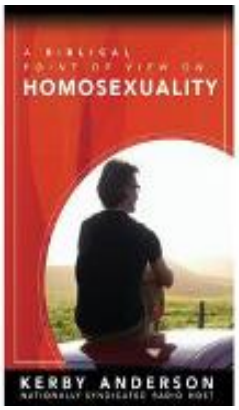
Answering Arguments for Same-Sex Marriage – A Christian Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson considers the arguments in favor or 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.
6. Alexandria Sage, "Utah polygamy ban is challenged: U.S. Supreme Court' sodomy ruling is cited," *Associated Press*, 26 January 2004.
7. "The Supreme Court: Excerpts from Supreme Court's decision striking down sodomy laws," *New York Times*, 27 June 2003, A18.
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.

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