be a classy guy,” “treat me like a lady,” and “love me right.”

The song also outlines what he will get in return as a reward if he does everything right. She will only “be the perfect wife,” buy groceries, give “some kisses,” be his “one and only all [her] life,” give “that special loving” if he does exactly what she asks of him. Additionally, he will have to expect that she will be crazy (at least some of the time), she will correct but not be corrected, she will not cook, and they will favor her extended family over his. What a deal! And unfortunately that is exactly what marriage is conflated into—a deal, an exchange.

Most of these actions are pretty standard ways men show love to their wives. However, men should not and likely do not perform the acts because of a contractual agreement or because of expectations. How can this man show true unconditional and sacrificial love to his wife if he does these actions out of duty or hope of reward?

This marred picture of marriage is so faulty because it offers a picture of marriage that is a one-sided willingness to be served by her husband and then only serve him as a response. Even though the song lists loving actions in marriage, this picture of marriage is ultimately selfish, conditional, manipulative, and loveless.

**Marriage as a Cheerleader**
Looking to “Cheerleader,” the song offers a more hopeful and less distorted picture of marriage—however, we are still left wanting. The future wife in OMI’s song is a woman characterized by her support, affection, strength, physical beauty, readiness to serve, and faithfulness. All these attributes are biblically commendable and should even be sought after. Yet, what does OMI, as the future husband, offer to her? Fidelity and sex. In contrast to Trainor’s song, here the husband remains rightly faithful and offers sex because he values his wife so much, especially her ability to support him.²

However, again the picture seems woefully incomplete. The song portrays a limited picture of women by reducing his future wife to only a handful of attributes that benefit him. His wife should be more than a mere cheerleader. She is simply a tool he can pull out whenever he wants or needs her. The song further reduces—and in some ways even dehumanizes—her by focusing on the services she can offer him. As a result, she is not represented as her own person with her own needs and desires.

**Marriage as a Picture of Unity**

Ultimately marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church—a picture both songs catch a small glimpse of. When Trainor in “Dear Future Husband” desires (albeit via demand) for her husband to show her love by serving her and affirming her, she desires something that is biblical. Husbands are called to nourish, cherish, honor, embrace, protect, and love their wives.³ Having biblical standards in what to expect in a husband is what God wants, but not through demands and deals.

OMI also desires legitimate attributes in his wife. He values a wife who will support and affirm him. In Genesis God created woman with Adam’s need for companionship and assistance in mind.⁴ Proverbs 31 describes an excellent wife as a woman who is strong, trustworthy and praiseworthy.⁵ However, Proverbs 31 does not just define an excellent wife in those terms; the excellent wife is generous, wise, skilled, dignified, and uses her time buying, selling, trading, and providing for her entire household. So when OMI seeks an excellent wife, he gets a cheerleader—but if he were to look for a biblically defined wife of excellence then the proverb would ring true, that “he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.”⁶

But neither artist has the full picture. Marriage is not an exchange of services—yes, spouses should serve each other; not out of duty but out of a thankful and loving heart. The element that is missing from both songs is the true and complete needs and desires of the opposite spouse. However, both songs together offer a fuller picture of what each spouse needs and desires. Ephesians 5 commands husbands to love their wives, something Trainor focused on, and for wives to respect their husbands, as OMI touched on through valuing affirmation from his wife.⁷

Genesis describes marriage as becoming one flesh, and following that theme Paul in Ephesians calls husbands to “love his wife as himself.”⁸ By being one flesh, spouses should see their separate
wills as one unified will and their separate body as one body. Paul writes that concerning this idea of unity, “For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” {9} This picture of marriage is strikingly different from the deal-making, manipulating, and self-serving marriage according to Trainor and OMI.

The true beauty and blessing in marriage for the Christian, is ultimately that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Again in Ephesians, Paul refers to marriage by writing, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” {10} When a man and a woman marry, they symbolize unity that is fully complete between Christ and His people.{11}

However, because of our sin we were incapable of being united with Christ. In order for Christ to marry his Church he had to make us clean and even righteous. Christ accomplished this by taking our place and dying on the cross for our sins so we might receive the righteousness of Christ. In that way, when God the Father looks down at His Church He sees a people who are flawless and thus fitting to be united with His son. Christ is the perfect husband, and when we are complete in our glorification, we will be the perfect wife as the Church.

Marriage as a Broken Picture

Yet our marriage is only a picture—a flawed and imperfect picture. Husbands abuse wives, wives undermine their husbands, and spouses cheat on each other which can all lead to separation and divorce. God did not intend marriage to be plagued by sin, and divorce and pain was not in his design.{12} However, we did sin and as a result sin has damaged our relationships, including marriage, in a deeply painful way.

Nevertheless, God still works to better our marriages. He sent the Holy Spirit to help believers in the process of sanctification—which is making us more like Christ. Both songs lack a place for sanctification. Trainor does not want to be confronted and OMI only wants to be affirmed. But marriage is made for more than just affirming the good and ignoring the bad. Because men and women are different yet compatible, God uses marriage to aid in the process of making us more Christlike. Women tend to be more relational and emotional and men tend to be more protective and provisional. In marriage, the wife can learn from and value her husband’s strengths and the husband can learn from and value his wife’s strengths, as co-heirs with Christ. And when one spouse has wronged the other they can and should go to each other for confession, repentance and reconciliation that will result in more unity and ultimately aid in their sanctification.

With the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, even in our sinful state, we can still strive to symbolize our unity in Christ in our marriages. Married Christians should continually search the Bible for insight and direction on how to better serve and love their spouse. However, both married and single Christians all wait expectantly for the glorious wedding feast celebrating our unity to Christ.
Raising Gender Healthy Kids

Emotionally healthy children who grow up to be emotionally healthy adults are comfortable in their own skin, in the gender God chose for them. These days, when a child shows non-stereotypical gender behavior, people start to freak out, afraid that their child is actually the opposite sex on the inside.

Good news! There are things parents can do to raise gender healthy kids, girls who are content to be girls and boys who are glad to be boys. Without resorting to artificial stereotypes, either.

First, loosen up your expectations of what boys and girls should be like. A friend of mine now in college was recently exasperated when the instructor taught that “Little girls play with dolls and wear dresses.” Carol shot back, “I was NEVER like that!” My friend preferred to climb trees and ride her skateboard, and absolutely hated it when her grandmother tried to teach her to make gravy because “that’s what girls do.” And it really irritated her that her brothers never had to do any kitchen work because “boys don’t do that sort of thing.” Narrow gender stereotypes don’t honor the creativity of the God who makes varieties of girls and boys on a femininity spectrum and a masculinity spectrum (my blog post on the Gender Spectrum has been helpful to a lot of people; please read it!).
When parents can relax about the kind of boy or the kind of girl they have, it is easier to support and encourage children according to the way God designed them. Some boys are not the rough-and-tumble, athletic type; they are born emotionally sensitive, more relational than most boys, often creative and artistic. I know one little boy who pretty much danced out of the womb, and has been dancing ever since. That’s his gift, his divine design. His family loves it, loves him, and supports him fully. Some girls just aren’t the girly-girl type; they are natural athletes and gravitate toward more classically masculine interests, but God intended them to be more of the tomboy feminine. Like my friend Carol.

Second, cultivate warm, affectionate, respectful relationships in your family—between husband and wife, between mom and children, and between dad and children. Emotionally healthy, gender healthy kids are grounded in the security of parents who love each other and their children. A hurtful relationship with the same-sex parent is the biggest contributing factor to a later development of homosexuality, but there are other forms of brokenness that can also arise from hurtful family relationships.

Third, appreciate the different contributions from mothers and fathers. God created the complementarity of male and female (Gen. 1:27) for our good and for His glory. Moms and dads are not interchangeable, which is why He intended for families to be led by a mother and a father.

Here are some suggestions from Ricky Chelette, my esteemed colleague at Living Hope Ministries, who has been helping parents deal with gender issues for decades, my friend Anne Paulk, author of *Restoring Sexual Identity* . . . and from me:

**Fathers and Sons**

- Strongly connect with your son at an early age.
- Affirm the son’s identity as a boy.
- Take interest in him and his interest(s). Be his #1 fan.
- Demonstrate love by word and deed. He needs to hear you say “I love you, son.”
- Love his mother and assure her security and safety.
- Powerful affirmation: “You’re good enough, you’re strong enough, and you have what it takes.”
- Always give affirmation, attention, and affection (The “Three As”)
- Don’t feel rejected by the mother/child relationship.
- Draw out your son (“Hey, let’s be guys together!”).
- Show him what maleness is.
- Do things together. Even a trip to the grocery store or Home Depot counts.
- Cultivate a habit of “thumbs-up” attitude of affirmation. Look for things to affirm.
- When he doesn’t get it right, don’t dismiss him and send him to Mom.
- Encourage and affirm “be-like-Dad” behavior.
- Be physical. Boys need safe male touch.
- When giving hugs, let kids (both boys and girls) pull away first.

**Mothers and Sons**

- Push your son towards his father and encourage their relationship.
- Affirm your son’s masculinity.
- Point out the differences between you and him, between him and his sisters, etc.
- Allow for emotional distance and independence. Don’t try to keep him bound to you like a baby.
- Demonstrate positive, safe touch with him (not just spankings).
• Love and respect his father.
• Bring other boys into the home and encourage connections with other boys.
• Reinforce the father’s role.
• Tell him that being a boy is wonderful, and you’re glad God made him a boy!
• Build up the similarities to his daddy.
• Refuse to diminish the glory of the father/son relationship; don’t get in the middle of it.
• Affirm what is valuable in your son’s father so your son can model it.
• Nurture and comfort with empathy, but allow your husband to nurture differently (aggression nurturing), such as “Hop up, you’re OK.” Boys need to learn to develop a thicker skin from their dads.
• Don’t insist that he look you in the eyes when you’re having a difficult conversation (except when it’s time to apologize). It’s especially threatening and painful for most boys. Take a walk or drive with him where you are shoulder to shoulder, or talk to him in dim lighting (such as bedtime), to encourage him to open up to you.

Fathers and Daughters

• Love and build up your wife, and make sure she feels secure and safe.
• Affirm your daughter’s femininity with words and deeds.
• Be your daughter’s “protector.”
• Tell her she is loved and beautiful 3X more than you think is necessary.
• Love and serve her. Set the bar high for the man she will marry.
• Girls are tactile. Touch is the key to your daughter’s heart. Appropriate touch is SO powerful and necessary.
• Girls are verbal, so words are also very powerful. They need to hear words of affirmation more often than boys.

Mothers and Daughters

• Respect and honor your husband.
• Affirm your daughter’s femininity.
• Show her what strength and nurture together look like.
• Love your daughter, don’t compete with her.
• Do girly things together early and often. She needs to learn to be a girl from you.
• Communicate feelings, not weakness.
• Continually develop and demonstrate a healthy relationship /romance with your husband.
• Be confident so she can admire you.
• Stand up for what is right in godly femininity, in the family and in the world.
• Demonstrate biblical femininity: relational, nurturing, vulnerable, responsive, and beauty (for an excellent article on this, read A Real Woman: Defining Biblical Femininity on the Living Hope website.
• Pursue contentment; enjoy life where you are right now.
• Model Christlike submission to God, husband, authorities.

And finally: pray, pray, pray for your children!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/raising_gender_healthy_kids on July 28, 2015.
Why Have So Many Christians and Churches Become Pro-Gay?

A recent email from a friend: “Sue, I’m seeing more and more ‘evangelical’ churches come out in support of gay marriage. Also, Christian friends are changing their views on the validity of the LGBT lifestyle being acceptable for a Christ-follower. I start worrying that I’m missing something, and even start questioning my beliefs.”

No, my dear friend, you are not missing something, but it is a good time to question (not doubt) your beliefs so you can be more convinced than ever that the Creator God has not changed and neither has His word.

I think there are two big reasons so many confessing believers in Christ have allowed themselves to be more shaped by the culture than by the truth of God’s word, drifting into spiritual compromise and even into apostasy (abandoning the truth of one’s faith). This is not a new problem; the apostle Paul urged his readers in Rome, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within. . .” (Romans 12:2, Phillips).

Reason One: Rejecting the Authority of God’s Word

The bitter fruit of several decades of shallow preaching, teaching and discipleship is that many believers have been especially vulnerable to Satan’s deceptive question to Eve in the Garden of Eden: “Did God really say . . .?” When Christians ignore or flat-out reject the unmistakably clear biblical statements condemning homosexual relationships, they are playing into the enemy’s temptation to justify disobedience by making feelings and perceptions more important than God’s design and standards.

There are now two streams of thought on same-sex relationships and behavior, the Traditional View and the Revisionist View. The Revisionist View basically says, “It doesn’t matter what the Bible actually says, it doesn’t mean what 2000 years of church history has said it means, it means what we want it to say.”

People are redefining the Bible, gender and marriage according to what will let them do what they want, when they should (in my opinion) be asking the insightful question posed by Paul Mooris in Shadow of Sodom, “[A]m I trying to interpret Scripture in the light of my proclivity, or should I interpret my proclivity in the light of Scripture?”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Bible</th>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional View</td>
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The Bible is inspired by a Holy God and is inherently true and trustworthy. The Bible is written by men, but divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and is sealed by a God of truth and authority.

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<th>Sexuality</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional View</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexuality and sex are God’s good gifts to men and women. While sexuality is an essential attribute of human nature, our Creator did not intend it to be the defining characteristic of humanity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revisionist View</strong></td>
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<td>Sexuality—the feelings and attractions one feels for other people—is God ordained, diverse, deeply personal and morally permissible. One’s sexual orientation, whatever it is, should be celebrated as one of God’s good gifts.</td>
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<th>Gender</th>
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<td><strong>Traditional View</strong></td>
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<td>God created both male and female in His image, and each gender reflects different aspects of the <em>imago Dei</em>. God’s sovereign choice of gender for every person reflects His intention for that person’s identity; it is one of the ways in which he or she glorifies Him as Creator.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revisionist View</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>We are free to make a distinction between sex and gender. Sex is biological maleness or femaleness at birth, and gender is how one feels about their “true” maleness or femaleness internally. Based on Galatians 3:28, “there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”</td>
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<th>Marriage</th>
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<td><strong>Traditional View</strong></td>
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<td>Marriage is God-ordained between one man and one woman in a lifelong, monogamous, covenantal relationship. The Bible begins with the marriage of Adam and Eve, and ends with the marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) and the Bride (the church). The complementarity of husband and wife express God’s intention of both genders in marriage.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revisionist View</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Homosexual behavior is appropriate within the confines of a committed, loving, monogamous, lifelong, Christ-centered relationship.</td>
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Both individual Christians and churches have drifted into endorsing same-sex relationships because it always feels better to follow one’s flesh than to follow Jesus’ call to “deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24).

**Reason Two: Snagged by the Gay Agenda**

In addition to those several decades of shallow preaching, teaching and discipleship I mentioned earlier, many believers have not been submitting themselves to the truth of the Word of God. By default, then, they were easily shaped and swayed by the six points of a brilliantly designed “Gay Manifesto” spelled out in a book called *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and*
Hatred of Gays in the 90s. Originally published as an essay called “The Overhauling of Straight America” that was published in a gay magazine, the authors laid out this plan which has been executed perfectly in the United States. (The quotes below are from the essay, found here)

1. Desensitization and normalization of homosexuals in mainstream America. Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and often as possible.

“The principle behind this advice is simple: almost any behavior begins to look normal if you are exposed to enough of it at close quarters and among your acquaintances.

“In the early stages of any campaign to reach straight America, the masses should not be shocked and repelled by premature exposure to homosexual behavior itself. Instead, the imagery of sex should be downplayed and gay rights should be reduced to an abstract social question as much as possible. First let the camel get his nose inside the tent—only later his unsightly derriere!”

2. Portray members of the LGBTQ community as victims. Indoctrinate mainstream America that members of the LGBTQ community were “born this way.”

“In any campaign to win over the public, gays must be cast as victims in need of protection so that straights will be inclined by reflex to assume the role of protector.”

“Now, there are two different messages about the Gay Victim that are worth communicating. First, the mainstream should be told that gays are victims of fate, in the sense that most never had a choice to accept or reject their sexual preference. The message must read: ‘As far as gays can tell, they were born gay, just as you were born heterosexual or white or black or bright or athletic. Nobody ever tricked or seduced them; they never made a choice, and are not morally blameworthy. What they do isn’t willfully contrary – it’s only natural for them. This twist of fate could as easily have happened to you!’”

3. Give protectors a just cause: anti-discrimination

“Our campaign should not demand direct support for homosexual practices, should instead take anti-discrimination as its theme.”

4. The use of TV, music, film and social media to desensitize mainstream Americans to their plight as gay people

Over the past 25 years, gay characters, on TV especially, have captured the hearts of American viewers because they were attractive, funny, smart—the kind of characters viewers would like to be. No one was shown the dark underside of gay bars and bathhouses, or same-sex domestic violence, or having to get one’s HIV+ status checked.

5. Portray gays and lesbians as pillars in society. Make gays look good.

“From Socrates to Shakespeare, from Alexander the Great to Alexander Hamilton, from Michelangelo to Walt Whitman, from Sappho to Gertrude Stein, the list is old hat to us but shocking news to heterosexual America. In no time, a skillful and clever media campaign could have the gay community looking like the veritable fairy godmother to Western Civilization.”

Use celebrities and celebrity endorsement. And who doesn’t love Ellen DeGeneres?

6. Once homosexuals have begun to gain acceptance, anti-gay opponents must be vilified, causing them to be viewed as repulsive outcasts of society.
“Our goal is here is twofold. First, we seek to replace the mainstream’s self-righteous pride about its homophobia with shame and guilt. Second, we intend to make the antigays look so nasty that average Americans will want to dissociate themselves from such types.

“The public should be shown images of ranting homophobes whose secondary traits and beliefs disgust middle America. These images might include: the Ku Klux Klan demanding that gays be burned alive or castrated; bigoted southern ministers drooling with hysterical hatred to a degree that looks both comical and deranged; menacing punks, thugs, and convicts speaking coolly about the ‘fags’ they have killed or would like to kill; a tour of Nazi concentration camps where homosexuals were tortured and gassed.”

This is how I see how we got to this place where so many people have been deceived. They didn’t anchor themselves to the Truth of the Word of God, and they opened themselves to the cultural brine of Kirk and Madsen’s plan to overhaul straight America.

And it worked.

I will close with three personal observations about this situation:

- Christians have bought into the culture’s worship of feelings over God’s unchanging revelation
- People love how being a protector of the underdog makes them feel
- Not enough of us Christ-followers are living lives that demonstrate the beauty and satisfaction of abiding in Christ

To my sweet friend who asked the question, let me say: God’s good gift of sex and the intimacy of the marriage relationship is still intended ONLY for one man and one woman for life. In the beginning, one (Adam) became two (when God formed Eve from Adam), and then the two became one again. That is a deep mystery that makes all variations and deviations on God’s intention wrong.

I am indebted to Hope Harris for her insight and analysis of this question.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/why_have_so_many_christians_and_churches_become_pro-gay on June 30, 2015.

What I’d Love to Say to Bruce Jenner

In Bruce Jenner’s recent TV interview with Diane Sawyer, the world-famous former athlete disclosed that “For all intents and purposes, I am a woman.” He’s being widely praised as a courageous hero for normalizing the T in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender).

I have a few thoughts I would love to share with him over a cup of coffee:

Bruce, you said you’ve known since you were young that you felt a mismatch between your insides and your outsides: “My brain is much more female than it is male . . . that’s what my soul is.” I have no doubt this was confusing for you, as a boy so clearly athletically gifted.

May I share a different interpretation of your experience?
Most people think there is a single gender spectrum or continuum that runs from masculinity to femininity. Since God’s Word says that in the beginning, He created humankind male and female (Genesis 1:27), I think there is one spectrum for masculinity and a separate spectrum for femininity, and God chooses what kind of masculine or feminine each baby starts out as. On one end of the masculinity spectrum are the rough-and-tumble, athletic boys who tend to emotional insensitivity—the ones often called “All-American boys.” On the other end, equally masculine albeit a different kind of masculinity, are the creative, artistic, musical, emotionally sensitive boys. Boys and men can be anywhere along that spectrum. And with emotional and especially spiritual growth, they can start taking up more bandwidth. The athletic ones can learn to listen well and show empathy to others; the sensitive ones can learn to be more comfortable with their bodies and feel more like they actually belong to the world of males.

Some, like you, are given the rare gift of possessing almost the whole spectrum at once (like Jesus, I think—a “man’s man” who drew other men to Himself, and the ultimate in creative, artistic and sensitive, since He was the Creator of the universe, of sunsets, and of women!). You were crazy-gifted physically, becoming arguably the world’s best athlete in the 1976 Olympics. And at the same time, you said that you believed God gave you “the soul of a female.”

I don’t think your creative, sensitive soul is that of a female, but of a sensitive, gifted kind of male. This was understood better in earlier days. During the Civil War, General Joshua Chamberlain showed uncommon courage and leadership during the battle of Gettysburg, complemented by deep compassion and respect for others. He would walk the battlefield, seeking out and caring for the casualties. He sat down with the wounded General Sickles to try and cheer him up, who whispered, “General, you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman.” Chamberlain, clearly honored by this praise, returned the blessing to the one who gave it.

Bruce, I don’t think God gave you the soul of a female. I think He gave you a body and soul very much like His Son. I think it would be fair to say you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman, and that does not detract one whit from your masculinity.

One Christian to another, I want to encourage you to develop an eternal perspective rather than only thinking about the here-and-now earthly life. In your interview, you said, “I couldn’t take the walls constantly closing in on me. If I die. . . I’d be so mad at myself that I didn’t explore that side of me.” But the end of your earthly life is only the last step before entering the glory of eternity. We need to always put more weight on the unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Your unhappiness with your gender identity qualifies as “momentary, light affliction” according to the standard God uses. You will spend the rest of your (eternal) life in your new body, a resurrection body similar to the Lord Jesus’. God chose for you to be male, just as His Son was male, and is still male. So will you be, for all eternity. That should help put your earthly life into perspective.

Bruce, I say this really, really gently: your sense that you are male on the outside and female on the inside is an error of thinking and feeling, not an error based in reality. Dr. Paul McHugh is the psychiatrist who shut down the sex-change surgery program at Johns Hopkins University because they discovered that patients were actually no better off after surgery. According to Dr. McHugh, those who identify as transgender, like you, are like the 78-pound anorexic girl who looks in the mirror and sees a morbidly obese cow. It’s your thinking that needs to be adjusted, not your body. You look in the mirror with your male eyes in a male body, a body that has fathered six children, and you say, “I am really a female.” But Bruce, you’re not. God chose to create you as a male. He made you to be a man.
Like the story of the Emperor’s New Clothes, brother, you are fooling yourself. You can’t change your gender, you can only amputate perfectly healthy, functioning organs and tissue. If you move forward with surgery and continued hormone treatments, everyone will always know that you are Bruce Jenner The Once-Uber Male Athlete, trying to look like a woman.

I recently learned from a computer animator that due to the different bone structures of males and females, men can never walk like women because your hips don’t move like ours do—male hips and pelvis were not created for pregnancy and childbirth. It’s yet another evidence that true sex change is not biologically possible.

Please, Bruce, before going any further down this path, talk to those who have gone down the path you are on, and who deeply regret it. People like Walt Heyer of sexchangeregret.com. People like the very tall female-looking man who told me through tears, in a very long conversation, that he would give anything to go back to the day before his surgery because he now feels like a fraud.

Bruce, our Bible says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Since God chose to give you the gift of maleness, and He calls you to be a good steward of every gift He places in your hand (1 Corinthians 4:2), please reconsider how you can reject His gift of masculinity to the glory of God.

You can have “the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman”—and be the man God made you to be.


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How Should We Think About Texas’ First Same Sex Wedding?

Last week saw a front-page story of Texas’ first gay marriage. I asked my friend Hope Harris to guest blog for me, responding to this event out of her decades of experience and perspective as a former gay activist before Jesus changed everything in her life.

For well over 25 years I lived openly as a lesbian, advocating for gay rights and Marriage Equality. Just over six years ago I trusted Christ, and since then I have wrestled in depth with resolving my faith and sexuality, gender roles and Marriage Equality. Because of my belief that God’s Word is true, I have landed on the side of the Biblical view of these issues. I can’t even begin to express what a transformation God has made in me, that He would bring me to the place where I embrace the Biblical definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

Last week, on February 19, 2015, Suzanne Bryant and Sarah Goodfriend became the first same sex couple to legally wed in the state of Texas. Shortly after the ceremony, the Texas Supreme Court responded with a stay, making it clear that this same sex marriage license is illegal and is not legally
binding. This was a one-time marriage license granted by a probate judge based on the fact that one of the women is battling ovarian cancer, because it is possible that Ms. Goodfriend may not live to see same sex marriage legal in the state of Texas.

How should we think about this?

Let’s start with the premise by which this couple was granted a marriage license. It is based on Ms. Goodfriend’s cancer battle; there is limited information available as to what stage her cancer has progressed to. In its article “Women Wed in Texas”{1}, the Dallas Morning News states,

“Goodfriend, policy director for state Rep. Celia Israel, said during a news conference that her last chemotherapy treatment was 4 1/2 months ago. But, she added: “All of us wonder if the cancer grows back along with the hair growing back.”

I am sorry that Ms. Goodfriend is suffering from ovarian cancer and my prayers are with her for full restoration of health. Furthermore, this not a personal attack on Ms. Goodfriend or her partner Ms. Bryant.

From my experience as an advocate for Marriage Equality, I see this as a public appeal to gain sympathy for same sex couples in Texas. After all, who would deny a “dying woman” and her faithful partner of 31 years the right to make medical and legal decisions? On the surface this sounds like a valid reason to side with the couple—after all, this is a one—time exception.

First, the couple themselves are well educated individuals. Ms. Bryant is an attorney who graduated from Duke Law School. She specializes in second parent adoptions for alternative families, meaning same sex couples. Ms. Goodfriend holds a Ph.D. in Economics from UNC.

It is a fact these women are long term partners and based on their level of education and positions, it would be hard to believe that they have not long ago obtained medical power of attorney and given each other the legal right to make medical decisions should the other not have the fortitude to do so. Additionally I am sure they have had the foresight to make funeral arrangements as well.

Let’s look at another aspect of this situation that appeals to our sense of equality and justice.

Bryant said Thursday that being legally married to Goodfriend, who has ovarian cancer, would ensure inheritance. . . “Financially, now we’re intertwined, and we will have community property that we will share.”

As mentioned above, the couple is well educated, and they have the ability—apart from marriage—to legally ensure that their joint property goes to the parties they intend it to, such as the remaining partner and their two adopted daughters. I see this as a ploy to gain the compassion and understanding of their fellow Texans for the larger agenda of granting all same sex couples the rights, responsibilities and portability now granted to heterosexual couples in the State of Texas.

What should our response be as Christ followers who want to uphold the Biblical definition of marriage?

It is crucial that we have each resolved that the Biblical definition is God’s best plan for humanity. I can assure you that the battle is just gaining momentum in Texas. As it does it will also bring many heated and harsh exchanges between people on both sides of the issue, in public forums, town meetings, churches and personal conversations. Anger will be most intense towards those who stand
on the side of Biblical marriage.

Understand that those advocating for Marriage Equality often view Christians as unkind, uneducated and intolerant. Because of this, I believe it is all the more necessary for God’s people to become educated. Learn to effectively demonstrate a balance of love and truth. Become men and women who can exercise empathy and compassion without compromise to those with opposing views. Below are three common positions most often brought to the forefront of the Marriage Equality argument.

**Social Constructs Argument:** *Men and women are equal and able to effectively carry out the roles of the opposite gender in traditional marriages.*

Understand that gay marriage dilutes the value of marriage by insisting that there is nothing intrinsically essential about the balance of male and female. It will further weaken the family bonds that God ordained.

**Civil Rights Argument:** *Gay rights and same sex marriage are civil rights issues parallel to the 1960s civil rights movement.*

Same sex marriage is not a civil right, by definition; civil rights are based on socio-economic changes rather than emotional wants and physical attractions.

I have always found this position personally offensive to men and women of color who fought tirelessly to gain equal footing to their counterparts here in the United States. From the perspective of one formerly immersed in the gay culture, I can attest that the majority of the LGBT community are well educated Caucasians who have not suffered the civil injustices people of color have.

**Religious Argument:** *It is necessary to redefine marriage and sexual identity as a cultural norm in order to justify living as one’s “authentic self,” according to one’s primary attractions.*

God created sexuality as complete and perfect; however, as the result of sin entering the world, humanity now lives with sexual and relational brokenness. People are using the term “authentic self” to describe what is actually flesh, the part of us operating independently from God and His intentions for us.

The cultural tide is sweeping the church, not only accepting but affirming men and women who chose their primary identity as gay rather than as a redeemed child of God. Furthermore, many so-called “gay Christians” are advocating redefining God’s design for marriage and sexuality as it is stated in the Bible. (So many people have become desensitized to this label or identity that it fails to disturb any more. How would we respond if a group started a “Christian swingers” or “KKK for Christ” movement?)

This position diminishes the integrity of the Bible as absolute Truth and God-inspired, with the ability to evaluate and direct our lives to become the people God calls us to be.

For those who embrace the Biblical definition of marriage being between one man and one woman, there are moral, ethical and theological implications—for Christians, churches, and pastors in Texas, the United States and beyond. We must not succumb to the cultural tidal wave challenging God’s definition of marriage. Be brave and courageous, friends. Stand firm in God’s Truth. Keep a level head and a calm spirit, and speak the truth in love.

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.
7. Marilyn Elias, “Gay teens coming out earlier to peers and family,” USA Today, 8 February 2007, 1A.

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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 polygamy. 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


4. Ibid., 216.


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 connotate 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.”

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**


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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.*

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### Adultery

#### 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.”

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.”

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.

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.

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.

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

4. Ibid., 13.
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.
11. Ibid., 53.

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Same Sex Marriage: A Facade of Normalcy

Sue Bohlin takes a look at the arguments for same sex marriage and finds them lacking from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. She explains that those pushing for same sex marriage have redefined it into something it never was and was never intended to be.
What’s Marriage For?

In any discussion on same sex marriage, we need to start at the beginning: What is marriage for, anyway? Marriage begins a family. The family is the basic building block of society. It has always been this way from Adam and Eve down to today.

Man did not invent marriage; God did. He invented and ordained marriage as the foundation for all human society when He gave Eve to Adam and pronounced them man and wife. Marriage is one of those institutions that is found in every human culture. Across the globe and across the ages, marriage has always been defined the same way: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children. I would suggest that since this pattern for marriage applies to all cultures and all times, this indicates that God is its inventor and creator. It’s such an intrinsic part of the way we relate to each other that even those who have lost track of the story of the true God (the non-Judeo-Christian cultures) still practice marriage according to the pattern God designed: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children.

God has woven “marriage into human nature so that it serves two primary purposes throughout all societies.”{1} The first is the way men and women were created to complement each other. Marriage balances the strengths and weaknesses of masculinity and femininity. Women help civilize men and channel their sexual energy in productive rather than destructive ways. Men protect and provide for women—and any children they produce together.

Marriage is built on a basic building block of humanity—that we exist as male and female. The strong benefit of marriage as God intended it is that males and females are designed with profound and wonderful differences, and these differences are coordinated in marriage so that each contributes what the other lacks.{2}

The second purpose of marriage is producing, protecting, and providing for children. Marriage ensures that children have the benefits of both mother and father. Each gender makes a unique and important contribution to children’s development and emotional health, and marriage provides the best possible environment for children to thrive as they enjoy the benefits of masculinity and femininity.

Those who are pushing for same sex marriage don’t see marriage this way. They seek to redefine it as a way to get society’s stamp of approval on their sexual and emotional relationships, and a way to secure financial and other benefits. Both of these reasons are about the adults, not about children. Both reasons are driven by the philosophy of “How can I get what I want? How can I be happy?” It’s a very self-centered movement.

Many homosexuals want the right to marry only because it confers society’s ultimate stamp of approval on a sexual relationship—\textit{not} because they want to participate in the institution of marriage.

Why Same Sex Relationships Are Wrong

Let’s look at several reasons (though not an exhaustive list by any means) that same sex relationships are wrong.

First, homosexuality is an attempt to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate, ungodly ways. We all have God-given heart hungers to feel loved and known and validated—to feel that we matter. God
intends for us to have those needs met first by our parents and then by our peers, but sometimes something goes wrong. People find themselves walking around with a gaping, aching hole in their souls, longing to make the connections that didn’t happen when they were supposed to, earlier in their lives. From both the women and the men that I know who are dealing with unwanted homosexuality, I hear the same thing: “I just want to be held, I just want to be known, I just want to be special to someone.” But turning to homosexual or lesbian relationships to get those needs met is not God’s intention for us.

Second, same sex relationships are outside of (and fall far short of) God’s created intention for sex. God made us male and female, designed to complement each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Two men or two women coming together can never live out God’s intent for His creation. The biology of our gender shows us that same sex relationships don’t work, but opposite sex relationships do. It is unwise to ignore the obvious about how the pieces fit, or don’t fit, as the case may be.

Third, marriage is an earthbound illustration of the mystery of Christ and the church. There is a mystical unity of two very different, very other beings coming together as one. Only the profound differences of man and woman display this mystery. “If the man represents Christ and the woman represents the church, then a male to male partnering would be, in essence, a symbolic partnering of God with Himself apart from His people. Likewise, a lesbian relationship would become a symbolic partnering of God’s people without Him. Either option is incomplete, unnatural, and abhorrent.”

Fourth, same sex relationships are idolatrous. In Romans 1, Paul describes the downward spiral of people who worship the creature instead of the Creator. When God says intimate relationships with people of the same sex are forbidden, and people insist on pursuing them anyway, they have elevated something else to the position of a god. It could be the other person, or sexual pleasure, or even just one’s own feelings, but all these things become idols because they are more important than anything else, including God.

Homosexual and lesbian relationships are wrong because God designed us for something far better. The nature of the gospel is to bring transformation to every aspect of a believer’s life, and many people have discovered the “something better.” (See my article, “Can Homosexuals Change?”)

**The Differences Between Heterosexual and Homosexual Relationships**

Sometimes you hear gays or lesbians say, “We’re just like anybody else. We have two kids, a dog, a mortgage, and we worry about the economy. We just don’t want anybody telling us who we can love.” My friend Brady, who used to be part of that gay sub-culture, calls the homosexual lifestyle “a façade of normalcy.” And it is only a façade.

Consider the huge variance in the stability of relationships. Despite a high divorce rate, 57% of heterosexual marriages last over twenty years. The average length of homosexual relationships is two to three years. Only 5% of them last 20 years.

And consider the issue of promiscuity. In heterosexual marriages, over three-fourths of the men and 88% of the women remain faithful to their marriage vows. Most sexually active gay men are promiscuous, engaging hundreds of sexual partners over a lifetime.

The concept of a committed relationship is very different for the two groups. Most heterosexual couples are faithful and stable. When homosexual men are in what they call a “committed”
relationship, this usually includes three to five outside partners each year. Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, told the *Dallas Morning News*, “Monogamy is not a word the gay community uses. . . . We talk about fidelity. That means you live in a loving, caring, honest relationship with your partner. Because we can’t marry, we have people with widely varying opinions as to what that means. Some would say that committed couples could have multiple sexual partners as long as there’s no deception.”

In Holland, which legalized gay marriage in 2001, the average is eight outside partners. One study of gay men who had been together for over five years could not find one single monogamous relationship. Not one!

Women in lesbian relationships often stay together not because they want to, but because they’re stuck financially and emotionally. “I heard one speaker say at a Love Won Out conference, “We don’t have partners, we have prisoners.” Of course, that’s not universally true, but over the years of walking toward Jesus with women who were no longer in lesbian partnerships, I have heard over and over, “We didn’t know how to do life apart from each other.”

Heterosexuals live longer, happier lives. Sexually active homosexual men live a dangerous and destructive lifestyle. They are at huge risk for contracting AIDS, and run a much higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases than straight men. The gay community experiences three times more alcoholism and drug abuse, and much more promiscuity and domestic violence than the straight world. Gay men can expect to live twenty years less than their straight neighbors.

And finally, a home with a mom and a dad is the best possible place for children. Homosexual parents put kids at risk. The American College of Pediatrics discovered that children raised by gay parents tend to be more dissatisfied with their own gender, suffer a greater rate of molestation in the family, have homosexual experiences more often, and are encouraged to experiment in dangerous, destructive lifestyle choices.

Please hear me: We’re commenting on the extremely high-risk behavior that is part and parcel of a homosexual lifestyle. That’s not the same thing as condemning the people who engage in it. A homosexual lifestyle is a façade of normalcy, but it can be changed.

**Answering Arguments for Same Sex Marriage**

Let’s look at several arguments being offered for same sex marriage.

The first is that marriage will encourage faithfulness and stability in volatile homosexual relationships. But the nature of homosexual and lesbian relationships is broken to begin with. Two broken people will not create a whole, healthy relationship. The best description I’ve ever heard of same sex relationships is “one broken little boy looking for his daddy, connecting with another broken little boy, looking for his daddy.” And the same is true of women. Neither a marriage license, nor the approval of society, can fix the nature of a relationship that is irretrievably broken at its core.

Another argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure hospital visitation. But it’s the patient who decides. If he appoints his partner as a health-care proxy, even if he’s in a coma that document will insure access to the hospital. We don’t need marriage for that. It’s a smokescreen.

A third argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure survivorship benefits. But that’s what a will is for. You don’t need marriage for that.
Some say that we need same sex marriage for Social Security benefits. This is an interesting argument, since Social Security benefits were created to address the financial inequity of father as breadwinner and mother as stay-at-home caregiver. Homosexual relationships are usually two-incomes. It’s very rare to have one stay-at-home caregiver of the kids, since homosexual relationships do not and cannot produce children naturally. When they do, they are borrowing from God’s plan for creating families.

Then there’s the discrimination argument. There are really two issues that fall under this argument: denied liberties and denied benefits.

Concerning the issue of denying the liberty to marry, this argument doesn’t hold water. Any person can marry whoever he or she pleases, with certain restrictions that are true for everyone. You can’t marry a child, a close blood relative, a person who is already married, or a person of the same sex. These restrictions apply equally to everyone; there is no discrimination here. The problem is, some people don’t like the restrictions.

True discrimination functions against an unchangeable identity, such as gender or color. Homosexuality is a lifestyle, a chosen behavior. Even sexual orientation is changeable. It’s not easy, but it is possible.

The other issue of discrimination is denied benefits. But benefits are granted to families because society has an interest in providing a safe place for children to grow up and be nurtured. So the government provides child-oriented benefits such as inheritance rights and tax relief to ease the financial burden of children. Insurance policies and Social Security benefits provide for the money gap between wage-earner and caregiver. These benefits are inherent to families. The essence of marriage is about building families. Homosexual relationships cannot build families legitimately. They have to borrow from heterosexual relationships or technology to create children.

**Final Points to Consider**

Joe Dallas draws on his wisdom and experience as a former homosexual to address the issue of same sex marriage in his book *When Homosexuality Hits Home*. He provides some excellent points to consider about this subject. {18}

We can recognize that people genuinely love each other, and we can respect their right to form a partnership, even if we disagree with the nature of their partnership. We can say a relationship is wrong without disrespecting or condemning the people in that relationship.

For example, look at the relationship between Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. Tracy was a married man when he met and fell in love with her. For decades they had a deeply committed and affectionate relationship although they never married. Note two glaring and conflicting facts about their relationship: it was adulterous, and therefore wrong, and they truly loved each other. You can find a number of good things about their relationship, such as the way they respected each other and cared deeply for each other and seemed to be good for each other. When we say it was morally wrong, this does not deny the good things about their relationship. But to recognize the good things does not change the fact that it was morally wrong. The two are not mutually exclusive.

With gay or lesbian couples, we can acknowledge that there may, indeed, be deep love and commitment to each other. After all, humans have an amazing God-given capacity to love—even outside the bounds of His design and commands. But God cannot and does not sanction homosexual relationships, so we cannot either. We can respect those involved without capitulating to their
Redefining marriage is especially unacceptable to Christians, since it is spelled out in both Testaments as a type of God’s relationship with His people. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as the husband of the nation of Israel, and in the New Testament, Jesus is the bridegroom of the Church. Marriage is far more than a social construct that provides for the creation of new families. It is a living parable that helps us to understand the dynamic, mysterious relationship between God and His people. How can we redefine something that has such a deep, spiritual meaning? Even if that were not part of the equation, we would still need to deal with the truth that marriage was created by God, and we do not have the right to tinker with His creation.

The problem with same sex marriage is that it doesn’t work, it doesn’t fit, and it is an attempt to make right something that is intrinsically, irretrievably wrong. God created us in His image as both male and female, and intends that His full image be expressed as men and women come together in designed complementarity. This is impossible in same sex marriage.

Notes

2. Stanton and Maier, 24.
See Also:

- Can Homosexuals Change?
- Did Phil Get It Wrong? Is Homosexuality Sin?
  - Homosexual Myths
- Homosexuality: Questions and Answers
  - Homosexual Theology
- When Someone In Your Congregation Says “I’m Gay” (Pastors’ Brochure)
- And also our answers to e-mails about homosexuality issues