

# How does same-sex marriage affect you?

Biblical answers to frequently asked questions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage



# How Does Same-Sex Marriage Affect You?

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While only 3.8 percent of the American population is homosexual,<sup>1</sup> issues related to homosexuality and same-sex marriage have been making headlines for years. Most recently, the Supreme Court's consideration of the Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8 have been in the news daily.

Now that the Court has issued its ruling, let's address some of the most frequent questions people are asking about same-sex marriage. The questions that follow were submitted by Twitter and Facebook followers as well as friends of the Denison Forum team.<sup>2</sup>

## Homosexuality and salvation

### Can a person be a homosexual and a Christian?

One of my best friends in college, after he graduated, told me he was gay. He was a worship leader when I knew him and later became a music minister in a congregation that affirms homosexuality. While I was in seminary, my favorite staff member at our church admitted his homosexuality and is a worship leader today in a similar church. I am absolutely certain that both of my friends are Christians and will spend eternity in heaven.

Why do people wonder if homosexuals can be Christians? Because God's word clearly teaches that homosexual activity is against his will (see Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; for more on these passages, see my "Homosexuality: a biblical overview"<sup>3</sup>).

But we need to be clear: Homosexual activity is not the "unpardonable sin." The "unpardonable sin" is rejecting the conviction of the Spirit that leads to salvation (Matthew 12:32). It is "unpardonable" because it rejects the pardon by which God forgives our sins and makes us his children. (For more, see my "What is the unpardonable sin?"<sup>4</sup>)

No Christian, whether gay or straight, can commit this "unpardonable" sin. Nor does homosexuality constitute this sin.

## **Doesn't the Bible say that homosexuals can't be saved?**

One passage in the Bible seems to teach that homosexuals cannot be Christians. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 states: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup> Since "homosexual offenders" are on this list of those who will not "inherit the kingdom of God," does this mean that they cannot be saved?

Not at all. Paul's point is that people who reject Christ as their Lord and thus live in ungodly ways cannot be saved since they have refused salvation. But they will receive salvation if they turn to Christ, no matter their past. Note verse 11: "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

If homosexuality keeps a person from salvation, so does theft, greed, drunkenness, slander, and swindling. There is no sin God cannot forgive, for those who accept his pardon (Isaiah 43:25).

## **What about those who refuse to repent?**

What about people who claim to trust Christ but refuse to repent of sins such as homosexual behavior? Are they genuinely saved?

We must confess our sins before God can forgive them (1 John 1:9). Such confession requires repentance (Acts 3:19), the desire to change our lives according to God's word and will. If people are unwilling to repent of sin, they cannot be forgiven for it.

However, salvation is based not on our repentance but on God's grace: "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). No works can save us, not even the works of repentance.

In addition, repentance is the gift of God: "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). We should pray for those in sin "that God will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:25-26). Note that the sinners to whom Paul referred were members of the church and presumably Christians, yet they still needed to repent of sins that had made them captive to the devil.

If people must confess and repent of all their sins before they can become Christians, my salvation experience was invalid. When I trusted Christ in 1973 at the age of 15, I had no knowledge of the need for such specific repentance. I simply asked Jesus to forgive my

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sins and become my Lord and Savior. I am still learning what that commitment means in my daily life.

Further, I can't find a single convert in the New Testament who was required to make such a specific and thorough confession with repentance before coming to Christ. Nor does the Bible anywhere tell us that such a step is essential to our evangelistic outreach to the world.

So here's my position: To receive God's grace unto salvation, we must admit to him that we need such grace and ask him to make us his children. His regenerating and transforming Spirit then comes to live in us (1 Cor. 3:16), working daily to mold us into the character of Christ (Rom. 8:29). This process is not complete until we are in heaven.

People involved in homosexual behavior are not required to acknowledge and repent of this sin before they can become Christians. Once they become a believer, the Spirit will begin his sanctifying work in their lives, convicting them of their unbiblical lifestyle in his time. Some will experience his transformation and be freed of homosexual orientation. Others will continue in this orientation but choose to remain celibate.

Some of my heroes in the faith are homosexuals who have chosen celibacy in order to live biblically. For instance, a friend in one of the churches I pastored determined as a young man that he was attracted to other men. He spoke with his pastor at the time and became convinced that homosexual behavior is unbiblical. He has remained celibate his entire life as a result, and is one of the most effective Bible teachers in that congregation. I have known others who made similar sacrificial decisions, and admire them greatly.

Tragically, some will persist in this sin and face the consequences: A loss of fellowship with God, a lack of his blessing, and eventually the judging work of his Spirit. But Christians can persist in any number of sins against their Lord. I have known believers who were shackled by heterosexual lust, chemical addictions, gluttony, and pride.

Our Father grieves for every child who lives outside his perfect will for our lives, active homosexuals included.

**If sexual purity and biblical marriage are the goal, why don't we try to outlaw divorce or premarital sex? Could it be that such laws might inconvenience the majority?**

This question brings up an important point: All sex outside marriage is unbiblical, whether homosexual or heterosexual. God's word says much more about heterosexual transgression than it does about homosexual sin.

God created sex (Gen. 1:28; 4:1) and intends it to be celebrated within marriage (Proverbs 5:18-19; Hebrews 13:4). Men and women are to be virgins until married (Deut. 22:20-21, 28-29); adultery (sex with a married person who is not one's spouse) is forbidden (Deut. 22:22-24; 1 Cor. 5:1).

Why, then, don't those who advocate biblical marriage try to outlaw divorce or premarital sex?

## **Divorce**

In 1969, California Gov. Ronald Reagan signed the nation's first "no-fault divorce" bill. He later called it one of the biggest mistakes of his political life.<sup>6</sup> Previously, a divorce was granted only if a spouse was shown to have committed adultery, abandonment, felony, or similar acts. After no-fault divorce was legalized, a couple could divorce for any reason—or no reason. Divorce rates have skyrocketed in the years since.

In response, a number of legislative attempts to strengthen marriage are underway today. In North Carolina, the proposed Healthy Marriage Act would require divorcing couples to attend counseling and, if they have children, take a class on how divorce affects them.<sup>7</sup> The waiting time before a divorce could be finalized would be doubled, to two years; couples would no longer be required to live separately during the interim.

Lawmakers in Texas and Georgia are considering similar bills that would apply only to parents of children under the age of 18. And in Louisiana, couples who enter "covenant marriages" waive their rights to a no-fault divorce and are required to seek counseling before getting one. Those who choose a "covenant marriage" stay together longer than those who do not.

Why not take these efforts further and try to outlaw all divorce? Because divorce can be a tragic but necessary action. Scripture permits divorce in cases of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15), since the marriage covenant has already been broken. In addition, divorce is sometimes necessary in cases of abuse, since life is sacred (cf. Gen. 9:6). However, we should enact laws such as the Healthy Marriage Act and reverse no-fault divorce laws.

If we permit divorce, why shouldn't we permit same-sex marriage? Because the two issues are not the same. I know of no one who supports same-sex marriage as a consequence of adultery, abandonment, or abuse. To the contrary, in countries where same-sex marriage is legal, these problems exist and are often heightened among same-sex partners. In Sweden, for instance, gay couples are 50 percent more likely to divorce than heterosexual couples; lesbian couples are nearly three times more likely to divorce than heterosexual couples.<sup>8</sup>

Divorce is related to the issue of same-sex marriage in another way: The children of divorced parents are not likely to understand the benefits of traditional marriage. A recent article in *American Thinker* states: "These young people are being polled as to whether there should be legalization of homosexual marriage; however, they very often do not even have the frame of reference to understand what is meant by traditional marriage." The author likens marriage in their minds to "going steady," a once-popular trend where teenage couples dated exclusively until they "broke up." If marriage is the new "going steady," why not make it available to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation?<sup>9</sup>

## **Premarital sex**

If all sex outside marriage is unbiblical, why not try to outlaw premarital sex? Many nations have done just that.<sup>10</sup> In America, adultery is illegal in 23 states today;<sup>11</sup> consensual "fornication" (premarital sex) is still illegal in Oklahoma.<sup>12</sup>

These laws are seldom if ever enforced in the U.S. (However, lawmakers in Idaho have requested that the federal government and FCC ban premarital sex on television between 6 AM and 10 PM.<sup>13</sup>) Overcrowded courts and jails make implementation implausible, as does the kind of police surveillance necessary to such enforcement.

If we permit premarital sex, why shouldn't we permit same-sex marriage? Because, as with divorce, the issues are not the same. It is one thing for states not to make an activity illegal; it is another for them to make it legal. The latter not only permits but endorses the act in question.

I recognize the logical problem here: If states ignore fornication, partners can participate in it; but if states ignore same-sex marriage, partners cannot do the same. However, the fact that states ignore premarital sex does not compel them to legalize other sexual activities. Otherwise, their stance on premarital sex would require them to legalize polygamy, bestiality, and any other sexual arrangement.

There is no doubt that laws against divorce or premarital sex might "inconvenience the majority," as the question states, but this fact is irrelevant to the present discussion. If such laws were analogous to laws against same-sex marriage, forbidding the latter would require that we forbid the former. But they're not.

## How will gay rights opponents be viewed by history? Are there parallels between them and civil rights opponents in the 1960s?

"I resent the fact that homosexuals are trying to piggy back on the civil rights struggles of the '60s," says Bishop Gilbert Thompson of Boston. Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson of Los Angeles calls this connection "offensive" and says that the civil rights movement "is not about sex." Pastor Garland Hunt of Atlanta adds: "Same-sex marriage has nothing to do with civil rights, this is an issue of morality."<sup>14</sup>

What are the differences between gay rights and civil rights?

- Race is clearly inherited; the origins of homosexual orientation are still very much in dispute.
- Race cannot be chosen, while homosexual *activity* is a choice.
- While minorities continue to face economic discrimination, there are far less financial consequences for homosexuals. To the contrary, studies place the average income of homosexual households at either twice or 60 percent higher than the national average.<sup>15</sup>

Some claim that same-sex advocates are fighting not for "civil rights" but for "special rights." Nonetheless, the supposed connection between civil rights and gay rights seems to motivate many to accept the latter, lest they stand on the wrong side of history.

Actor George Clooney: "At some point in our lifetime, gay marriage won't be an issue, and everyone who stood against this civil right will look as outdated as George Wallace standing on the school steps keeping James Hood from entering the University of Alabama because he was black."<sup>16</sup>

Who wants to be George Wallace today? How can supporters of biblical marriage respond?

First, we should make very clear our support for civil rights. Racism in all its forms is wrong. God loves the entire world (John 3:16) and calls us to do the same (Matt. 22:39). Second, we should explain that our opposition to same-sex marriage is based on objective facts as well as biblical truth. (More on this later in the paper.)

The biological differences between people of different races are miniscule, varying by just two tenths of one percent. But the anatomical and biological differences between males and females are obviously very significant.

Jesus was right: "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4, quoting Gen. 1:27). By his design, "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Matt. 19:5, quoting Gen. 2:24). Our Lord concluded: "What God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:6). We might add: "What God has not joined together, let man not unite."

**Why are Christians so threatened by same-sex marriage? How does legalizing same-sex marriage endanger religious freedom in the United States? As long as churches aren't forced to perform them, in what ways would religious liberty be affected by legalizing gay marriage?**

In 2004, Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon warned:

Religious freedom . . . is at stake. As much as one may wish to live and let live, the experience in other countries reveals that once these arrangements become law, there will be no live-and-let-live policy for those who differ. Gay-marriage proponents use the language of openness, tolerance and diversity, yet one foreseeable effect of their success will be to usher in an era of intolerance and discrimination the likes of which we have rarely seen before. Every person and every religion that disagrees will be labeled as bigoted and openly discriminated against. The ax will fall most heavily on religious persons and groups that don't go along. Religious institutions will be hit with lawsuits if they refuse to compromise their principles.<sup>17</sup>

Have her warnings proved prophetic?

### **What's happening in other countries**

Canada legalized same-sex marriage in June 2005. Michael Cohen notes in *National Review Online* that there have since been between 200 and 300 legal proceedings in Canada against critics and opponents of gay marriage.<sup>18</sup>

For example, a well-known television anchor on a major sports show was fired after tweeting his support for "the traditional and TRUE meaning of marriage." The Roman Catholic bishop of Calgary was charged with a human-rights violation after writing a letter to local churches outlining standard Catholic teaching on marriage.

A marriage commissioner in Saskatchewan (akin to our Justice of the Peace) declined to perform a gay marriage, explaining his religious objections, and found someone else to do the ceremony. The couple made an official complaint; commissioners with theological objections to same-sex marriage now face the loss of their jobs.

Now a campaign has begun in Canada to remove tax-free status from churches that refuse to consecrate same-sex marriages. And legislation is being considered that would prevent educators in private denominational schools from teaching that they disapprove of same-sex marriage.

More examples:



- February 2000: A printer in Canada refused to print material for the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives because he felt doing so would violate his religious beliefs. He was fined and ordered to print the material. He appealed to the Ontario Supreme Court and the Ontario Court of Appeal, and lost both times. His legal bills exceeded \$170,000.
- May 2002: A Catholic high school in Whitby, Ontario has strict prohibitions against condoning homosexual behavior. Nevertheless, it was forced by the Ontario Supreme Court to permit a student to take his boyfriend to the graduation prom.
- February 2004: Canadian teacher Chris Kempling was suspended for one month for expressing his Christian views on homosexuality in a letter to the editor.
- January 2005: Calgary Bishop Fred Henry was forced to remove a diocesan letter from his Web site because it urged Catholic Christians to oppose same-sex marriage and support traditional marriage.
- January 2005: In British Columbia, Knights of Columbus were sued for not permitting the rental of their hall for a same-sex wedding reception.<sup>19</sup>

Religious leaders in England are warning that the government's support of same-sex marriage will lead to significant legal challenges against the Church of England.<sup>20</sup> The former Archbishop of Canterbury foresees "serious and wide-ranging conflict between religious institutions and local authorities."<sup>21</sup>

In June 2012, Denmark's parliament legalized same-sex marriage and made it mandatory for the Evangelical Lutheran Church to conduct gay marriages.<sup>22</sup> The legislation permits individual Lutheran ministers to decline, in which case "the local bishop must arrange a replacement for their church."<sup>23</sup> There is apparently no provision for a bishop or congregation who object to same-sex marriage.

In France, the mayor of Arcangues has challenged the country's new marriage equality law by refusing to officiate same-sex marriages. As a result, he could face "significant sanctions," including up to three years in jail.<sup>24</sup>

## Examples in America

Could the same happen in the U.S.? Is it already happening here?

New Jersey's "Bias Intimidation" statute states: "A person is guilty of the crime of bias intimidation if he commits, attempts to commit, conspires with another to commit, or threatens the immediate commission of an offense . . . with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, religion, gender, handicap, sexual orientation, or ethnicity."<sup>25</sup>

Thirty other states have similar statutes criminalizing bias-motivated intimidation on the basis of sexual orientation.<sup>26</sup> If a Christian espouses biblical positions regarding homosexuality and marriage in these states, a homosexual can claim that he or she feels intimidated and sue on the basis of the statute.

In April 2013, a Catholic high school in Columbus, Ohio fired a teacher after it became public knowledge that she is a lesbian who lives with her partner.<sup>27</sup> She sued the Diocese of Columbus under the city's anti-discrimination law, which does not provide an exemption for religious organizations and carries a penalty of up to 180 days in jail. It is possible that the Catholic bishop will be sent to jail for upholding his church's teachings.<sup>28</sup>

Other examples:

- October 2004: A group of Christians in Philadelphia were arrested, spent 21 hours in jail, and were charged with multiple felonies for peacefully protesting at a gay pride event. The event was open to the public and held on city streets and sidewalks.
- June 2005: A manager with Allstate in Illinois was fired for writing an Internet column that was critical of same-sex marriage and espoused Christian beliefs. He was not at work when he wrote the column. He sued and reached a settlement.
- June 2005: A lesbian couple in Vermont sued the owners of a small inn for saying that, as Catholics, they would have a moral difficulty in hosting a same-sex civil union on their premises.
- March 2006: The California Supreme Court voted unanimously that the City of Berkeley could withdraw a rent subsidy for a Boy Scouts affiliate at the city marina because of the Scouts' opposition to homosexuality.
- March 2006: Catholic Charities in Massachusetts was forced out of business after 100 years of ministry, because it would not place children with homosexual couples.
- April 2006: San Francisco's Board of Supervisors urged Catholic leaders to defy Vatican directives telling agencies not to place children with same-sex couples.
- June 2006: Robert J. Smith was fired as a director of the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority for stating on a local cable show that gays and lesbians are "persons of sexual deviancy." He stated that, as a Catholic, this was part of his religious beliefs.
- May 2007: eHarmony.com was sued in California for refusing to offer its dating services to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. The organization was founded by an evangelical Christian with strong ties to Focus on the Family.
- June 2007: The Oakland, California city government found the words, "Marriage is the foundation of the natural family and sustains family values" to be a hate crime. It reprimanded a group of city government employees for using these words on a flier in the workplace.
- October 2007: Oak Grove Camp Ground, a Methodist camp in New Jersey, lost its state tax-exempt status for refusing to host a same-sex union in its marriage pavilion.
- January 2008: Jon and Elaine Huguenin were tried before the New Mexico Human Rights Commission after refusing to photograph a same-sex commitment ceremony, citing their religious beliefs. The commission fined them \$6,600.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, employment may be a consequence of the same-sex marriage debate. According to Kerby Anderson, "If same-sex marriage becomes legal, then a natural next step will be to ban discrimination in hiring based upon sexual orientation. Churches, synagogues, religious schools, and faith-based organizations would not be allowed to refuse to hire someone who was a practicing homosexual."<sup>30</sup>

## Threats to tax-exempt status

In 1983, the IRS revoked the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University as a result of the school's racial policies. Their finding: "Racial discrimination in education is contrary to public policy. Racially discriminatory educational institutions cannot be viewed as conferring a public benefit within the above 'charitable' concept or within the congressional intent underlying 501(c)(3)."<sup>31</sup>

Now imagine that the courts eventually determine that same-sex marriage is "public policy" (change "racial" to "sexual" in the above finding, for instance). Will the tax-exempt status of churches and other religious institutions that support biblical marriage then be revoked?

A similar decision was reached recently in New Zealand, where a pro-family group has been stripped of its charitable status. Family First New Zealand spoke in favor of biblical marriage in April 2013 during debate prior to the passage of the Marriage Amendment Bill. As a result, it was removed from the Charities Register; its donors will not receive a donation rebate and the ministry will be required to pay income tax, though it is a non-profit.<sup>32</sup>

In Great Britain, the Church of England is legally required to marry anyone in the parish who wants to marry and is eligible. With the UK's move toward legalizing same-sex marriage, the Church and state will work for the first time with different definitions of marriage. The results for the church and its tax status remain to be seen.<sup>33</sup>

In February 2013, Colorado state senator Pat Steadman (D) introduced the Colorado Civil Unions Act, legislation that allows same sex couples to form civil unions. Responding to concerns from religious groups, he said,

Don't claim religion as a reason the law should discriminate. We have laws against discrimination. Discrimination is banned in employment, and housing, and public accommodations . . . So, what to say to those who claim that religion requires them to discriminate? I'll tell you what I'd say: 'Get thee to a nunnery!' And live there then. Go live a monastic life away from modern society, away from people you can't see as equals to yourself. Away from the stream of commerce where you may have to serve them or employ them or rent banquet halls to them.

Go some place and be as judgmental as you like. Go inside your church, establish separate water fountains in there if you want, but don't claim that free exercise of religion requires the state of Colorado to establish separate water fountains for her citizens. That's not what we're doing here.<sup>34</sup>

Will such a position affect the tax status of those who "discriminate"? Benjamin Wiker warned that if the U.S. Supreme Court affirms same-sex marriage,

It will be the secular liberal state against the Christian church, the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment against the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Religious liberty will be the loser—precisely because, in using the amendment historically designed to remove the vestiges of the evil institution of slavery, liberalism will have successfully equated, in the eyes of the law, racism with religious opposition to homosexuality.<sup>35</sup>

## **Secular organizations**

Workers at the United States Department of Justice were recently sent an email telling them that they must go out of their way to make homosexuals feel comfortable. The email, originating from a group that calls itself "DOJ Proud," is titled, "LGBT Inclusion at Work: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Managers." The brochure encourages employees to stop using "gender-specific terms like 'husband' and 'wife.'"<sup>36</sup> They were also told that "silence will be interpreted as disapproval" and were instructed to post "DOJ Pride" stickers in their office to indicate "that it is a safe place."<sup>37</sup>

The Boy Scouts of America's recent debate is another example of the pressure being brought to bear by the LGBT lobby. The Scouts' decision to admit gay members but not gay leaders is not enough for many activists. For instance, the Caterpillar Foundation has stopped supporting the Scouts, arguing that their policy that bars homosexual adults from serving as Scout leaders is discriminatory.<sup>38</sup>

As you can see, Christians (as well as non-Christians who support traditional marriage) have much to fear from the move to legalize same-sex marriage.

### **How can Christians claim that marriage is between one man and one woman when the Bible is full of polygamy and affairs?**

I recently read a fascinating book on marketing which claims that our culture moves in 40-year cycles from focusing on the individual to focusing on society (from "me" to "we"). The authors do not commend this cycle. They do not wish that culture worked in this way or prescribe such behavior for other societies. Rather, they describe what they believe to be the case.

This distinction between describing actions and prescribing behavior is vital to understanding any literature, including the Bible. God's word describes much that goes against his will for us. For instance, Scripture describes David's affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), an act that violates his Seventh Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

It is the same with polygamy. Christians claim that marriage is between one man and one woman because God does: "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they

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will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). The fact that some in the Old Testament chose to violate God's will for marriage does not make his will wrong.

Nowhere does the Bible prescribe polygamy or affairs. To the contrary, every time the Bible teaches us what to do with regard to marriage and family, it teaches monogamy and fidelity.

### **How can you be sure that gay people aren't born that way?**

If people are "born gay," it seems that "gay rights" are both logical and compassionate. Just as we protect the interests of people born into other minority groups (such as racial minorities), so we should protect the interests of those who were born LGBT. These rights would presumably include the right to marriage.

However, the science on this issue is far more confusing and complex than conventional wisdom would suggest. According to the American Psychological Association (which affirms same-sex marriage),

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.<sup>39</sup>

You may have heard about neurobiologist Simon LeVay's 1991 study of the hypothalamus, which announced that the INAH3 (the third interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus) of gay men is smaller, roughly the same size as that of women. He clearly stated, "I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. . . . Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain." Nonetheless, his research was heralded as proof that homosexuality is biologically determined.<sup>40</sup>

However, critics soon noted that his sample size (41 people) was too small; his identifications of the sexual orientation of his subjects were too speculative; the smaller size of INAH3 in some subjects could have been caused by a variety of factors in addition to sexual orientation; and his study could not address the cause-and-effect question (did the smaller INAH3 "cause" homosexuality, or the reverse?).<sup>41</sup>

In 1993, geneticist Dean Hamer published a study of 114 families of homosexual men, concluding that markers on Xq28, "the subtelomeric region of the long arm of the sex chromosome," are connected to male sexual orientation.<sup>42</sup> However, later studies were unable to replicate Hamer's results, finding that the genetic markers he identified were of no statistical significance.<sup>43</sup> And Hamer admitted: "There is not a single master gene that makes people gay."<sup>44</sup>

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Another now-famous study focused on twins, finding that 52 percent of identical twins were homosexual, as opposed to 22 percent of non-identical twins, 11 percent of adoptive brothers, and 9.2 percent of brothers. If homosexuality were genetically determined, 100 percent of the identical twins should have been homosexual, 50 percent of the non-identical twins, and 50 percent of the other biological brothers.<sup>45</sup> (Note that there was a higher incidence among non-related, adopted brothers than among biological brothers.) The study concluded that "childhood gender nonconformity does not appear to be an indicator of genetic loading for homosexuality."<sup>46</sup>

Another question regarding genetics: If there is a "gay gene," how would it be passed down? While some homosexuals were in heterosexual relationships that produced children before they "came out," their number would not explain the total population of homosexuals.

To conclude: There is no scientific basis for the claim that "gay people are born that way."

**Will children of same-sex parents suffer any discernable deprivation? Will acceptance of gay marriage encourage impressionable young people to experiment with alternate sexual lifestyles?**

We've all heard the arguments: Homosexuals deserve to have children, the same as heterosexuals. It would be better for orphans to be adopted by homosexual couples than to stay in an orphanage. Research shows that children of same-sex parents grow up as healthy as those in heterosexual homes. Or so we're told.

Let's take each claim in turn.

First, the claim that same-sex couples "deserve" to have children is built on a false premise. There is no inherent or legal "right to a child." No one "deserves" to be a parent. If they did, any person who wishes to have a child would be allowed to become a parent. Infertile couples, senior adults, children, and people in any living arrangement would have equal opportunity to raise children. This approach to parenting makes children an object and imposes the "rights" of adults on the rights of the child.

Second, it could be argued that orphans need both a father and a mother even more than other children. They have already experienced (or will as they grow older) a sense of abandonment by their biological parents. To grow up in a home which is different from the norm may cause them to feel stigmatized even further.

Third, research is inconclusive at best regarding the children of same-sex parents, and may indicate that they are disadvantaged in significant ways. One view is that there is not enough science to make a determination on this issue. Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, during debate on DOMA, called this topic "uncharted waters." Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. asked, "You want us to

step in and render a decision based on an assessment of the effects of this institution which is newer than cell phones or the Internet?"<sup>47</sup>

Another view is that there is no benefit or disadvantage for children of same-sex marriages. According to a report written for the American Academy of Pediatrics, "A great deal of scientific research documents that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between parents' sexual orientation and children's well-being."<sup>48</sup> Yet another position is that same-sex parents are even more competent than heterosexual parents.<sup>49</sup>

Others claim that children raised by lesbian parents are "more likely to be uncertain about future heterosexual romantic involvement."<sup>50</sup> According to a recent study by a University of Texas sociologist, only 61 percent of children raised by lesbian mothers and 71 percent of those raised by gay fathers "identify entirely as heterosexual," compared with 90 percent of those raised in intact heterosexual homes.<sup>51</sup>

Doug Mainwaring, a gay man who writes for *The Public Discourse*, is a strong opponent of same-sex marriage. He was married and adopted two children before he "came out." After a divorce and ten years living apart, he and his wife have put their family back together. As a father who has been raising children, he states, "denying children parents of both genders at home is an objective evil. Kids need and yearn for both."

He adds:

To be fully formed, children need to be free to generously receive from and express affection to parents of both genders. Genderless marriages deny this fullness. There are perhaps a hundred different things, small and large, that are negotiated between parents and kids every week. Moms and dads interact differently with their children. To give kids two moms or two dads is to withhold from them someone whom they desperately need and deserve in order to be whole and happy. It is to permanently etch "deprivation" on their hearts. . . . Two men or two women together is, in truth, nothing like a man and a woman creating a life and a family together.

Mainwaring concludes: "Marriage is not an elastic term. It offers the very best for children and society. We should not adulterate nor mutilate its definition, thereby denying its riches to current and future generations."<sup>52</sup> In a later essay, he adds that through same-sex marriage, "selfish adults have systematically dismantled that which is most precious to children as they grow and develop." He believes that genderless marriage is "depriving children of their right to either a mom or a dad. This is not a small deal. Children are being reduced to chattel-like sources of fulfillment . . . [We are] treating our children as expendable pawns, sacrificed in the name of self-fulfillment."<sup>53</sup>

## Why is same-sex marriage more accepted today than ever before?

It is important that we understand the political agenda at work in legalizing same-sex marriage. Activists for any social cause work through four stages:

- Community establishment: Finding others who share the same concern and banding together for their mutual benefit.
- Organization: Creating a plan to advance their agenda in society.
- Mobilization: Pooling resources and enlisting leadership.
- Legitimization: Advancing the agenda in the culture until the group's goals are met.<sup>54</sup>

In *The Homosexual Agenda*, Alan Sears and Craig Osten show how this strategy has been employed in support of homosexual acceptance and same-sex marriage. They quote two homosexual activists who laid out an agenda 25 years ago that has been followed successfully by the movement.

First, "talk about gays and gayness as loudly and often as possible." Their emphasis in Hollywood, the media, and general culture has been on homosexuals as "normal" people just like the rest of us. Shows like *Will & Grace* were vital in this regard. Sympathetic gay characters in movies and on TV have become the norm, while those who defend traditional marriage have been portrayed as out of touch, backwards, and homophobic.

Second, "portray gays as victims, not aggressive challengers." For instance, when Matthew Shepard was murdered by two nonreligious thugs, activists blamed the murder on conservative Christian organizations such as Focus on the Family. When Jason Collins became the first openly-gay homosexual athlete in a major American sport, he was hailed as a courageous hero. He soon threw out the first pitch for the Boston Red Sox and has become a celebrity. Homosexual activists intend to be seen not as "aggressive challengers" against biblical and traditional marriage, but its victims.

Third, "give homosexual protectors a 'just' cause." In recent years, "homosexual marriage" has been replaced by "marriage equality." "Gay rights" is now "civil rights." In a culture where tolerance is the supreme good, intolerance is the supreme sin.

Fourth, "make gays look good." From screen stars to athletes to political leaders, the gay rights lobby has elevated those who most portray their cause in a positive light. Homosexuality has quickly become just another lifestyle in our culture.

Fifth, "make the victimizers look bad." Religious leaders who support biblical marriage are portrayed as hateful and discriminatory. Medical and scientific research indicating the damage done by homosexual activity and same-sex marriage is caricatured or dismissed as homophobic.

Sixth, "solicit funds: the buck stops here (i.e., get corporate America and major foundations to financially support the homosexual cause)."<sup>55</sup> As the Boy Scouts recently discovered, threats by

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corporate sponsors such as FedEx and UPS can significantly affect an organization and the culture.

These steps are effective in advancing any social agenda, as the "gay rights lobby" has proven.

### **How would redefining marriage affect the education of children? The public school system?**

In Great Britain, teachers who refuse to endorse same-sex marriage are subject to dismissal. A recommended reading list for primary and secondary schools includes "King and King," "Mom and Mum are getting married," "Daddy, Papa and Me," "Daddy's roommate," "Josh and Jaz have three mums," and "Mommy, mama and me." A training guide shows how children can become "resilient" to the traditional values of their parents and grandparents.<sup>56</sup>

In the U.S., academicians are at work developing curriculum that will teach "tolerance" and affirmation of homosexuals.<sup>57</sup> Gay history is now a requirement in California public schools.<sup>58</sup> A high school in Connecticut made the news for its workshop on LGBT acceptance.<sup>59</sup> (Note that the workshop was held under the guise of "social justice.")

*It's Elementary* is a video being shown in primary and middle school classrooms across the country. Its purpose is to normalize homosexuality in the culture. For instance, it notifies students that music in the film "The Lion King" was the work of a gay musician. It shows one school's gay and lesbian family photo display. And it equates criticism of homosexuality with racism and ethnic bigotry.<sup>60</sup>

The Web site *Teaching Tolerance* provides tips on using editorial cartoons to advance gay rights in the classroom<sup>61</sup> and offers the curriculum, "Marriage Equality: Different Strategies for Attaining Civil Rights."<sup>62</sup>

Will sex education in the future include instruction on same-sex relations? If we redefine marriage, will redefining education about marriage be far behind?

## Homosexuality and religion

### What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

This is a divisive issue which has been the subject of considerable debate. In brief, the Bible addresses the topic of homosexuality in at least five places:

- "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Lev. 18:22).
- "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads" (Lev. 20:13).
- "God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Rom. 1:26-27).
- "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).
- "We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" (1 Tim. 1:8-11).

(Note that homosexuality is also part of the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative [Gen. 19:5; see Jude 7], but homosexual rape is in view, not consensual relations.) It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these texts and counter arguments; for an in-depth analysis, see my "Homosexuality: a biblical overview."<sup>63</sup>

### If God is love, why would he be against two people loving each other in a monogamous relationship?

It is clear that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), but it does not follow that he is the author of every relationship that claims to be loving. His word warns against adultery, for instance (Ex. 20:14). Incest and polygamy are wrong, even if those who engage in them claim to do so out of love. It is the same for same-sex partners, even if they remain monogamous.

Another point should be made here: Scripture forbids homosexual activity, not homosexual orientation. All sex outside of marriage is wrong, whether heterosexual or

homosexual. The sin is not in being attracted to a person of the same sex, or even loving that person. The sin is in expressing that attraction in lust or sex.

### **Why would God create some people without the capacity to be attracted to the opposite sex even if they do reject homosexual desire?**

As we have seen, sexual orientation is a very complicated issue, one that involves family dynamics and other life circumstances. Homosexual attraction could be a result of the Fall as well. Nothing in Scripture or science proves that God created some people without heterosexual attraction.

### **Other than Christianity, what other religious groups are opposed to homosexuality or same-sex marriage?**

While Buddhism has been generally accepting of homosexuality, Hinduism, Islam, and most of Judaism (excluding Reform) are opposed to both homosexuality and same-sex marriage.<sup>64</sup> In other words, more than 90 percent of the world, as viewed by their religious affiliation, is opposed to homosexual activity.

### **Why are Christians so laser-focused, so culturally obsessed, time and time again, with other people's sin? Does it not seem we have a log of self-righteousness in our own eye while we try to get the speck out of our brother's?**

There is no question that Christians must acknowledge our own sins as we deal with the sins of others (Matt. 7:3-5). But the one does not preclude the other. A doctor may be suffering from cancer as she helps her patients deal with their own illnesses. For us to wait until we are perfect before we try to help other people would mean that no one ever receives our help.

Let's be clear: My stand against same-sex marriage is intended to help, not to harm. I know that homosexual sin is no greater or worse in God's eyes than other sin. But same-sex marriage, for the reasons we're discussing in this paper, will hurt society as a whole, not just homosexuals.

**Why do we exempt ourselves from so much clear New Testament teaching when it asks too much of us, be it "selling all our possessions to give to the poor" or women covering their heads, all of which we dismiss as "cultural differences" or metaphor or individual instruction for one individual group? Why are we then unwilling to allow the exact same rhetorical flexibility to others on the issues we arbitrarily decide are non-negotiable?**

Gene Robinson was the first openly gay bishop to be elected by the Episcopal Church. In *God Believes in Love*, he addresses the moral statements in Leviticus, including those that warn against homosexual activity: "Either *all* of these proscriptions must be eliminated as binding on us, or *all* of them must be adhered to. Biblical literalists cannot have it both ways, picking and choosing which proscriptions will still be enforced as eternally binding and which may be casually tossed aside or explained away."<sup>65</sup>

Actually, it's not that simple.

Biblical scholars distinguish between "precept" and "principle." The former retains the force of law, while the latter offers guidance without requiring legal obedience. How do they know which is which?

If an Old Testament law is not repeated in the New Testament, it is considered a principle rather than a precept. For instance, kosher dietary laws are not found in the New Testament (and are expressly not required of Gentiles; cf. Acts 15:24-29). Therefore, they convey the principle that God cares about our diet and health, but do not require legal obedience.

If an Old Testament law is repeated in the New Testament, it retains the force of precept today. For instance, each of the Ten Commandments is repeated in the New Testament. As we have seen, Old Testament injunctions against homosexual activity are repeated three times in the New Testament. Therefore, they are to be considered as binding precepts now.

By contrast, the New Testament injunction for women to cover their heads is not repeated across Scripture and reflects the cultural expectations of the day. Jesus' instruction to the Rich Young Ruler that he should sell his possessions was directed only to a single individual, not repeatedly throughout God's word, and addressed the man's particular obstacle to faith.

As you can see, we are not being arbitrary in believing that the Old Testament laws regarding homosexuality are still in effect today. (For more, see my "How to Study the Bible"<sup>66</sup> and "What Should Be the Role of Women in Church?"<sup>67</sup>)

**Why do we think forcing church rules on society at large is a remotely good idea? Or why do we think God would somehow be pleased in the slightest with someone outside of a relationship with him obeying his rules only because he had to legally?**

To affirm the biblical position on homosexual activity and same-sex marriage is not "forcing church rules on society." More than 90 percent of the world's population lives in countries whose religious worldview agrees with the biblical position on these issues. There are objective reasons why homosexual activity and same-gender marriage are bad for those who practice them and for society at large.

The Lord clearly wants us to follow his rules because we love and trust him, not out of legalistic obedience. However, he would rather that we obey his word for the wrong reasons than disobey it, since such disobedience only harms us.

**Haven't Christians, whose divorces are as common as non-Christians, done more damage to traditional marriage than same-sex marriage ever will?**

As we have seen, "no-fault divorce" has done more damage to traditional marriage than any other single factor in society. Christians, tragically, have been affected by society's revised view of marriage as much as others. But divorce doesn't damage traditional marriage nearly as much as redefining it in a way that changes its basic intent and purpose.

**What about animals? Some argue that nature shows heterosexuality is by design while others say that homosexuality exists between other species.**

There are indeed examples of homosexual activities in nature. However, these actions are motivated by a variety of factors, most of them non-sexual in nature. For instance, male dogs sometimes mount other male dogs to display their dominance over them. Bonobo monkeys use sexual activity to diffuse tension or display aggression. And some species seem not to know the gender of the animal with which they engage sexually. While homosexual actions do occur in nature, researchers agree that these actions do not represent homosexual orientation. In other words, they are the sporadic actions of heterosexuals.<sup>68</sup>

In addition, surely we would not want to depend on animal behavior as a model for human interaction. Female bonobo monkeys often engage in incestuous homosexual activity—does this fact warrant human incest? What about species that eat their young, such as hyenas, or species that kill their mate after copulation, such as black widows?

## Legal questions

### **Does it have to be called "marriage"? Could they not just extend the same rights normally afforded to 'married' hetero-couples as same-sex-civil-unions?**

Those who favor same-sex marriage typically claim that civil unions are not enough. First, they view such unions as consigning same-sex partners to second-class status in society. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg has stated in this regard, "There are two kinds of marriage. Full marriage and skim-milk marriage."<sup>69</sup>

According to "Lambda Legal," a legal organization that works on behalf of LGBT causes, civil unions violate the Constitution's promise of equality for all; they do not get the same respect as marriage; they invite others to discriminate; and they harm children who are then raised in "second-class" families.<sup>70</sup> One columnist stated this position vehemently: "The denial of the 'title' of marriage serves only one purpose—to denigrate and diminish the dignity of the same-sex . . . unions. It is a mean-spirited and cruel insult to the loving commitments made by such couples."<sup>71</sup>

Second, many same-sex marriage proponents claim that civil unions do not confer all the rights of marriage. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "the 1,138 federal benefits and protections of marriage are only available to couples that are allowed to legally marry." They list examples such as Social Security survivor and spousal benefits, spousal insurance benefits through one's employer, Medicare spousal benefits, and the ability to file joint income tax returns with the IRS and for bankruptcy protection. They also state that civil unions are not "portable," meaning that rights conferred via civil unions by one state may not be available when they move to another state.<sup>72</sup>

Many advocates of traditional marriage reject civil unions as well, viewing them as "nothing but a counterfeit form of marriage." They claim that society privileges marriage at present because marriage benefits society by producing children and stabilizing the culture. Such privileges should not be extended to same-sex relationships, since they do not benefit society in the same ways.<sup>73</sup>

### **How does granting homosexuals the legal right to marry affect anyone else's existing or future heterosexual marriage or life choices?**

One issue relates to religious freedom and free speech. As we have seen, if same-sex marriage becomes the law of the land, it will become increasingly difficult for those who object to do so freely. Religious and personal convictions will become grounds for persecution.

Those who affirm biblical marriage will nonetheless be required to extend same-sex partner benefits to their employees. All of us, whether we agree with same-gender marriage or not, will pay taxes to provide governmental benefits to same-sex partners.

In states where same-sex marriage is legal, churches have so far been excluded from its enforcement, but other religious institutions have not. Will they be forced to extend spousal benefits to same-sex partners?

A second concern relates to the unintended consequences of present decisions (see below).

### **Is the slippery slope argument about polygamy a realistic worry?**

Absolutely. Feminist activist Gloria Steinem, Princeton professor Cornel West, and hundreds of co-signers have already demanded "recognition of diverse kinds of partnerships, households, kinship relationships and families." Included among them are multiple-partner relationships.<sup>74</sup>

*Slate* author Jillian Keenan recently claimed that "legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice. More importantly, it would actually help protect, empower, and strengthen women, children, and families." She concludes: "The definition of marriage is plastic. Just like heterosexual marriage is no better or worse than homosexual marriage, marriage between two consenting adults is not inherently more or less 'correct' than marriage among three (or four, or six) consenting adults."<sup>75</sup>

As many as 50,000 to 100,000 Muslims in the United States already live in polygamous families. A man marries one wife in a civil ceremony that is recognized by the state, then two or three others in religious ceremonies that are not recognized by the state.<sup>76</sup> Will their numbers (and voting power) continue to grow?

According to a recent study, "young adults' attitudes toward polygamous marriage were neutral."<sup>77</sup> Will society's shifting views on marriage soon include acceptance of polygamy? If so, why would legal definitions of marriage not follow suit?

"Polyamory" is "the practice, desire, or acceptance of having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved."<sup>78</sup> According to the "Polyamory Society," it is "the nonpossessive, honest, responsible and ethical philosophy and practice of loving multiple people simultaneously."<sup>79</sup>

As many as five percent of Americans are currently living in relationships that involve "consensual nonmonogamy" or "permission to go outside the couple looking for love or sex."<sup>80</sup> Polyamory advocate Lee Stranahan notes, "There's no argument you can make against a poly marriage that wouldn't work just as well as an argument against gay marriage."<sup>81</sup>

Here's the point: Once we begin permitting anyone to marry, where do we end? If those in love are entitled to marriage, why not fathers and daughters (or sons)? Why not adults and children? Why not three or more marriage partners? As we have seen, advocates are already working to advance these agendas.

If federal and state marriage benefits are owed to anyone who marries, why would a young man not marry his grandfather so as to secure medical care and inheritance rights? And what impact will same-sex marriages have on children, the future of our society?

In fact, why have "marriage" at all? According to lesbian activist Masha Gessen,

The institution of marriage should not exist. . . . Fighting for gay marriage generally involves lying about what we're going to do with marriage when we get there. Because we lie that the institution of marriage is not going to change. And that is a lie. The institution of marriage is going to change and it should change. And again, I don't think it should exist.<sup>82</sup>

While no one has polled homosexuals regarding their support for same-sex marriage, some have made public their opposition to the entire institution.<sup>83</sup> Philosopher Auguste Comte noted that the only safe way to destroy something is to replace it.

### **Why does the government make polygamy illegal to begin with? Where did that legislation come from?**

Bigamy (the attempt to engage in two legal marriages at the same time) has been outlawed in England since the 1603-4 session of Parliament.<sup>84</sup> The issue was not significant in America, however, before the advent of Mormonism.

George Reynolds was a secretary to Brigham Young, the President of the Mormon Church. He made himself a test of the government's attempt to outlaw polygamy. In 1878, the Supreme Court ruled (*Reynolds v. United States*) that the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom could not be used to engage in polygamy. The court determined that if polygamy was allowed, some could argue that human sacrifice was a necessary part of their religion as well.<sup>85</sup>

From then to today, bigamy has been against the law. Polygamy, to the degree that it involves only one legal marriage, is not illegal, however.



## Medical questions

### Are there adverse effects on the body from the homosexual lifestyle?

The Journal of Sex Research found that "the modal range for number of [homosexual] sexual partners ever was 101-500." In other words, the number of participants in the study reporting 101-500 sexual partners was higher than any other group. The study also reported that 10.2 percent to 15.7 percent had between 501 and 1,000 partners. Another 10.2 percent to 15.7 percent reported more than 1,000 lifetime sexual partners.<sup>86</sup>

According to one study, 66 percent of gay couples reported sex outside the relationship within the first year, and nearly 90 percent if the relationship lasted five years.<sup>87</sup>

Why is such promiscuity a health issue?

The Centers for Disease Control report that men who have sex with men constitute 2 percent of the U.S. population, but accounted for more than half of all estimated new H.I.V. infections annually from 2008 to 2010.<sup>88</sup>

As a result, the Food and Drug Administration continues to bar gay men from donating blood. This is because men who have had sex with other men since 1977 have an H.I.V. infection rate 60 times higher than that of the general population, and 800 times higher than first-time blood donors. Our best tests may not detect a new H.I.V. infection within a one- to two-month window, leading to the ban. As an alternative to the rule, most blood collection agencies suggest a one-year deferral period for gay men who have engaged in sex with another man.<sup>89</sup>

Dr. John Diggs, an internist with the University of Massachusetts Health Care system,<sup>90</sup> describes the physiological consequences of anal intercourse in detail:

Anal intercourse is the sine qua non of sex for many gay men. Yet human physiology makes it clear that the body was not designed to accommodate this activity. The rectum is significantly different from the vagina with regard to suitability for penetration by a penis. The vagina has natural lubricants and is supported by a network of muscles. It is composed of a mucus membrane with a multi-layer stratified squamous epithelium that allows it to endure friction without damage and to resist the immunological actions caused by semen and sperm. In comparison, the anus is a delicate mechanism of small muscles that comprise an "exit-only" passage. With repeated trauma, friction and stretching, the sphincter loses its tone and its ability to maintain a tight seal. Consequently, anal intercourse leads to leakage of fecal material that can easily become chronic.

The potential for injury is exacerbated by the fact that the intestine has only a single layer of cells separating it from highly vascular tissue, that is, blood.

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Therefore, any organisms that are introduced into the rectum have a much easier time establishing a foothold for infection than they would in a vagina. The single layer tissue cannot withstand the friction associated with penile penetration, resulting in traumas that expose both participants to blood, organisms in feces, and a mixing of bodily fluids. . . .

The end result is that the fragility of the anus and rectum, along with the immunosuppressive effect of ejaculate, make anal-genital intercourse a most efficient manner of transmitting H.I.V. and other infections. The list of diseases found with extraordinary frequency among male homosexual practitioners as a result of anal intercourse is alarming:

- Anal Cancer
- Chlamydia trachomatis
- Cryptosporidium
- Giardia lamblia
- Herpes simplex virus
- Human immunodeficiency virus
- Human papilloma virus
- Isospora belli
- Microsporidia
- Gonorrhea
- Viral hepatitis types B & C
- Syphilis.<sup>91</sup>

According to a study published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*: "In a major Canadian centre, life expectancy at age 20 years for gay and bisexual men is 8 to 20 years less than for all men. 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 65<sup>th</sup> birthday."<sup>92</sup>

### **Are there emotional and psychological effects from homosexuality?**

A study in the United Kingdom reported that homosexuals are about 50 percent more likely to suffer from depression and engage in substance abuse than the rest of the population, and are 200 percent more likely to be at risk for suicide.<sup>93</sup>

According to the National Lesbian Health Care Survey, over half the sample had had thoughts about suicide at some time, and 18 percent had attempted suicide. About three-fourths had received counseling at some time, half for reasons of sadness and depression.<sup>94</sup>

A recent study of women who had sex with women and men found that they report significant higher experiences with unsafe sex, smoking, alcohol consumption, and intravenous drug use. They also had an increased likelihood of induced abortion and sexually transmitted disease diagnoses. The study concludes: "For women, a history of

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sex with women may be a marker for increased risk of adverse sexual, reproductive, and general health outcomes compared with women who reported sex exclusively with men."<sup>95</sup>

A typical response to these studies is that gays and lesbians in the U.S. live in a homophobic culture, and that increasing acceptance of their lifestyles would mitigate these risks. However, homosexuals in Denmark (a culture which is highly tolerant of homosexuality) die as early as those in the U.S.—on average, in their early 50s (or in their early 40s if AIDS is the cause of death).<sup>96</sup> Since Denmark legalized gay marriage in 1989, they have found that the average age of death for homosexually married men and women was around 60; for conventionally married, it is about 80 years.<sup>97</sup>

## Ministry questions

### **What should a believer's response be to his/her child (young or old) who is involved in a same-sex relationship/marriage?**

Interviewer Hugh Downs once asked Billy Graham, "If one of your children had been gay, would you have ceased to love that child?" He responded, "No. I would not. I would love him even more maybe!"<sup>98</sup> As the father of two sons, I would give the same answer.

There are two pitfalls to avoid here. One is to condone what the Bible condemns, for the sake of preserving your relationship with your child. Any loving parent would be tempted in this way. However, what we most want for our children is that they experience God's best for their lives, and we know that a homosexual lifestyle is not one he can bless.

The other pitfall is to condemn those whom God loves, for the sake of leading your child out of homosexuality. Any parent would be tempted in this way as well, but no matter what sins we commit, nothing we do places us outside the love of God. He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

In my view, our best model for this situation is the loving father in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). The father allows his son to live in sin, knowing that if he were to force him to come home, he would likely flee again at the next opportunity. At the same time, the father never gives up on his son, always looking for his return. When his son does choose to come home, he finds a father who never stopped loving him.

In practical terms, I have counseled Christian parents of homosexual children to state their biblical beliefs clearly but in love. Do not burn bridges with your child, keeping the

door open to their return to biblical obedience. Pray for them constantly and seek other resources that may help as well. All the while, know that your Father in heaven loves your child even more than you do.

For additional resources, consider Homosexuals Anonymous (<http://www.ha-fs.org/>), or ministries such as Living Hope (<http://fbca.org/ministries/partner-ministries/living-hope/>).

### **How do church members deal with unrepentant homosexuals wanting to be involved in their church?**

The biblical pattern for dealing with sin as a congregation is Matthew 18:15-17:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

According to Jesus, our first step is to go directly to this person and "show him his fault." We are to do this "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15) by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). If the person will not respond, we are to bring two or three others into our conversation. If the person is still unrepentant, we are to make the matter public. As a last resort, we are to exclude the person from active participation in the congregation.

Note that these steps apply to any and all sin, not just homosexual behavior. We should be as concerned about lying, gluttony, drunkenness, or any other unbiblical lifestyle (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10). And we should work for restoration of all (v. 11).

### **How do you think telling gay people that they are sinful affects their self-perception? To that end, if God is love then doesn't making someone feel bad for who they are go against the Bible?**

Jesus clearly loves each of us, whatever our mistakes and failures. At the same time, he was willing to expose sin wherever necessary as a way of leading sinners back to God. Note his extended criticisms of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23), for instance. His goal was not to make people "feel bad for who they are," but to bring them into holiness and health. Ours should be the same.

## Conclusion

God loves us all, whatever our sexual orientation and lifestyle. Each person deserves to be treated with dignity. "Gay-bashing" is always wrong. It is vital that those who support biblical marriage represent God in ways that reflect well on him.

It is also important that we advocate biblical truth firmly and graciously for the sake of our culture. Obedience to God's word is the best way for each person to live. The One who made us knows us better than we know ourselves and has given us standards that lead us to our best lives. As "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14) we owe our Lord and our culture no less.

While our culture is clearly moving away from biblical marriage, God is neither surprised nor defeated. His truth still sets us free (John 8:32). And reality does not change when we redefine it.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone was recently asked about the trend toward same-sex marriage in our country. Here is his thoughtful and encouraging response:

The natural law has a power written on the human heart that doesn't go away. Notice how there is no controversy in this country now over the evil of Jim Crow laws. Shortly after the Civil Rights Act the cultural change was complete. This is because it was the right thing to do. The truth cannot be suppressed indefinitely.

Draw a contrast here with the pro-life movement: After the *Roe* decision, it was commonly thought that our society would soon easily accept the legitimacy of abortion. But what has happened? The pro-life movement is stronger now, 40 years later, than it has ever been. This is because of the truth: Abortion is the killing of an innocent human life. That is not a matter of opinion or religious belief; it is a simple fact that cannot be denied.

The same principle applies with marriage: It is simply a natural fact that you need a man and a woman to make a marriage and that a child's heart longs for the love of both his or her mother and father. Even if the Supreme Court rules against this truth, the controversy will not die out, as it hasn't on the abortion issue.

The problem is, the longer a society operates in denial of the truth, the greater is the harm that will be done. The examples of the racist policies and practices of the past in our own country make this clear, as does all the harm that abortion has done to women and all those in her network of relationships.

With marriage, we have to consider the harm that will be caused by enshrining in the law the principle that children do not need a mother and a father. The circumstances of our struggles change but the truth does not.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For biographical information, see his speakers profile (<http://www.ambassadorspeakers.com/ACP/speakers.aspx?speaker=423>), accessed 17 June 2013) and his physician description

([http://physicians.umassmemorial.org/directory/profile.asp?dbase=main&setsize=40&view=wmh&practice=Wing+Medical+Center&pict\\_id=406](http://physicians.umassmemorial.org/directory/profile.asp?dbase=main&setsize=40&view=wmh&practice=Wing+Medical+Center&pict_id=406)), accessed 17 June 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Diggs; a study in the *American Journal of Medicine* also reports that gay and bisexual men are at significant risk for developing anal cancer: "Gay Men Should Be Checked For Anal Cancer, Experts Say," *WebMD*, May 31, 2000 (<http://www.webmd.com/cancer/news/20000531/gay-men-should-be-checked-for-anal-cancer-experts-say>), accessed 17 June 2013).

<sup>92</sup> R. S. Hogg, et. al., "Modelling the impact of HIV disease on mortality in gay and bisexual men," *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 26, issue 3 ([http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/26/3/657.abstract?ijkey=63dd6feaf3b5c5d34f9bf3a0751087f2fbc9b6d8&keytype=tf\\_ipsecsha](http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/26/3/657.abstract?ijkey=63dd6feaf3b5c5d34f9bf3a0751087f2fbc9b6d8&keytype=tf_ipsecsha)), accessed 17 June 2013).

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<sup>94</sup> J. Bradford, et. al., "National Lesbian Health Care Survey: Implications for mental health care," *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, April 1994

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<sup>95</sup> C. H. Mercer, et. al., "Women who report having sex with women: British national probability data on prevalence, sexual behaviors, and health outcomes," *UCL Discovery*, 2007 (<http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/6741/>), accessed 17 June 2013).

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<sup>98</sup> "Transcript of the Hugh Downs 20/20 interview of Billy Graham" (<http://raggedtiger.tripod.com/bgtranscript.html>), accessed 17 June 2013).

<sup>99</sup> "Archbishop Cordileone states case against gay marriage," *USA Today*, March 21, 2013 (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/03/21/archbishop-cordileone-gay-marriage-catholic-church/2001085/>), accessed 17 June 2013).