

Heterosexual and Homosexual Marriages – Are Straight and Gay Marriages Identical?

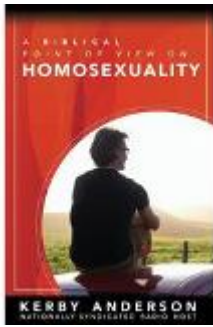
Although Kerby wrote this article before same-sex marriage was legalized, his assessment of homosexual relationships has not changed because the intrinsically disordered nature of same-sex relationships has not changed. He identifies the measurable benefits of heterosexual marriage over other types of family set ups. Then he considers the difficulties introduced by homosexual marriage in obtaining the same benefits. With the fundamental differences between them, considering them to be equivalent will not make it so.

Is there any difference between heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage? We are told that there is essentially no difference between the two and thus marriage status should be granted to anyone of any sexual orientation. This is not true (as I discuss in more detail in my book *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality*[\[1\]](#)).



Traditional, Heterosexual Marriage

Let's begin by talking about the benefits of traditional marriage. Traditional marriage is the foundation of civilization. So before we even consider the impact of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and other alternative lifestyles, we should consider the benefits of traditional marriage to society.



An excellent summary of the studies done on married people can be found in the book, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* by Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher.[\[2\]](#) Here are just a few of the many findings from the research:

- Married people are much happier and likely to be less unhappy than any other group of people.
- Married people live up to eight years longer than divorced or never-married people.
- Married people suffer less from long-term illnesses than those who are unmarried.
- Married people are less likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse.
- Married people have twice the amount of sex as single people and report greater levels of satisfaction in the area of sexual intimacy.

A look at individual studies by social scientists also confirms these conclusions. For example, married men and women report greater satisfaction with family life.[\[3\]](#) Married couples report greater sexual satisfaction.[\[4\]](#) Married women report higher levels of physical and psychological health.[\[5\]](#) Married people experience less depression.[\[6\]](#)

Researchers at the Heritage Foundation have also compiled numerous statistics that also demonstrate the positive impact of marriage. Traditional marriages have higher incomes when compared to step families, cohabiting couples, or those who

never married.{7} Traditional marriages also result in lower welfare costs to society when compared to divorced couples or out-of-wedlock births.{8} Married women are less likely to be victims of domestic violence, and married couples are more likely to be happy and less likely to attempt suicide.{9}

The studies compiled by the Heritage Foundation also found many positive effects on children.{10} For example, they found that:

- Children in married families are less like to suffer serious child abuse.
- Children in married families are less likely to end up in jail as adults.
- Children in married families are less likely to be depressed as adolescents.
- Children in married families are less likely to be expelled from school.
- Children in married families are less likely to repeat a grade in school.
- Children in married families are less likely to have developmental problems.
- Children in married families are less likely to have behavioral problems.
- Children in married families are less likely to use drugs (marijuana, cocaine).
- Children in married families are less likely to be sexually active.

Children benefit from traditional marriage in the same way just as was previously mentioned adults. For example, they are better off financially. The National Longitudinal Survey of

Youth found that child poverty dramatically increased outside of intact marriages.[{11}](#) Children in married homes are generally healthier physically and emotionally when they reach adulthood than children from other home situations.[{12}](#)

Although these are relatively recent studies, the conclusions have been known for much longer. In the 1930s, British anthropologist J.D. Unwin studied 86 cultures that stretched across 5,000 years. He found that when a society restricted sex to marriage, it thrived. However, he also found that when a society weakened the sexual ethic of marriage, it deteriorated and eventually disintegrated.[{13}](#)

Differences Between Heterosexual Marriages and Homosexual Marriages

Are heterosexual couples and homosexual couples different? The popular media treats heterosexual couples and homosexual couples as if they are no different. One headline proclaimed, "Married and Gay Couples Not All that Different," and essentially said they were just like the couple next door.[{14}](#)

There is good reason to question that assumption. Dr. Timothy Dailey has compiled numerous statistics that demonstrate significant differences.[{15}](#) He shows that "committed" homosexual relationships are radically different from married couples in at least six ways: relationship duration, monogamy vs. promiscuity, relationship commitment, number of children being raised, health risks, and rates of intimate partner violence.

Consider the duration of a relationship. Gay activists often point to high divorce rates among married couples, suggesting that heterosexuals fare no better than homosexuals. Research shows, however, that male homosexual relationships last only a fraction of the length of most marriages. By contrast, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that 66% of

first marriages last ten years or longer, with 50% lasting twenty years or longer.[{16}](#)

Various studies of homosexual relationships show a much different picture. For example, the Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census of nearly 8,000 homosexuals found that only 15% described their “current relationship” lasting twelve years or longer.[{17}](#) A study of homosexual men in the Netherlands published in the journal *AIDS* found that the “duration of steady partnerships” was one and a half years.[{18}](#) In a study of male homosexuality in reported in *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, Pollak found that “few homosexual relationships last longer than two years, with many men reporting hundreds of lifetime partners.”[{19}](#)

Another key difference is “monogamy versus promiscuity.” Married heterosexual couples are more monogamous than the popular culture and media would have you believe. A national survey published in the *Journal of Sex Research* found that 77% of married men and 88% of married women had remained faithful to their marriage vows.[{20}](#) A national survey in *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* came to essentially the same conclusions (75% of husbands and 85% of wives).[{21}](#)

By contrast, homosexuals were much less monogamous and much more promiscuous. In the classic study by Bell and Weinberg, they found that 43% of white male homosexuals had sex with 500 or more partners, with 28% having 1,000 or more sex partners.[{22}](#) And a Dutch study of partnered homosexuals, published in the journal *AIDS*, found that men with a steady partner nevertheless had an average of eight sexual partners per year.[{23}](#)

The authors of *The Male Couple* reported that in their study of 156 males in homosexual relationships lasting from 1 to 37 years, “Only seven couples have a totally exclusive sexual

relationship, and these men all have been together for less than five years. Stated another way, all couples with a relationship lasting more than five years have incorporated some provision for outside sexual activity in their relationships.”^{24} They also found that most homosexual men understood sexual relations outside the relationship to be the norm, and usually viewed standards of monogamy as an act of oppression.

A third difference between heterosexual and homosexual couples is “level of commitment.” Timothy Dailey argues: “If homosexuals and lesbians truly desired the same kind of commitment signified by marriage, then one would expect them to take advantage of the opportunity to enter into civil unions or registered partnerships.”^{25} This would provide them with legal recognition as well as legal rights. However, it is clear that few homosexuals and lesbians have chosen to take advantage of these various unions (same-sex marriage, civil unions, domestic partnerships), suggesting a difference in commitment compared with married couples.

These three differences (along with others detailed by Timothy Dailey) demonstrate a significant difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Gay and lesbian couples appear less likely to commit themselves to the type of monogamous relationship found in traditional marriage.

Is It Natural?

Many in the homosexual movement say that their feelings are natural. Often they even say that their feelings are God-given. So how could they be wrong? Years ago Debbie Boone sang a song with the lyrics, “How can it be so wrong when it feels so right?” That is the argument from many in the homosexual movement. It feels natural, so it must be natural.

But God’s character as revealed in the Bible should be our

standard. There are many sinful acts that feel natural, but that does not mean they are moral. Romans 1:26-27 makes it very clear that these passions are unnatural:

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Homosexual desires and temptations may feel natural to some people, but they are not what God intends for human beings. Any sexual encounter outside of marriage is immoral. The Bible refers to the sin of sexual immorality nearly four dozen times. Homosexuality, along with fornication and adultery, are all examples of sexual immorality.

Although God created a perfect world (Genesis 1-2), it was spoiled by sin. The effects of sin impact us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Homosexual temptation, like other sexual temptations, is a result of the fall (Genesis 3). When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, He reminded them that God “created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Matthew 19:4-5).

Although there is a concerted effort to push for homosexual marriage within our society, we have seen in this article that there are fundamental differences between heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage. For more information on this topic, visit the [Probe website](#) and read many of our other [articles on homosexuality](#). And you might pick up a copy of my book, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality*.

Notes

1. Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008).
2. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
3. Linda J. Waite, *The Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter 2000), 368-391.
4. Scott Christopher, "Sexuality in Marriage, Dating, and Other Relationships: A Decade Review," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no. 4, November 2000: 999-1017.
5. Peggy McDonough, "Chronic Stress and the Social Patterning of Women's Health in Canada," *Social Science and Medicine*, 2002: 767-782.
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7. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: Economic Effects of Marriage," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Marriage/economic.cfm.
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9. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: The Effects of Marriage on Adults," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/adults.cfm.
10. Patrick Fagan, et. al., "The Positive Effects of Marriage: The Effects of Marriage on Children," The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org/research/features/marriage/children.cfm.
11. See the U.S. Department of Labor for the various longitudinal studies, www.bls.gov/nls/home.htm.
12. James Dobson, *Marriage Under Fire* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 54.
13. See J. D. Unwin, *Sexual Regulations and Human Behavior* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1933).
14. Robert Gebeloff and Mary Jo Patterson, "Married and gay couples are not all that different," *Times-Picayune*, 22 November 2003.
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16. Matthew Bramlett and William Mosher, "First marriage dissolution, divorce and remarriage: United States," *National Center for Health Statistics*, 31 May 2001: 1.

17. "Largest gay study examines 2004 relationships," GayWire Latest Breaking Releases, www.glcensus.org.

18. Maria Xiridou, et. al., "The contribution of steady and casual partnership to the incidence of HIV infection among homosexual men in Amsterdam," *AIDS*, 17 (2003): 1031.

19. M. Pollack, "Male Homosexuality," in *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, ed. Philippe Aries and Andre Bejin, trans. A. Forster (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 40-61.

20. Michael Wiederman, "Extramarital sex: prevalence and correlates in a national survey," *Journal of Sex Research*, 34 (1997): 170.

21. E. O. Laumann, et. al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 216.

22. A. P. Bell and M.S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 308-309.

23. Xiridou, "The contribution of steady and casual partnership," 1031.

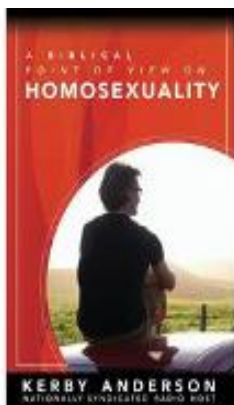
24. David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison, *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 252-253.

25. Dailey, "Comparing."

Answering Arguments for Same-Sex Marriage – A Christian Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson considers the arguments in favor of same-sex marriage from a biblical worldview perspective. He shows that arguments such as tolerance, equal rights, and no impact on others do not hold up under critical examination. As Christians, we can love those who live a different lifestyle without allowing them to claim their lifestyle is identical and harmless to society.

Shouldn't We Be Tolerant?



As more and more states are either legalizing same-sex marriage or willing to recognize same-sex marriages from other states, it is crucial that Christians know how to answer arguments for same-sex marriage. We will look at some of these arguments and provide answers from my book, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality*.[\[1\]](#)

One of the first arguments for same-sex marriage is that we should be tolerant. We used to live in a society where the highest value was a word with a capital T. It was the word Truth. Today, we live in a society that has switched that word for another word with a capital T: [Tolerance](#).

Should we be tolerant of other people and their lifestyles?

The answer to that depends upon the definition of “tolerance.” If by tolerance someone means we should be civil to other people, then the answer is a resounding “yes.” In fact, civility should be the hallmark of Christians. Jesus expressed the goal of civility when he taught that “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

Civility also includes being gracious even in the midst of disagreement or hostility. Other people may be disagreeable, and we are free to disagree with them. But we should disagree in a way that gives grace. Often such a gentle response can change a discussion or dialogue. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that “a gentle answer turns away wrath.”

Civility also requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, one should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right and that he is wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.”

There is also an important distinction we should make between judging a person and judging their sinful behavior. Some have said that the most frequently quoted Bible verse is no longer John 3:16 but Matthew 7:1. It is where Jesus says, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” People misuse this verse all the time to say you should not judge anything another person does.

The context of this verse is important. It seems that what Jesus was condemning was a critical or judgmental spirit. It is a judging spirit when someone believes they are superior to you. Jesus was obviously not saying that people should not make judgments. A few verses later Jesus calls certain people “pigs” and “dogs” (Matthew 7:6). He even calls some “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Matthew 7:15). There are many passages in the Bible that admonish us to use sound judgment and

discernment (1 Kings 3:9; Proverbs 15:14; 1 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 1:9-10).

The Bible says that Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and provides a model we should follow. We should model both biblical compassion and biblical convictions when considering the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Don't Homosexuals Deserve Equal Rights?

Each person in our society deserves equal rights. But redefining marriage is not about equal rights but about adding special rights to our laws and Constitution. Currently we all have the same right to marry a person of the opposite sex who is of a certain age and background. We don't give people the right to marry their siblings. We don't give people the right to marry a young child. As a society we have placed certain limits on marriage but give everyone the equal right to marry under those specified conditions.

When we redefine marriage, then all sorts of new relationships will also vie for social acceptance. Already the legalization of same-sex marriage in one state had resulted in the call for the legalization of polygamy. Some gay activists are calling for the legalization of polyamory (multiple sexual relationships with multiple partners).

We should also realize that the government is not prohibiting homosexuals from engaging in their behavior or even having a partner. All government is saying is that it is not going to redefine marriage to include same-sex relationships. And when citizens of this country have been given an opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment in their state defining marriage, they have overwhelmingly approved of the traditional definition of marriage.

As we have already noted, the push for same-sex marriage has been more about respect and acceptance than it has been about

rights. If government recognizes the legal validity of gay marriage, then that places government's "seal of approval" on homosexuality.

Often when gay activists are calling for equal rights, they are really asking for special benefits. Homosexuals have the same right to marry as heterosexuals. They have the right to marry a qualified person (age, marital status) of the opposite sex. Homosexuals and heterosexuals cannot marry someone of the same sex, someone who is too young, someone who is already married, etc.

But the activists argue that because they cannot marry someone of the same sex, they lose out on certain benefits. But that is not a justification for redefining marriage. It may be a justification for reconsidering the benefits we provide as a society, but it isn't a justification for changing the definition of marriage.

Consider the issue of visitation rights. Gay activists argue that government needs to grant same-sex marriage rights to homosexuals so they will have visitation rights. But again, this may be an argument for changing the laws concerning visitation, but it isn't an argument for redefining marriage.

A bigger question is whether this is really a problem. In this day where major corporations and governmental entities are granting domestic partnership rights, it is difficult to see this as a problem. If such a case were brought to light people could use public pressure to force the hospital to change its policies.

Isn't Homosexual Marriage Like Interracial Marriage?

When objections are raised about legalizing same-sex marriage, proponents argued that the same concerns were said about

interracial marriage. For years gay activists have tried to hitch their caboose to the civil rights train. While many in the African-American community have found this comparison offensive, the tactic is still used on a fairly regular basis.

There are significant differences between interracial marriage and same-sex marriage. First, removing certain state laws banning interracial marriage did not call for a *redefinition* of marriage but merely an *affirmation* of marriage. Traditional marriage is not about equal rights but about establishing norms for sexual relationships within society. We ban discrimination based on race because it is an immutable characteristic that each person has from the moment of conception. And the word "race" appears in the Constitution.

A person who participates in homosexual *behavior* is different from someone who is born with an immutable *characteristic*. As many people have pointed out, there are no former African-Americans or former Asian-Americans. But there are hundreds of people who have left homosexuality.

Actually, interracial marriage and same-sex marriage differ from one another at the most fundamental level. The genetic difference between various races is insignificant biologically. A recent study of human genetic material of different races concluded that the DNA of any two people in the world would differ by just 2/10ths of one percent.[\[2\]](#) And of this variation, only six percent can be linked to racial categories. The remaining ninety-four percent is "within race" variation. And the moral difference between the races is also insignificant since the Bible teaches that God has made all of us "from one blood" (Acts 17:26, KJV).

But even though race and ethnicity are insignificant to marriage, gender is fundamental to marriage. There is a profound biological difference between a man and a woman. Marriage is defined as a bond between a man and a woman.

The Supreme Court case of *Loving v. Virginia* struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriage, arguing that marriage is one of the “basic civil rights of man.”[\[3\]](#) The Supreme Court of Minnesota later ruled in *Baker v. Nelson* that race and homosexual behavior are not the same.

To legalize same-sex marriage is to change the very nature and definition of marriage. And there is good reason to believe that is exactly what gay activists want. Michelangelo Signorile is a leading voice in the homosexual community. He explained in *OUT* magazine that the real goal in legalizing same-sex marriage was to radically transform marriage.[\[4\]](#)

He later goes on in the article to admit that the idea of the “freedom to marry” was actually a suggestion from the Los Angeles PR firm which they thought would be successful because it would play well in the heterosexual world.

Does Same-Sex Marriage Hurt Traditional Marriage?

One of the arguments against legalization of same-sex marriage is that it will have an adverse effect on traditional marriage. Proponents of same-sex marriage argue that it will not have any impact. They ask, “How can my marriage to someone of the same sex have any impact at all on your marriage?” So what would be the consequences of same-sex marriage?

First, when the state sanctions gay marriage, it sends a signal of legitimacy throughout the culture. Eventually marriage becomes nothing more than sexual partnership and the sanctity of marriage and all that goes with it is lost.

When same-sex marriage is legalized, the incidences of cohabitation increases. This is not theory but sociological fact. Essentially, Europe has been engaged in a social experiment with same-sex marriage for decades.

Stanley Kurtz has written numerous articles documenting the impact of same-sex marriage on traditional marriage in the Scandinavian countries. When the governments of Sweden and Norway permitted same-sex marriage, he noted a trend away from marriage. According to Kurtz: "Marriage is slowly dying in Scandinavia." A majority of children in Sweden and Norway are born out of wedlock, and sixty percent of first-born children in Denmark have unmarried parents.{5}

A second consequence of same-sex marriage legalization would be the complete redefinition of marriage and the introduction of a variety of marital relationships. Already we are seeing court cases attempting to legalize polygamy. The most prominent case involved Utah polygamist Tom Green. He and his lawyer used the Supreme Court case of *Lawrence v. Texas* as a legal foundation for his marriage to multiple wives.{6} It is interesting to note that when the Supreme Court rendered its decision in the *Lawrence* case, Justice Antonin Scalia warned that the decision could lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage and the redefinition of marriage.{7}

Traditional marriage rests on the foundation of biblical teaching as well as cultural tradition. Theology, legal precedent, and historical experience all support the traditional definition of marriage. Once you begin to redefine marriage, any sexual relationship can be called marriage.

Third, the redefinition of marriage will ultimately destroy marriage as we know it. For many gay activists, the goal is not to have lots of same-sex marriages. Their goal is to destroy the institution of marriage.

Stanley Kurtz believes that once same-sex marriage is legalized, "marriage will be transformed into a variety of relationship contracts, linking two, three or more individuals (however weakly or temporarily) in every conceivable combination of male and female." {8}

Does Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage Really Affect Families?

Those who oppose same-sex marriage often point to the connection between marriage and family. Traditional marriage provides a moral and legal structure for children. Proponents of gay marriage point out that many marriages do not have children. Thus, the connection is irrelevant.

While it is true that some marriages do not result in children due to choice or infertility, that does not invalidate the public purpose of marriage. Marriage, after all, is a public institution that brings together a father and mother to bring children into the world. Individuals may have all sorts of private reasons for marrying, but there is an established public purpose for marriage.

If couples choose not to have children or are not able to have children, it does not invalidate this public purpose. There is a distinction between purpose and use. Over the years I have written a number of books. I would like to believe that every person who has a copy of one of my books has read it. I know that is not true. Some sit on shelves and some sit in boxes. Others sit in used bookstores. The fact that some people don't read my books doesn't mean they were not intended to be read.

Likewise, we shouldn't assume that the connection between marriage and family is insignificant simply because some couples do not or cannot have children. One of the public purposes of traditional marriage is procreation.

At the center of every civilization is the family. There may be other social and political structures, but civilizations survive when the family survives. And they fall apart when the family falls apart. Michael Novak, former professor and winner of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, put it this way: "One unforgettable law has been learned through all the oppressions, disasters, and injustices of the last thousand

years: if things go well with the family, life is worth living; when the family falters, life falls apart.”{9}

Marriage between a man and a woman produce children that allow a civilization to exist and persist. Marriage begins the foundation of a family. Families are the foundation of a civilization.

Notes

1. Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008).
2. J. C. Gutin, “End of the Rainbow,” *Discover*, Nov. 1994, 71-75.
3. *Loving v. Virginia*, Supreme Court of U.S., 388 U.S. 1, 1967.
4. Michaelangelo Signorile, “I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO,” *OUT*, May 1996, 30-32.
5. Stanley Kurtz, “The end of marriage in Scandinavia: The conservative case for same-sex marriage collapses,” *The Weekly Standard*, 2 February 2004, <http://tinyurl.com/3xpkz>.
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8. Stanley Kurtz, “Beyond gay marriage,” *Weekly Standard*, 4 August 2003.
9. Michael Novak, “The family out of favor,” *Harper’s Magazine*, April 1976, 37-46.