

OpenTheo

How Should I Respond to News of a Same-Sex Marriage?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to a friend's enthusiastic news of a same-sex marriage, whether one should send a gift to a same-sex wedding, and whether there's any merit to Christians withdrawing from "the world" and congregating together for the purpose of safety and shared community standards.

- * What's a winsome way to respond to a relative or friend who enthusiastically tells you their child recently married in a same-sex marriage?
- * I won't be attending my cousin's same-sex wedding, but would not sending a gift be unnecessary and rude?
- * Is there any merit to Christians withdrawing from "the world" and congregating together in their own areas for the purpose of safety and having shared community standards?

Transcript

♪♪♪ This is Amy Hall at Stand To Reason, and you're listening to #STRAsk. That's right. With me is Greg Cokol.

Hey. And Greg, we're going to start with a question from Doug Smith today. All right.

Do we know Doug? He has some questions before, so you've probably heard his name. He's not like Pine Creek, Doug, is he? No, no. This is a different Doug.

Different Doug. Not an atheist, as far as I know. All right.

What is a winsome and not harsh response to a relative or friend who enthusiastically tells you their child is recently married in the same sex marriage? I really am not happy for them. Yeah, this is a hard one, and it seems to me we've thought about this before, but I can't remember what he said. Well, what you don't want to do, obviously, is say congratulations, which would be the natural kind of thing for some kind of

announcement of this sort.

But what you can do is show some genuine interest in the other person without affirming the relationship. So you might say, let's say my daughter just got married to another woman and they have a same sex. Oh, really? Where are they living? When did that take place? Oh, did you go? Did you travel to see it? Oh, it was in town.

Okay. So I'm just thinking of their questions you can ask to show interest in the person that's sharing with you without affirming the thing that took place. And there are some things that happen, obviously, that are tragic, and you want to commiserate with the person.

But if the person doesn't think this is morally tragic, you're not going to do that. And if you say something along that lines, it's probably going to just make you sound mean-spirited. And that's why I think that kind of thing should be avoided.

I don't think we have to kind of scowl and disparage the thing because we don't agree with it morally. We're not being asked for our moral judgment or assessment. And I think we need to consider the relationship and the feelings of the person that's involved there.

Now, if the person says, well, you didn't say congratulations, aren't you happy for me? Then I think it's fair to say, well, since you asked, you really want my opinion? Okay, I'm not, actually. And that's when you can offer an answer to the question. Okay.

So the idea here is not to act like something that's evil is good. And it also isn't to unnecessarily disparage something that somebody else values in their life that's evil because that's not going to help the circumstances. Usually, depends on what's being disparaged.

But in this circumstance, I think it's better to just let it slide and then find some other way to show an interest in the other person in the circumstances that were mentioned. And you may not be that interested, but what you don't want is you don't want somebody to make this announcement like it's great and have it be followed by dead air and your blank look because they're going to infer from that your displeasure. And that's just going to create problems, it seems to me.

So maybe the best way to deal with it is just to plan in advance for this. Obviously I hadn't or I would have had the response more quickly than I did. But this kind of circumstance is going to come up with lots and lots and lots of people.

So probably the best thing to say is something like, "Oh, no kidding. When was that?" So where was the wedding? So where was the event if you want to not call it a wedding? But just something we could draw the person out just to show appropriate polite response and then move on. And if they ask you explicitly for your point of view, then I think it's fair to give it in a but in a carefully nuanced kind of fashion.

Well, since you asked, you really want to know? I don't think this is a good thing personally. But there you go. I don't know.

There's no real way out of it. But if somebody corners you, then you tell them your rationale. I doubt the cornering would happen very often.

I think most people assume everyone's on board. I mean, if they're coming to you and they're excitedly telling you something, they're already assuming that you agree. And so I doubt they're going to challenge you.

I'm trying to think what I would say if they did. Because I like your idea of asking questions. I think that's a good way to go.

If they asked me what I thought, I think I would probably talk about, I would focus on the definition of marriage. And I would say, look, we all have an understanding of what marriage is. And this is my understanding.

My understanding is that- If they get cornered a little bit. If they get cornered, right. If you can't just ask the questions.

If you focus on the idea that you keep it away from an idea of equality or anything like that. It's an understanding of what marriage is. And even when marriage was defined as a man and a woman, it wasn't that we were saying, you can't get married, you can't get married, you can't get married.

Everyone had the opportunity to get married within that definition of marriage. We weren't excluding individuals. There was actually an idea of what marriage was.

And that was one man and one woman. Well now, and the reasons for that, we've talked about this a lot before. But I don't know how much on this show because most- This was such a huge topic before this show started.

That's right. But the idea is that marriage exists because the union between a man and a woman is unique. It creates new human beings.

There's no other union that does that. And that is required. That's the only bodily system that requires both halves in order to function.

It's a special type of union and that's why the government has an interest in marriage because it creates this new life and the government has an interest in making sure that family stays together, that the child is supported, that it has a mother and a father and all those things. So that's the purpose of marriage. Well once you change the definition of marriage to just mean people who love each other and it has nothing to do with biology and the type of union it is, well now there's no real reason for a lot of aspects of marriage.

Why should there only be two? The reason why there's only two with man and woman marriage is because there are two halves of the reproductive system. There are only two man and woman and they come together and that's the one flesh. That's right.

By the way, why should the government be privileging or protecting it? Two people just love each other. What interest does the government have in rewarding in a certain sense a love relationship? So this is a good point and I don't want it to be missed. I love the way you're putting it though.

If it turns out to be something other than the classical understanding and here is where instead of using the word define, I use the word describe. In other words, we're looking at something that exists in the human societies from the beginning of time. There's a reason that they've existed this way.

We're describing what human relationships are like and then we, given the reality of what we discover, communities are protecting it and regulating it for the good of that unit, the family unit and for the good of the community. If the minute you take away that unique distinctive that you described, then there's no reason for the community to be involved at all. Who cares if other people love each other? Go ahead and love each other.

Who cares? Why give tax benefits? Why do anything special? Why give certificates? You don't give certificates for love. It's not on the form. And I got married 25 years ago almost, filled out the marriage certificate.

They didn't ask me if I love my wife. So this is, I think, a really good point and I actually never heard it put quite so succinctly as you did a moment ago. That's why I'm underscoring it.

Once you redefine marriage, you redefine it so that it's different from what the description we have of it based on what humanity is like, then there's no reason for anybody to do anything about it. That's a very good point. I mean, there's no reason for there to be two.

Which is why you're starting to see people promote other polyamory and that sort of thing, because what is the reasoning? At this point, it's just people who love each other. Most people are still saying they want it to be two, but there's really no reason for that under this new definition. So there are a lot of very explainable reasons why man-woman marriage is the definition that you hold to and it's the understanding that you hold to.

I mean, here's another example. When you bring two people together of the same sex, they cannot create life. So now you open up this whole other area of problems where now they're saying, "Well, we're married, so we have a right to a child.

So now insurance has to pay for me to have in vitro or I have to hire a woman to use her

body to bear my child." Now you have this whole idea of these right. There is no right to a child. There is only the union that creates a child.

And when you say that when you ignore the fact that it's different from the union of a same sex couple, now nothing really makes sense. Because they're still connecting it with family, but it's not connected to family. And they're still demanding all of these that other people give them things so that they can have a child.

They demand in vitro, they demand surrogacy. Insurance coverage. Because they're saying that's what we need for equality.

But the fact is you cannot deny, this is what happens when you deny reality and you're not basing it on reality. You're basing it on what you want to be the case. And so there are a lot of problems that follow from this redefinition.

I think it's only going to get worse. I've got a counter example here that, or maybe just an example of this kind of thing. It sounds really bizarre, but it seems to me to apply.

This is like a man demanding that he allowed to have an hysterectomy. Well, wait a minute, hysterectomy is to apply to males, only females. Well I demand that you put a uterus into me so I can have it taken out.

This is maybe kind of a glaring example, but it seems to me there's a parallel here. Nature has not provided the means for these other things to happen. If men, so-called married men, then there's no way to make children.

Now we demand that you provide a way for me to make children that don't apply to this kind of union. And that deprives, by the way, the child of a mother or a father in a same-sex marriage. And it's been pretty obvious to everybody from the beginning of time, and just about anybody who's married with children, that children need a mom and a dad because they provide different things in their relationship because moms and dads, males and females, mothers and fathers are not the same.

Obviously so. And there are studies out there that study what happens when a child is missing a mother or is missing a father. There are certain things that a man just cannot provide for his child.

It's because of the nature of who he is. So there are implications for children. There are all sorts of implications.

There's a post on our website. I think the title is called Understanding the Same-Sex Marriage Issue. And I listed a bunch of different articles that explains not using the Bible, but just in terms of the reality of the physical union between a man and a woman, the differences between men and women, that this whole issue is not about denying people rights, but about recognizing what marriage is and why it exists.

And saying, "Anyone can join into this, can enter in." We're not going to stop someone from getting married, but getting married actually means something and you can't just change that definition. That's right, this is where I think the understanding that marriage is not defined but described really comes to our aid, but because what we're trying to appeal to is the structure of reality. This is the way the world is made.

It's interesting right after 2015 with the Bergafell where same-sex marriage was deemed a constitutional right. Right after that, I thought everything was going to settle down. Just when all the gender dysphoria stuff just blew up in our face and everybody now is gender dysphoric, not that little sliver of .001% of the population, but now it just seems like everybody.

This is the way they make it sound. But it's the same kind of thing. It's a denial of what nature tells us to be the case, not using the Bible here, just look around.

The Bible tells us why the world is the way it is, but we don't need the Bible in many cases to know that the world is a particular way. And same kind of thing. We are denying the reality.

We are defining for ourselves what gender is and it has nothing to do with our physical bodies. When we defend so-called classical marriage, it isn't just the way people have defined it. We are looking at the nature of reality and we understand why societies from the beginning of time when they organized into groups have been regulating and protecting a unique kind of relationship because as a rule, my words are very carefully chosen here, as a rule, there are exceptions, as a group, by nature, and I would add by design, long-term monogamous heterosexual unions produce the next generation.

That's why we have the government or the community, broadly put, regulating and privileging this unique relationship because it is the foundation stone of culture. Culture doesn't define marriage any more than a building defines its bricks. It's the other way around.

Marriage is the foundation stone or the foundation stones, family, and the families that marriage has built are the foundation stones of culture. And that relationship is tied to the nature of reality, not to any religious text or any revelation. You don't need that to see the way the world really is and nobody has had any trouble with it for tens of thousands of years until just recently.

So to bring this back to your question, Doug, we just gave you a lot of information and obviously you're probably not going to have a chance to say all of these things but you never know in the conversation if you just start with the idea that I really think that because of the way reality is, because of the ways our bodies work, because of the way families work and children are created, that man-woman marriage is a real thing. I don't think we can mess with that and I think there are going to be implications for that. And

that's just a short way of saying it but now you've got some of those other ideas in the back of your mind that can help you as if this conversation progresses.

And incidentally, there's a lot of stuff on our website about this and frankly we've been addressing this issue with blogs or articles that I've done, blogs you've done or other team members and articles I've done, at least for 20 years, maybe 25 years. When it first started coming up on the radar, we began speaking to this issue. And there's a lot of good information out there.

There's also a book by Ryan Anderson called *What Is Marriage*, I think that's what it's called. He's one of the authors, there are three authors but that's another resource. Resource.

Yeah, it's another resource. We have the quick reference guide that has different short pieces of information and of course- Responses to challenges that people are in marriages about love, marriages in a convention. By the way, my response to marriage is all about love.

I said, "No, it's not, ask any married person." That isn't the foundation for marriage. Anyway, that's another issue. All right, well, we're almost out of time but I want to get this second question in here.

This one comes from Elizabeth. "My cousin invited me to his gay wedding. I'm not going because I don't want to support it but would not sending a gift be unnecessary en route or an appropriate rebuke." Well, I think that's a false dichotomy the way she put it.

The purpose is not to rebuke by not sending a gift, it's to not participate the celebration. So it's not meant to be a rebuke. Now, Alan Schlemann from Sander Reason here, he's got a, I think a great way of dealing with this.

He said, "Don't go to the celebration because you're not going to celebrate, okay, and the gift is part of the celebration." But what you can do is arrange with a couple that's invited you to meet with them at some other time to maintain the friendship with them. So sometime after the event arranged to have them come off for dinner and continue the relationship because there's nothing wrong with that. And Paul makes it really clear in Romans and make that 1 Corinthians chapter 5, we don't judge the world and separate ourselves from the world because we don't like their behaviors.

Non-Christians live like non-Christians if we separated ourselves from the world in that sense for that reason, then we wouldn't be able to reach them. But it's, no, I always stumble at her first name, Rosaria Rosaria. Yeah.

Butterfield has written a very popular book called *The Gospel Comes with the House Key* and it's based on hospitality being shown to non-Christians because that was a key for her coming out of a lesbian lifestyle and a non-Christian lifestyle and becoming a

follower of Christ. So we want to continue that relationship with them. If we're able in that friendship, we want to communicate that to them even though we are not going to celebrate the thing that we don't think it's right for us to celebrate.

So I'm going to have to squeeze another question in here, Greg, because you brought up the one I had scheduled for the next one. This one's from John D. Is there any merit for Christians withdrawing from the world in the sense that they choose to congregate together in their own areas, regions or neighborhoods, not to cut ourselves off from the world entirely, but more for the purpose of safety and having more common community standards? Well that's an interesting question and I haven't thought about this a lot. It depends to me, to some degree, on the degree of isolation that you have in mind.

There certainly have been groups that have done this, okay? And isolated, well this is, mystics do this, desert mystics, but they're individual, they're not groups, but monastic orders do this and there are some benefit to that, but the problem is with extreme isolation is that God doesn't want us to come out of the world. He wants us to stay in the world during that message to the world. Now there are broader communities that have done this because of their commitments and their faith like the, goodness gracious here, now it's recalling.

The Amish, is that? No, well the Amish is an example, a little bit more of extreme example because they haven't just isolated themselves as a community, but they have isolated themselves from progress too and they have kind of done, in a certain sense like Muslims have done, they've frozen themselves in a period of time and that's where they want to stay. I was thinking more of the German, the Germans, I spent a lot of time in Paraguay with them, you know, the German, the Mennonites, okay, the Mennonites form communities and as a community they do tremendous amount of good stuff. They tame the wilderness, this is what they did in Paraguay and lots of other places too.

So when you are bound together in a fairly tight knit community, working together, whatever, you can accomplish a lot of things as long as you don't become kind of xenophobic and that means you are suspicious of all the outsiders and that's the downside. I like this idea frankly to some degree, I wish it would happen more but the liability then is because I don't think that, I don't celebrate diversity personally, I don't think that makes a lot of sense. I'm not saying diversity of some sort is unvaluable but I don't want to celebrate it and you don't want diversity in a marriage, you want as much similarity as possible to create a harmony in that relationship.

You don't, same thing with communities, the more diverse communities are, the more potential for conflict. And you're talking about morally diverse and culturally, what kind of diversity are you talking about here? Just in general, you know, and more I guess it has to do with values, more, I don't care about skin color, that doesn't matter or race or anything like that, that's not relevant. Yeah, I just wanted to make that clear that it's not

what we're talking about.

But what is celebrated as diversity is a diversity, okay, and I don't want to get into that whole thing but I think that people just say this like it's a magical formula for a wonderful world and I don't think it is, okay. When people of similar values get together, they work better as a group, okay, the liability is though they become somewhat xenophobic or they're suspicious of outsiders or they become bigoted and that kind of thing. So that's a downside.

So I guess the answer to the question, John's question, excuse me, is that I have no problem with this and I actually wish there was more community, this is the way the early church was, more unified in community doing things together. And that made them more productive in the things that they were able to do and to accomplish their mission more effectively. And I think a lot of the so-called diversity emphasis nowadays is just emulsified people into our culture and we have lost largely a sense of community.

Yeah, I think as Christians community is crucial and if we're airing in any direction, we're airing away from community, our problem is not that we are too closely knit as communities as Christians. So I agree, Greg, I think we need more intentional community living as Christians where we depend on each other and we live with each other and we do things with each other, not necessarily as protection, but just as support as this is how we grow as Christians where the body of Christ God has given everybody different gifts and we're supposed to use them so that we mature each other so that we become like Christ and we need each other for that. So the more that we can be connected to each other, the better, but as you also said, Greg, there is the danger of becoming bigoted or isolating ourselves from the world.

So you have to be careful that you're still interacting with people out who are in the world and that book you mentioned by Rosaria Butterfield might be a good place for people to start if they want to make sure they're not airing in that direction. But so much of this is just there's always there are always two ways that you can mess things up. So you figure out which way you're going wrong and you try to come back towards a more wise and balanced approach to this.

There's a Aristotle called the Golden Mean that is in the middle in the balanced middle kind of thing. Yeah, but if you want to be with other Christians so that you're teaching especially for schools and things like that, that's a great way to use your community and the gifts of your community to teach your children. But just be intentional about reaching out to other people outside do mission trips, be involved in other outside hobbies where your kids can interact with other people.

And you can interact not just your kids. Actually the home school culture particularly the Christian home school culture really exemplifies this because they're getting educated together in a way that's not being compromised by worldly values. They are doing things

together doing sports together they're having getaways together and all that other stuff but they're still part of the culture.

They're not isolated from everybody else but in the ways that are important for building up individual integrity and individual character and education and all of that they are unified and they're doing things together because they identify them with that community. It's really great to see that happen and it is a huge I think it is a protection against the cultures in the cultures intrusiveness because the culture is very very aggressive and doesn't matter where you turn everywhere you turn the culture is discipling us and our children and this is a way of pushing back against that or protecting ourselves from that. Well thank you Doug, Elizabeth and John D. We really appreciate hearing from you.

If you have a question send it on us to know on Twitter with the hashtag #SDRask or through our website. We look forward to hearing from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.

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