

# OpenTheo

## What if Two Men Who Are Legally Married Choose to Follow Christ?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether two men who are legally married and have an adopted daughter should divorce and break up their family if they choose to follow Christ and how Christians can be compassionate on topics like homosexuality, abortion, and other religions.

\* If two men who are legally married and have an adopted daughter choose to follow Christ, should they divorce and break up the family?

\* As Christians, how can we be compassionate on topics like homosexuality, abortion, and people of other religions?

### Transcript

I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Koukl and you're listening to Stand to Reason's hashtag, S-T-R-S-C-Podcasts. Good morning, Greg. Good morning, Amos.

So the first question today comes from Deborah. I've been listening to podcasts on homosexuality. Question.

If two legally married gays who have raised a daughter from birth, now high school senior chose to follow Christ, what would slash should they do? Do you about family divorce, break up family, hurt daughter with two dads? Well, it's just interesting how the language works here. I think this is a tough situation, but if you're not married, you can't get a divorce. Two men who are together through so-called legal marriage are not married.

And so since they are not married in God's eyes because marriage is not between a man and a woman, that feature is simply a definition of culture, not a definition of reality. It's just like 60 genders. There aren't 60 genders.

There are two genders matching two sexes. People who claim to have other genders

doesn't make gender flexible. It makes imagination flexible.

That's all. It doesn't even make sense to say that I'm an ampersand gender, an ampersand. I don't know, just like the same reason they chose any of the other 60 or 58 genders that Google says people might have.

I mean, it's just an invention of language. So the same thing here. The marriage is an invention of culture.

As one put it after Obergefeld in 2015, marriage now are just names on a sheet of paper. That's all it is. It has no substance to it at all.

It just names on a sheet of paper. And there's no reason why those names can't be multiple names or whatever. But the practical concern is what does one do about this relationship? I think if there are two men who have been married by the state, so I'm qualifying my term, and are living together sexually and raising a daughter, then what they and their Christians, then what they need to do is, first of all, repudiate their marriage if they're going to be consistent with scripture.

They have to repudiate the marriage and disclaim it because that's not God's purpose. And then I'm talking about minimally. I don't know.

I can solve all of this, but that would be minimal. If you're going to follow Jesus and see the world the way Jesus sees it and affirm the things that Jesus affirms, then they would have to repudiate their alleged marriage as a non-marriage. And they would have to cease being sexually and romantically involved because I don't think the point is, and this is what happened to the Pacific University a few years ago.

And this is not inside information. This is all public. How the homosexual contingent at the university, just think of that.

I graduated from a Pacific College that later became a university in 1977. I did a year graduate work there in 1978. And yeah, this is a group that has a school that has a contingent of gay people, an organized contingent of gay people.

Because heterosexual folk were not allowed to have sex, but they still could have relationships. And so since the sex is wrong for the heterosexuals, premarital sex, then they would acknowledge that premarital sex for gays is wrong too. But that doesn't mean they still can't have loving, intimate, or romantic relationships.

So as I recall, then the school ended up saying, yeah, you got a good point that as long as you're not sexually active, then you are not violating God's purposes. Which means that the powers that be at Azusa completely missed the point. It isn't just where you put your sexual organs.

It's the kinds of relationships that God has ordained that entail or lead to what you do sexually. But it isn't just what you do sexually. So it just misses the whole point.

So this is why I'm saying that why this is very difficult. But to follow Jesus, I don't see any other way than repudiate the so-called marriage, the illicit union, and cease being romantically involved. Now, does that mean they can still live together? I'm not sure.

That would be tough. It's like a man and a woman who have a child who are not married and been living together, and then they become Christians. All right.

Can they continue living together and having sex and being intimate in that fashion with their child there? Because they've just been living this way all the time, and they love each other. And there's, by the way, I don't take exception with the emotional attachment in either case. Well, the answer for the heterosexual, I think, would be for the clear thinking Christian, considering that circumstance, it would be obvious.

No, they can't keep cohabiting in that sexual way. Then the same thing would have to be true about a same sex couple. And since it's not just the cohabiting that's a problem, but it is the same sex romantic relationship that normally would entail the sexual relationship as part of that.

It's also a problem. So then the question becomes, what about the children? And that's where it becomes very difficult. It's kind of like in other cultures where you have a polygamous situation, and then the husband becomes a Christian.

Now what? Now he's got multiple women that he is intimate with, and he's taken care of, and he's responsible for. And so actually, I don't know how those things have been worked out. I don't encounter that here.

Missionaries have had to deal with that. It seems to me he would have to choose one wife as his genuine wife, but also stay committed to caring for those that are in his care, because they depend upon him. But he can't continue to cohab it with them, because that would be adulterous.

So something like that, in the case of this situation, I'm not exactly sure how the best way to work that out. And maybe you have some ideas about that. There has to be a consideration for the emotional well-being of the child or children involved here, but it cannot trump the moral obligations sexually that they're facing.

So, I mean, people seem to be fine with divorce in general. Oh, it's tragic, but the kids will take a kid over it, and you know, you share whatever. So people have adapted to a divorce and still co-parent, then I don't know why the cessation of this relationship couldn't look the same.

Yeah, it's tragic. It's tragic because of sin. And in this case, the whole circumstance came

about because of sin.

And anyway, so I mean, that's, I guess, my thinking. Now, as someone, I know the tendency of some is to say that is so heartless. Well, I don't know what to respond to that.

It isn't like I have no concern about the children. But if heartless means we are going to do what we can to make the children happy, even though we continue in sin, then that is not a gross sin. Sin that Paul says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 6 and verse 9, that disqualifies someone from being in the kingdom of God.

Then then then I call me heartless, but this is what happens is with sin in the world, especially gross sin where people have chosen to live in it, it creates damaging broken hurtful circumstances. And that's, that's the problem here because once you start down the road where you are, you've already left God's instructions for marriage and you start down this other road, at that point, no matter what happens, there's going to be pain. So trying to come back from that, there's, there won't be any perfect option where everyone is perfectly happy because you've already, the damage has already been done.

You've, you've created this relationship that was not allowed. So that's going to hurt when you, when you break up. I mean, the same thing is true when, when young Christians start dating someone who's not a Christian, and then they get really invested in the relationship and then they have to break it off because God wants us to marry those who are following Christ.

And, and you could say, well, that's heartless, but the problem is again, once you've entered into that relationship, now the way out is going to be painful, no matter what. But, you know, so you have this, this relationship that can't create children and then they somehow, a lot of times it's surrogacy or whatever it is they have now they've, they've gone outside of the way you create children. Who are adopted? Adopted children.

Yeah, if they're, if they're adopted, that's better, but sometime, a lot of times they want to create their own. So they, they bring in another woman into it. Well, now they denied the child, the mother.

So the, the child already lost a mother. We're just starting right off the bat. Right.

So, and why is it that considered heartless? Yeah. Anyway, that's another issue, but. So there's no, there's no easy way out of that, but I think what you suggested, Greg, as far as ending the relationship, I think, yeah, I think that's necessary.

It will be painful, but that's because they started down that road. And I think as Christians, we need to support them in this. If when people who are living in some sort of

homosexual relationship, they want to follow Christ.

First of all, that they need to be encouraged and helped through that. And I hope people will show them compassion. I don't know how often this happens.

I don't know. I don't, I haven't ever personally seen this happen where there was a family and then they became Christians, but, but we need to support them. However, we can.

We all have to decide. We all have to place Jesus above everything else we know and love. We all have to do that.

Every one of us. And it's sometimes we have to give up things that have become really integral parts of our lives. You know, I think about, uh, CS Lewis is the great divorcee where people are not willing.

There's a man at the end where the, they're, I guess they're not angels. They're people who've gone ahead and to. To heaven and it's not supposed to be.

It's not supposed to be accurate. Right. But he wants to kill this man's sin and the man's holding on to it and he's too afraid to let it go.

But then when he finally does, then he's freed from that. And so I think when you start to follow Jesus and you have to give up these things have become so much a part of who you are. You think they're so much a part of you.

You are. They're very hard to give up. But if we will trust him and let him kill our sin and go forward in that painful, you know, it's not easy.

It will be painful. But ultimately you're always better off being obedient than trying to hang on to things that God hasn't given you. Right.

Always. And that's hard to believe sometimes, but it's true. That makes me a couple of thoughts running through my mind.

We just finished last weekend. The reality student apologetics conference in Seattle. And of course this year's theme is identity and how Christopher Yuan was talking about our identity cannot be in our.

In our sexual appetites, basically, it may be how we are, but it isn't what we are. What we are is the individual created in God's images in God's image for God's purposes. And that really struck me.

And in addition to that, as I'm thinking about this question, I'm also thinking about all of those people. That are in in marriages that are painful and deeply unsatisfying for them. No biblical grounds for divorce.

It's just marriages that have gone empty and tedious and in our hurtful and painful and unsatisfying. And so these are people that still have to stay before God and be honorable in their in their conduct and pursue virtue in that marriage, even though there's virtually no satisfaction there. So it isn't like this is the only thing that we're dumping upon gay people.

There are all kinds of people who don't have their emotional slash relational slash sexual needs fulfilled. And that doesn't change anything. It doesn't mean, okay, well, then we'll have to find some other way.

And this is what, pardon me, anti-standly said recently, unfortunately, that some so-called gay Christians find a celibate life to be. How did he put it? Unsustainable. Unsustainable.

An unsustainable ideal. And so therefore, we make accommodations. Really? Do we do that with all kinds of other things too? So there are men in very unsatisfying relationships with their wives and the bedroom doors basically close to them.

So their sexual life with their wife is not just unsustainable. It's non-existent. But the sexual desires and desire for closeness and intimacy and love and sexual satisfaction are still there.

Does that mean that they mean they can get the faux example or faux care, false characterization of that from pornography? Because, well, it's clearly the standard is unsustainable here. So we just kind of have to roll with it, do the best we can and get what we want, where we can. I mean, this is silly.

And there's a whole host of counter examples that could be brought to bear here. So nothing is being asked of, say, a same-sex couple that has gone through a union according to the state who becomes a Christian. Nothing is being asked of them.

That is not being asked of every Christian in either similar or parallel kinds of circumstances where personal prices have to be paid to follow Jesus faithfully. I also think of the very end of the Old Testament part of the Bible where the exiles come back from Babylon and they start to rebuild. And then they intermarry with the people around them, which was a very dangerous thing because culture will, I mean, we see this happening now.

Culture changes when you are interacting with people who have different ideas. And it was very dangerous situation for them to, first, they were sent into exile because they had taken on some aspects of culture that were evil from the people around them. And so that's why God wanted, didn't want them to intermarry with people who had these other cultures that were dangerous for them as a people and evil.

So what happens is they come back and they intermarry again. And the prophet requires

them to divorce the wives who are following the other gods. And here's an example where obviously that was, it's horribly painful.

You can see it in the text and God hates divorce. So why did he do that? Because it was entered into, it was not legitimate under God's law. And it was dangerous for them as a nation so that they would survive until Jesus would come.

As a nation, right? Yeah. And so even he, even at that time, it required them to break up. And these are heterosexual people.

So it's not just, this is the point you were making. This is, it's not just a singular thing that ever happened. And it's different from everyone else, this situation that we're talking about right now.

There have been other examples where things like this have happened. Sure. And in fact, this intermarrying and forced separation by the prophet, I think happened at other times too in the history of Israel.

This wasn't the only case, but this was one important example of that. And so it's your reference to the influence of culture on us is really significant. And the culture is going to have more of an impact on us changing our views from God's view to their view, the closer we get to the culture.

And when we bring a foreign idea, a foreign way of living in a foreign person, in a certain sense, into our intimate environment, into our home, into our marriage, that's going to have the biggest impact on us, which is why the Jews were told, don't do that. And we are too. In 2 Corinthians, you know, this is the famous unequally yoke passage, but just think of the metaphor.

These are two oxen yoked together. And one is going to pull the other one off the path. And that's Paul's concern there.

And just to be clear, in case anyone is confused about this, this wasn't because of their ethnicity. This was because of their following other gods, false gods that had evil laws that would cause them to do evil things. It wasn't, you know, we're not talking about, oh, be afraid of somebody who has a different way that they dress or a different way.

That's not the problem here. The problem is your view of reality, your view of who God is, your view of what he wants from you, all of these things matter when you're living your life, and you're trying to raise children and your all of these are the important things. It's not just ethnicity.

Well, look at Rahab. She's a Canaanite, folded into Israel. We have Ruth the Moabitess, folded into Israel.

We have the Gentiles and Churyan Cornelius, right in Acts chapter 10, folded in. And so this is not an ethnic concern. It is a values concern.

And even in the Old Testament law, you could become part of the covenant of Israel. You could join the nation. You could become part of them.

The problem was when you wanted to be among them and not serve God and not follow God, that was the only problem. Well, Greg, I know we're over, but I do want to throw one more in here because I think it goes with this one. This one comes from Elise.

How to be compassionate as a Christian in today's topics, for example, homosexuality, abortion, people of different religions? Well, the difficulty here is what counts as compassion. And the culture has one definition, and God has another definition. The culture's definition is love, compassion, tolerance, acceptance, all of that means approving of what people want for themselves.

That's the entire psychological community now. There is no sense of emotional health in the classic sense that there is a teleology to human psychology. There is a purpose for humankind to achieve a certain, what's the word I'm looking for the right words, it's kind of an operation or functional wholeness because the concept of wholeness is gone.

There is no teleology. There is no ultimate end to human development. It isn't that being the best you can be means being whatever you want to be.

Okay. And as long as the culture and those who have been influenced by culture, even Christians understand compassion and love and acceptance and tolerance and all that other stuff, or grace, however you want to characterize it as affirmation of what a person wants for themselves, what now is called authenticity. They're authentic cells, then you're you are not going to be able to be compassionate.

You can be compassionate in the genuine sense of the virtue. And that is having, showing sympathy and kindness and goodness towards others and seeking their best. That's what it means to love others as we love ourselves.

Louis makes the point. When we love ourselves, that does not mean that we have good feelings about ourselves, that we have to learn how to really think how wonderful we are before we can start acting like other people are wonderful. Louis says, that's not the point.

The point is that we seek after our own good. Okay. Loving ourselves means putting ourselves first, okay, and seeking after our own well-being.

Now, sometimes that goal is twisted distorted by our understanding of what goodness entails and the culture influences that. That's what I was just referring to. And this is why we always have to be in the word to see what is the truth about goodness and what does



virtue look like from God's perspective.

But if we are seeking our own well-being, that's the definition of self-love, not emotion, then to love others as we love ourselves is to seek their well-being as well. What is good for them. And to be compassionate is to be concerned about what is good for them.

To treat them with grace and courtesy and honor as human beings made the image of God, yet at the same time not giving in and affirming behaviors that are destructive to them and destructive to their souls and dishonoring ultimately to God. It is possible to do that. Now, my sense, I could be mistaken about Elise here, my sense is that her question is being asked in light of that confusion.

Because if we understand what compassion means in scripture and that it is morally informed and we are not to be haughty or condescending or think of ourselves better than other people and all of those kinds of things, all of that is in scripture, then I don't understand why there is any difficulty for Christians to do that, at least in principle, in any culture. The reason that the question I suspect is raised is because the understanding of compassion has changed radically because the culture has redefined it. And we have kind of absorbed that.

And people say, well, you Christians are not compassionate. You Christians are homophobic. You're misogynistic.

You're Islamophobic. Your haters, your bigots, you're intolerant. Well, these are all things that we receive.

We hear and we begin to think that they're right and Jesus is wrong, or at least the way we understand them. Because we want to be gracious and we want to be compassionate, but everybody's telling us we are not being compassionate. That's because they are celebrating sin and calling that celebration compassion.

You know, Greg, you mentioned that true compassion and love is when we put someone else ahead of ourselves. And this is precisely why this is difficult. Because if you're trying to protect yourself from other people being angry at you, it's very easy to give in.

It's very easy to say, yes, what you're doing is fine, even if you know it's not fine. But that's not compassion because that's putting yourself up above them. And that's not accepting the pain that will result from rejection.

From rejection, yes. So if you can think about it that way, make sure that you're not doing something because it'll make things easier for you because that's not compassion. It's interesting the way John characterizes Jesus in his opening chapter, talking about the word became flesh and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And when you read through the life of Jesus and what he did and what he said, both things were front and center. Yes, he was gracious, but he did not compromise on the truth. And when push came to shove on the truth issue, he pushed back.

Okay. And people love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. He who does not believe in the sun does not have life, the wrath of God abides on him.

Okay, that's John 3. That's like quite a bit kidding. That's right. The same chapter.

That's the famous verse, John 3 16, right following it, then then Jesus gives these sober words at the end of the chapter, 3 36. He talks with the wrath of God falling on people. So he was gracious, but he did not compromise truth.

And he did not think that the two of them were in conflict. And I want to emphasize kind of build on what you said earlier, Greg, about our character and we need to build wisdom and we do that by reading the Bible and by seeing who Jesus is. What God has done, how he's interacted with people because he's the ultimate example.

Jesus is the ultimate example of compassion. If you want to know how we should respond to people, learn from Jesus. And as we're reading, as we're doing everything, we're being shaped into the character of Jesus because that's what God's whole goal for us is according to Romans 8. That's what he's doing.

He's conforming us to the image of his son. So as you do that, you will gain wisdom about how to deal with these situations and we're going to make mistakes because we're fallen people. But the more you're shaped into the character of Christ, the better decisions you will make when it comes to these questions.

And I recommend, especially First Peter, which talks a lot about how Jesus responded when he was reviled, when he suffered. And that's how we need to be. So First Peter is a great book to focus on in building up this kind of wisdom.

And then if I could just give two quick practical suggestions, one of them is don't mock individual people. Just don't mock them. Treat them with dignity and just make it a rule that even when you're among people who agree with you, you're not going to mock human beings.

And I think that'll go a long way to how you see them and how you treat them. And then the final suggestion would be just the Colombo questions. If you want to be compassionate as you're engaging people on these topics, ask them questions, find out who they are.

Think of them as an individual human being who has their particular ideas and you're trying to draw them out and find out who they are and what they think. And that's what the questions do. And so that's there to help you be compassionate in your

conversations also.

Well said. Well, I'm sorry. I went over quite a bit.

But I wanted to include that so that we talked a little bit about what compassion is and why we're saying what we're saying. So thank you, Elise. And thank you, Deborah.

And if you have a question, you can send in on Twitter with the hashtag STRAsk or you can go through our website at STR.org. This is Amy Holland. Great Coco for Stand to Reason.