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How Can We Defend the Claim That Marriage Was Created by God?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to defend the claim that marriage was created by God and what to say to someone who doesn't want her daughter to grow up Christian because she thinks Christianity is harmful to women.

* How can we defend the claim that marriage was created by God if marriage has been in non-Judeo-Christian civilizations throughout time?

* What should I say to someone who doesn't want her daughter to grow up Christian because she thinks Christianity is harmful to women?

Transcript

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That's right. I should have known you were going to say that. Okay, we're going to start with a question from Shane from Temecula, California. Hi, Greg and Amy.

Hi. I've heard you say that marriage was created by God. I don't disagree, but to claim it was created by God sounds like just an assertion when marriage has been in non-Judeo-Christian civilizations throughout time.

So could you please teach us how to defend this claim? Thanks. Was gravity created by God? Yes. Yeah, but, but wait a minute, gravity affects all kinds of people who don't believe in God.

So how could that be? I mean, there's a basic non-sequitur here, okay? When we talk about these kinds of things like say marriage, we're not, we're not talking about in a certain sense a mere theological institution, the priesthood, for example. We are talking about the way reality is structured. And the issue of marriage goes back to the very

beginning.

When Jesus talks about marriage and remarriage, divorce, whatever, Matthew 19, he takes us back to Genesis 1, and then he steps into Genesis 2. He says, from the beginning, this is the way it is, male and female. So sex slash gender is binary. And then he describes the first marriage that is between a man and a woman being, a woman being created as an appropriate helpmate to man, they are similar but different from the many one, so to speak, E. Plurvis Unum, and from the two in that case, one.

And they are joined together in a very particular union by God himself, okay? So God is the one who has made human beings the way they are to be in a joined relationship for the purpose of being, among other things, being fruitful and multiplying and subduing the earth, okay? And in a certain sense, well, what Jesus says is what God has joined together to let no man separate. But in that case, there was no possibility of separation because there was no one else to separate too. You know, it isn't like there are other women or men that could be distractions for Adam and Eve.

So they were built into the nature of it was a sense of permanence by the circumstances, but then God is rather Jesus is making the point that God is the one who made it this way. And that's why man can't undo or ought not be undoing the kind of thing that God enjoined. And incidentally, that applies the same reasoning applies not just to marriage and divorce, but it also applies to all the other aspects of sexuality and gender and physical sex.

God made them male and female. This is a feature of reality, okay? Male and female can be joined together to become one flesh to be fruitful and multiply, but that happens in a kind of committed relationship now described in chapter two, where a man leaves his family and takes on a wife and the two become one flesh, which is referring to the sexual act, but entails more. And so what Jesus is saying is that the way reality is structured is that a man marries a woman and that's the appropriate context for sexual behavior, which naturally produces the kind of children, or I should say, produce children that are of the kind of nature that they require a long-term stable environment to grow up protected and to flourish, okay? So this is all about human flourishing.

None of those are in a sense theological categories in themselves, like the priesthood, for example. Those are Jesus describing based on what Moses has written about how God made the world like gravity. This is like gravity.

This is part of the structure of reality. It's the way I've talked about it for years, so people can distinguish it from mere theological claims or mere cultural claims. And by the way, because it is a feature of reality as part of the structure of the way the world is, this is precisely why people with no religious background or variant religious background still see this.

They still understand this, that marriage is between a man and a woman. What else would it be? Water is wet, right? So what would it be? Dry? No, this is the way the world works. And because it's such an important kind of relationship as a cornerstone of civilization, it produces the next generation.

This is precisely why, and this is available just simply at a moment's reflection, why cultures of all sorts for all time have privileged and protected monogamous heterosexual long-term relationships because they produce the next generation. They're vital to civilization, and so civilization then, in a certain sense, reflectively, now was trying to protect that which supports it or makes it up. This is why people, it doesn't make any sense to say that the culture creates marriage.

It's actually the other way around. Marriage creates culture. Marriage creates civilization.

It's the building block, families. It's marriage creates families and families create cultures when they aggregate together. And now they see what they're made of, as it were, and oh, yeah, this is important to our survival as a community and a culture, and therefore we are going to do the things that we do, we are going to regulate this, and we're going to privilege it, and we're going to protect it because of the unique function it has.

Now, in light of that, the way reality is structured, it becomes very easy to see that same-sex marriage, it's an oxymoron. It doesn't even make any sense. It bears no resemblance to how reality works.

And when somebody says, well, marriage is just a cultural convention and we can redefine it any way we want, what they are doing is simply taking away the cultural characters. They are nullifying the cultural understanding and in process of the nature of reality. And when they nullify it, then the things that culture done to protect that unique thing disappear.

And so that unique thing is not protected, which is what we see right now. Just think of people saying, well, gravity is a cultural convention. We can change that anytime we want, because we want to float around.

Well, you can redefine anything you want about gravity, but the fact is, it still asserts it's force on us, regardless, because it's a feature of reality. And by redefining it in some way that causes us to deny it's effect on us, then that's just going to cause harm. Reality has a way of injuring us when we bump into it.

We don't think it's seriously. Marriage is not arbitrary. It's connected to our nature as human beings.

So even if somebody is objecting to you, saying that marriage was created by God, even if they don't believe God exists, they can still look at who we are as human beings, our bodies, what happens when a man joins with a woman, what that union creates, it

creates children. And therefore, we need to keep those parents together because a child works, he grows best. He's protected, he flourishes.

Best when there is a mother and a father because they give different things to the child. All of these things play into it because of the differences between men and women. Because of those differences, marriage is necessary if you want to have a thriving society where the children do well.

You don't even have to bring God into it to talk about who we are as human beings. That's right. When Jesus talks about marriage in Matthew 19, one could argue he is not arguing, giving an answer in virtue of being the incarnate son of God, but rather as a reasonably reflective individual.

And that's why you don't need Jesus to know about these things. And you don't need, well, people say, what's your evidence? What's your proof? I said, just open your eyes. We learn a lot about the nature of reality by just watching and reflecting on it.

And that's all that's required here. Just to reflect on that. Somebody challenged me once when I made the comment that from the beginning of time, people of cultures have privileged and protected the institution of marriage because of the unique role it played in culture and regardless of their religious convictions.

And he said, what's your proof of that? And it was kind of stuck me for a minute. I don't have a footnote. I have eyes.

Just pay attention to the world. This is obvious. And this is why so many times when studies are done and experts say what they end up saying almost always comports would come in sense.

So there's a lot of work we can do on our own without having some expert have to tell us about it. We can see it and especially in this regard. So just to sum up, marriage is created by God because God created human beings.

The world in a particular way. And so therefore marriage arises out of what God has created. And this is something we can all recognize.

Yeah, it's not merely a religious dogma of Christianity as our point. It is a dogma of Christianity, but it isn't merely or it isn't like I mentioned the priesthood earlier. Well, that's kind of a sectarian dogma that is particular to Christianity, but it doesn't apply to others.

You know, but that's not what this is. Well, in those first few chapters, it's the word Genesis means beginnings. And so what we are learning there in those first few chapters is God is telling us the story of reality is that here is how the world began and here is how man began.

And here is how man's problem began, problem of evil. Here's how that happened. And here is how God planned to rectify the problem of evil and rescue human beings, because he has the beginning of a salvation plan that starts in Genesis 12 with Abraham.

That's the beginning of the plan. So all of these things are beginnings of the world and the way God is working in the world. Now, I guess you could say in a certain sense that when you get to Abraham, you are speaking theologically, yeah, because it's a theological plan for salvation.

But the rest of the ways or the rest of the details are just meant to show you, here is what happened in history. God made the world this way. Human beings are this way.

And this is what human beings did to make the world the way it is now. We are talking about the structure of reality, not about religious dogma in those cases. So let's go to a question from Patty.

My friend's wife does not want their daughter to grow up Christian, because she thinks it's harmful to women. She is very much of the feminist culture. Any advice on how to present to her that growing up Christian is the right way? Thank you so much.

Well, this one's a difficult one. And it's not that the answers are so hard, but the perspective that people bring to the table is really confusing, okay? And it might be best to get out on the table. What exactly feminism is to this individual? I don't know what that means.

Because her feminism causes her to look a scant at the Bible, like a lot of people do. I mean, especially when this all started taking building momentum in the 60s and the 70s, the 80s, and the idea was what it had to do with the glass ceiling for one for employment. It had to do with the hierarchy structures in culture, in general, especially in the family, patriarchy.

And of course, there are a lot of abuses of those kinds of things, because, as I mentioned, and I wrote in in street smarts, one of two things is going to prevail in the world, either truth or power. And if truth doesn't prevail, then it's going to be power, okay? And so if men are not functioning in a way, or husbands, in a way that is appropriate, then their power is going to be, they're not functioning according to truth, then their power is going to create destructive results. And so what women then want to do, they want to seize back the power, okay? So I don't have to, women, you don't have to listen to what men say.

Now, there are different forms of feminism. There are Christian feminists too. And I think even Nancy Pearcey has identified herself as someone that aligns herself with the appropriate kinds of concerns and injustices that have befallen women.

And there are many other solid Christian gals. But at the same time, they don't buy the

feminist deal. And part of it is so ironic, it's like women and men are not different.

Excuse me, to a great degree, women and men are not different. They are the same in ways that they're not the same. And so one of the things that really troubles me is an expression of this, okay? Is watching movies now, where you cannot watch a movie, a drama, or especially an action movie, where there's military, there's bad guys that need to be killed, or the cops and robbers, or however you want to characterize it, where there's not a woman in there with a gun that is killing people with impunity.

And beaten up these big guys, they're always got a cast of woman there. No, women can't do that. This is Hollywood, all right? And it doesn't mean that women are capable in many ways, obviously, and some more than others, and some women can do the job of a man.

But women have different temperaments that make them better suited for other enterprises than men, men are better suited for battle, not women. Now, these are the kinds of things that really bothered feminists, and they wanted to, okay, no, you're excluding us, so we want to be included now. And I think included in a way that's, in many cases, in some cases I should say, let me back up, included in some ways that are appropriate, but in other ways that are inappropriate, because what they end up doing is erasing the kinds of distinctions that are critical to human flourishing, the way God made men and women to work together in a complementary way.

So, I mean, that's a lot of stuff, you know, so it's hard, it's hard to know, you know, how to address a person who's hostile, and I think the most simple way of answering this question, at least conceptually, is that how were women treated in the first century, in the ancient Near East, even in Israel, but in the larger culture, certainly, okay? Then, in light of that, with that as a backdrop, what were the instructions, or what were the statements that were made regarding women in the New Testament? And it turns out that they're worlds apart. Christian women had it so much better than non-Christian women. Why? Because of the teachings of Christianity.

Which is why I attracted a lot of women, actually. Yes, that's right. That's right.

Now, what wasn't removed is patriarchy, because that's built in to the structure of the church and the structure of the family, because, this is a real important part, it's built in to the structure of reality. We were actually talking about this in an article recently, I talked about this, this isn't just a theological point, it has to do with the way God has made men and women to function differently and accomplish different roles, do different things, and therefore be most effective as they were created, okay? Now, they can play out in a lot of different ways, but clearly, they're different. And the abuses of the power difference, because there's a power difference, that's the complaint about patriarchy, as men have used their power, the power they have over women, the strength they have over women to abuse women, all right? Well, what they're identifying there is a feature

of the nature of reality.

Men are stronger than women, and therefore can women are more vulnerable, all right? And what the New Testament teaching does is to invade against an inappropriate exercise of that difference and put it in its proper perspective. That was a huge thing that Christianity did, because its conception of power, who is the most powerful person? It's Jesus. And what did he do? How did he lose his power? I always think about, I think it's in John, where Jesus is about to wash the feet of his disciples, and the text says, it might be Matthew, I can't remember now, but the text says, Jesus, knowing that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God, okay? This is the highest position, the most powerful person, because he loved them, you know, knowing this, he washed their feet.

Yeah, that's John 13. Right, so it connects, the passage connects his power with servanthood. So what Christianity came and did is it redefined what it means to be powerful, and what it means to be powerful in a leader is to be a servant, is to be someone who serves others.

There are plenty of passages in the New Testament that talk about how men are supposed to love their wives and honor their wives as fellow heirs of Christ, and as fellow, you know, Christianity says that we're the same kind of being, that wasn't even accepted back then in the ancient world. So I think, I think what I would do, if somebody said this to me, the first thing I would start out saying is you need them to clarify, in what way is it harmful to women? Can you just tell me the ways you're thinking, because maybe you're misunderstanding Christianity, or maybe you're misunderstanding what's harmful to women. And then we can talk about that.

But first, that's just such a general statement. I, it's hard to know how that answers. Does that mean it's harmful to women because it Christians are against killing the unborn? I mean, that's something, let's talk about what's harmful to women.

What about the women who are being killed in that situation that so, so isn't it, isn't it better for women to be rescued from being killed in the womb? I mean, there, there, there are all sorts of things you could, but you have to start with knowing what they're saying is harmful. Now, I suspect it probably has to do with abortion. It probably has to do with sexual behavior.

I think that's, and probably, Patrick, those are probably the three things. But one thing you have to remember, and this is why, Greg, I love your suggestion about saying, look at how the ancient world was, and then look at what the Bible says at the same time about women. Yes.

Yes. That's the contrast. That's the appropriate contrast.

Yes. And I've heard, I've heard different people, and I think Tom Holland, and I think someone named Kyle Harper, but they've made the point of how radically Christianity transformed the world for women by simple things like saying you're both under the same rules because the ancient world said, yes, women, you need to be monogamous, you need to be faithful to your husband. But Christianity came along and said, hey, guess what, husbands, you have to be faithful to your wives.

And that was something new. You can't just, men, you can't just have sex with whoever you want who's under your control. Christianity came and said, you can't do that.

But the ancient world said that was fine. There are all sorts of ways that Christianity transformed the world for women. So I would recommend, there's one book I know by Kyle Harper called from Shame to Sin, the Christian transformation of sexual morality in late antiquity.

That's one book that talks about this. But there are, there are all sorts of ways it made things better. Now, there's also a woman who's not a Christian.

And I don't even think she's a theist. And her name is Louise Perry, and she wrote a book recently called The Case Against the Sexual Revolution. Because guess what she's finding out? Or maybe Christianity did have some wisdom about women and men and how they best thrive.

And maybe it's not best for women to be the same as men in the sexual arena and to not have these kind of prohibitions protecting them from the things that will hurt them. Because what, you know, you mentioned this, Greg, what feminism has done is it's denigrated femininity. And it tries, it holds up masculinity as the ideal and pushes women towards being more like men.

Yes, ironic. It is very ironic. But it actually, I think it's more aggressive than that because it ends up feminizing men.

Men are no longer allowed to be men. This is what they call toxic masculinity. Now, Nancy Pearson, of course, we had her on as she talked about her book on that.

But the, but you're right. It's making everywhere, every movie you see, you're going to see this. Every, the woman was she, you know, how can I put this? See, these women have that they're in positions of authority.

They're aggressive, they're nasty, and they, they, they swear like a drunken sailor. It's just like they are made like the most unpleasant males and the men are, and because the story is written like this, the men largely are brought in submission under her. Right.

So instead of lifting up women, they're just saying, they're just kind of tacitly saying men are better. So let's be like them. I mean, it's horrible.

I mean, think about what is, what is the most feminine thing that women can do? They're unique thing they can do, have children, raise children. But what is looked down upon in this society? Those very things, staying home and raising your kids, that's terrible. You should be like a man.

When this is instead of lifting up these feminine things, it just, it just pushes them down. It's very, it's very, it's all very strange. It's actually, if we don't have abortion on the demand, then we cannot have complete equality with men.

That's a line of reasoning that they've used in the past. In other words, equality means disencumbered from the things that make us uniquely women. Right.

And then everyone. They want sameness. They want sameness.

So all these things are ideas you could bring up. And finally, I would get, you mentioned Nancy Piercy's book, *The Toxic War on Masculinity*. I would get that book because that book goes through all these studies, it mentions all these studies where it shows that it's actually the case that Christian women, women who are married to Christian men who are not just saying they're Christian, but actually, you know, attending church and living church, because you have to make that distinction.

Otherwise, you don't get that the difference in the stats aren't that different from the world. But if you specify what kind of Christian you're talking about, the evangelical men who go to church every week, what you find is that the women are actually happier, married to those men. They're happier.

So I would just ask her, what do you make of that? Maybe there's something you're missing about Christianity. Let's talk about how Christianity views power and how men should use power and the value of women and what Christianity has done for all the women in this world because the Western world has had such an impact on the rest of the world. A lot of people just don't know about this.

It's a very shallow understanding where at this point, Christians are presented as those who want to oppress women. Again, I think a lot of times this goes back to abortion and sex. That's right.

And it's also been wrapped into critical theory really, really aggressively. So this is a huge, huge element that's involved here. And this thing about Nancy's point is so good that the distinction here is critical, as you made.

So I'm just going to underscore it. It is not those who self-identify as Christian. That's like 65% of the population.

It's those who live consistently the virtues of Christianity as expressed in Scripture. So you've got to measure the impact not by people who claim to be Christian, but by people

who follow the Christian rules, so to speak, the way of life. If you're going to assess Christianity that way, then you have to assess who are living according to what Christianity teaches and then what's the proper comparison.

Nobody in the ancient world would be asking these things. Nobody in the ancient world would be saying, Oh man, are we, are women being oppressed here? Why is it that now we're asking these questions and not back then? And I just go back to Tom Holland, and I think I mentioned him earlier, but he's a historian and he was very surprised to discover a few years ago that his values, because he had always been interested in the ancient world. And he always assumed that he had more in common with like the Romans and the Greeks.

And then he started reading more carefully and he said, Oh my gosh, this is a completely foreign world to me. All of my values are Christian. They came from Christianity and I didn't realize it.

And I think that's the state of this country right now. We do not realize where our values have come from. And then we turn around and try and destroy Christianity, but you can't destroy the foundation without destroying the values in the end.

That's right. Douglas Murray makes the same point. And by the way, Justin Briarley's book on the surprising rebirth, right of belief in God.

I think we had him on the air and I mentioned this a bunch of times, but he chronicles all of this and not just Douglas Murray and Tom Holland, but a number of others. And because of this is exactly what they've discovered, all the things as even the atheist who considered themselves liberals as opposed to leftists realized that all of their liberal values were rooted in a Christian worldview. They were not rooted in a materialistic worldview.

They had found no home there for them. In fact, they got nothing but nihilism out of that and existential angst as a result of what follows from a materialistic worldview, the things that they clung to as being valuable and good, even things that have to do with feminism in the best sense. They realized, well, this is, I'm an atheist Christian.

I think one of those two kind of characterize themselves as this. And this is why the recommendation that Justin made based on this observation, many others that are moving in the same direction is that this is why Christians need to stay weird. We have to stay what we are distinctly and not try to be like the world, because what is valuable is what we offer distinctively as Christians following a Christian understanding of reality.

Remember, it was the ancient world that would, if there was a famous letter they found, an ancient letter where the father says, when you give birth, if it's a girl, just leave her, set her out, expose her or let her die. The trash. Yeah.

So it was, it was the ancient world that was throwing out girls and it was the Christians who would go out and find these babies and save them and raise them. The thing of the practice of sati before the British colonized India, you know, sati is when a man died and they burned him on a funeral pyre. They tossed his wife on with him.

That was what they did. Okay. So it's, it's, I mean, there's all kinds of practices like this that we're just part of.

You know, people think, well, you know, you can't judge other cultures. And I remember a famous statement. I think this is the relativism book regarding sati.

And the, the Indian was saying to the British commander who was trying to stop it. He says, he says, we have a custom here. This is our custom.

And the British guy says, we also has a custom. We kill people who do that kind of thing who throw women on their pyre, you know, so anyway, if you just look at the cultures of the world, apart from the influence of Christianity, what you're going to see is barbarism on many levels that we take for granted today because our value system, even if we're atheists, if we're liberals, if we're leftists, our deepest values are profoundly informed, though misdirected in many cases, but deeply and profoundly informed by Christianity. Well, thank you, Gray.

And thank, I mean, Gray, thank you, Greg. I was already looking at the next. She was looking at my hair as much as look at that.

And thank you, Joy and Max. If you have a question, you can send that to us on X with the hashtag SDRAsk or you can go to our website. That's at str.org and just look for hashtag SDRAskPodcast page and you'll find a link there.

We'd love to hear from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.