

OpenTheo

Christian Response to Gay Marriage



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Christian Response to Gay Marriage," Steve Gregg argues for the biblical definition of marriage as a divine institution between one man and one woman, grounded in the relationship between Christ and the church. He believes that Christians must resist the cultural shift towards acceptance of same-sex marriage and instead should show love and grace towards those in the homosexual community while still standing firm against homosexual acts. Gregg encourages the church to license their own marriages and enforce the contracts within the church community, rather than relying on government recognition.

Transcript

Well, tonight, as announced, I'm talking about the Christian response to the issue of same-sex marriage, and obviously this is an extremely timely subject for Christians to be considering. It's a timely subject for the whole nation, but especially for Christians because it threatens to challenge the culture in a more dramatic way than almost any of the other deviations from Christianity in our modern times have. Easy divorce came along in the 60s, and that was probably, previous to this, the most dramatic change.

We survived it, or did we? Look at the constituents in the church, how many of them have divorced, wrongfully, somebody that they shouldn't have divorced because of the easy divorce, and may find themselves in second marriages now and having regrets that they had done the wrong thing. How do churches deal with that? Some of those remarriages, if we take Jesus seriously and what he said about this subject, are not legitimate. Because Jesus said, a man who divorces his wife for any cause other than fornication and marries another commits adultery.

This change in our laws and in the definition of marriage back in the 60s has tremendously impacted the church, and perhaps the way it's impacted most has made us numb. Because we're not shocked anymore when we hear that Christian people are getting a divorce. We say, oh, them too, huh? And we don't realize that we've lost something that God created in the Garden of Eden, something called marriage, a divine institution, which, of course, all societies have taken over because even the societies

have gone away from God since the time of the creation, have retained the knowledge that marriage and family are the foundation of any society.

But the Christians have had the definition that God gave of what marriage is, and that definition has prevailed even among non-Christians for the most part throughout the past 6,000 years of history. Ours is the first generation to see a shift of the type that we're seeing, the first to be smarter than all others before, at least so we behave and act as if we think that way. I don't think the evidence is good that our present generation is the wisest of all generations of history.

I don't believe that the society is in its most enlightened or its most moral condition that it's ever been in. And therefore, the assumption that changes that are made in this generation that would have been frowned upon a generation ago and before that forever in every society do not have a very good claim on being an improvement. As the society's ideas change, they want to change the institutions to go along with their new ideas.

And they assume that, hey, new is better. Things have changed. But not all change is an improvement.

And just being newer doesn't mean it's better. It's too early to tell the amount of damage this will do. But it already has put a tremendous pressure on Christians because the new marriage ideas have been politicized.

We've got the Supreme Court involved. A new human right has been discovered that was never known to exist. The right of anyone to marry whoever they want to.

They want equal rights, they said. That's just propaganda. They want a right that no one else has.

And that is the right to redefine marriage. Same-sex couples have for most of my lifetime had the right to live together, have sex together, do whatever they want together. But that wasn't enough.

They want to change the meaning of an institution that has had one meaning in the dictionaries forever. So that all the dictionaries have to change. When the homosexual activists say we just want to have the same rights everyone else has, well, I don't have the right to change the definition of marriage.

If I want to say that marriage is when I put a rock and a piece of wood into a bed together, that's marriage. I can't do that. People can say you can put all the rocks and pieces of wood in bed you want to, but we're not going to call that marriage because that's not what marriage is.

You can't change the definition. You can go against it if you want to. And by the way, the

Supreme Court in their recent action has not really redefined marriage.

They have undefined marriage. There's really not any definition of marriage at this present time that will be able to withstand court challenges. Because as soon as three men want to marry the same woman, or three women want to marry the same man, or a person wants to marry a dog, actually in England there's a woman who wanted to marry a dolphin and did, I think.

There was in Florida some years ago a man who wanted to marry his television set. And at that time marriage still had a definition that would make that absurd. Today if somebody wants to do that, how can anyone deprive them of it? Marriage has been dislodged from its foundational definition and it has no clear definition now at all.

What is the basis for defining anything as a marriage, any relationship as a marriage? Well, Christians have an answer because the Bible defines marriage. Jesus defined marriage, but it was already defined before him, but he confirmed the definition of marriage. And for Christians his teaching is absolutely authoritative.

And if you want to see what Jesus said, just so we'll start out with an understanding of what the Bible actually does say on it. In Matthew chapter 19, Jesus was asked about not same-sex marriage, but he was asked about divorce. The Pharisees wanted to know whether he agreed with one rabbi or another on the disparate definitions of what were grounds for divorce.

Rabbi Hillel believed you could divorce your wife for any cause you wanted to. Rabbi Shammai believed that you had to pretty much have something like adultery or something as grounds for divorce. All Jews agreed that divorce was permitted, but they didn't agree about what it was permitted for.

And so the Pharisees, wondering which side of this controversy Jesus might land upon, came to him in Matthew 19. And it says in verse 3, the Pharisees also came to him testing him and saying to him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason? If Jesus had said yes, he would have sided with the rabbi named Hillel. If he had said no, he'd be siding with Shammai.

These rabbis had lived a generation earlier than Jesus, and they were the leaders of two main schools among the Pharisees. So they asked Jesus which side he came upon, and he said in verse 4, Have you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to him, Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away? And he

said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And then Jesus went on to say, If a man divorces his wife for any reason other than fornication, that if he remarries, it's adultery.

Now this is a passage about divorce, ostensibly. The question was about divorce. The question was about grounds for divorce.

But Jesus didn't answer it directly by speaking about divorce, but by speaking about marriage. He says, Haven't you heard what marriage is? He said, Haven't you heard what was written that God made them male and female, and said, For this cause a man will leave his father, mother, and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? Okay, now that we've got that established, I can talk to you about divorce. If they become one flesh inside of God, what God has joined, man should not put asunder.

So your answer to your question about divorce requires first understanding what marriage is. Because divorce isn't a thing in itself. Divorce is dissolution of something that already exists called marriage.

And to understand whether divorce is alright or not, you have to understand what marriage is. Now, homosexual activists sometimes say, Well, Jesus never said a word against same-sex marriage. He'd never heard of it.

Nobody had ever heard of it. There was no same-sex marriage in the world until the last few months, or maybe the last few years, because some states were allowing it here in the last few years. But prior to modern same-sex marriage, there was no same-sex marriage in any society.

Jesus never had to forbid it, because no one had ever dreamed of doing it. I'm not saying there was no homosexuality. There's been homosexuality as long as there's been people, probably.

Almost as long. But no one thought that marriage was anything other than a man and a woman becoming one flesh. And that's what Jesus defined it as.

In order to give a perspective on what divorce ethics should be, he said we need to understand what God had in mind when he made marriage. And Jesus didn't only quote Genesis 2.24. Genesis 2.24 is the statement, For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. Paul quoted that.

I mean, Jesus quoted it here. Paul quoted it in Ephesians. It's obvious that both Jesus and Paul felt that Genesis 2.24 was the definition of marriage.

But Jesus didn't start by quoting that. He started by quoting from Genesis chapter 1, where it says he made them male and female. And Jesus said, Have you not read that he that made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said the man will

leave his parents and join to his wife.

It's clear that Jesus saw the male and female part as part of the definition of marriage. And of course it is, because when you find in Genesis that man was made first and the woman was not yet made. God said in Genesis 2, It is not good that man should be alone.

I will make a helper for him. Now many people feel that the reason God said it was not good for a man to be alone is because it wasn't good for a man to be lonely. And therefore it is assumed by many that God made marriage in order to remedy the loneliness of Adam.

And therefore the main purpose of marriage was for fulfillment and companionship. I seriously doubt that that is what God had in mind when he said it's not good for man to be alone for the simple reason that man had never had a chance to get lonely. Adam and Eve were made on the same day.

Adam earlier apparently and Eve later, but in the meantime Adam had been naming all the animals and hanging out with God. I doubt that he had a chance to feel lonely. He's probably just marveling at everything God had made.

He's keeping busy and he noticed there was no woman for him, but that doesn't suggest he was necessarily lonely. He had God. He had an unbroken fellowship with God.

Even if he was prone to get lonely with those advantages, he hadn't had any time. I don't believe it was the loneliness of Adam that made it not good for him to be alone. It was not good for him to be alone because he couldn't do alone what God wanted done.

And what was that? We can see it very clearly when we read Genesis 1, when God said let us make man in our own image and let us give them dominion over all the things we've made. And he made the man male and female. He made them and it says, and he said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

It obviously was not possible for man alone to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. So it wasn't good for him to be alone because he couldn't fulfill the purpose that people were made for. When you go to the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, God is rebuking the Jews for divorcing their wives.

And he says, but did not God make them one? He's referring to Genesis where it says he made them one flesh. Malachi chapter two, I think it's around 15 maybe. He says, did he not make them one? And why did he make them one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.

It says in Malachi and in Genesis that the reason that God made male and female instead of two males and two females is that he was looking for godly offspring. And by the way,

companionship is not a bad reason to be married. But it is not why marriage was created.

Now, I believe that people who get married, who know they can't have children, are not necessarily doing anything wrong because in the history of marriage, it has served a function in society besides populating the world. And, you know, some people say, well, what if a woman's barren? Or what if a couple's too old or whatever and they can't get pregnant? Should they not get married? Well, no, marriage is an institution that has more than one function in society. But when we ask, why did God make marriage, which is going to explain what features of it make it essentially marriage? It was because it was not good that man would be alone.

He had to multiply and he needed a woman for that. Another man couldn't help in that and two women couldn't help. But it wasn't good for man to be alone.

So he made a woman and told them be fruitful, multiply. Now, while marriage has many other advantages besides multiplication, it was clearly the desire for offspring that caused God to make man and woman instead of making man as an amoeba. An amoeba doesn't need a partner to multiply.

God can make creatures that don't need partners to multiply. He could have made Adam so that he could split in two and become two whole beings and then four and so forth like an amoeba. Nothing could prevent God from doing it that way if he wanted to.

But he had something else in mind. Paul said when he quotes from Genesis 2, 24 and Ephesians 5, he quotes this. He says, for this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, the two shall be one flesh.

He says, this is a great mystery. I'm speaking of Christ and the church. God created marriage functionally to make it possible to multiply, but at the higher level, it was made to be a picture of Christ and the church.

The church is the bride of Christ and Christ is the bridegroom in the Scripture. And so there's something not just functional but something sacred in the way God made marriage. He made marriage to be a picture of something heavenly.

When God made the tabernacle or had Moses build the tabernacle, he said, make sure you make it according to everything that was in that pattern I showed you on the mountain. Remember, God showed Moses a pattern, a heavenly pattern of the tabernacle and said, when you make it, when you make the furniture and stuff, make sure, and God said this repeatedly to him, make sure you do it according to the way, the pattern you saw on the mountain. Why? Because it says in Hebrews 9 that the purpose of the tabernacle was to portray spiritual realities, heavenly realities.

If Moses changed the pattern in some way, it would misrepresent those realities. The

pattern needed to be followed in order to be a true reflection of the spiritual things. Marriage is that way too.

Marriage is a picture of spiritual things. Husbands and wives are like Christ and the church in some respects, and they're supposed to resemble them as much as they can in their relationship. If we change that, we're changing the message of what marriage is, what it depicts.

So for Christians, the model of marriage made by God reflected his purposes in it, although not all of his purposes in marriage were known in the Old Testament. Paul says in Ephesians, this is a great mystery, something people didn't know before, but it's about Christ and the church. We Christians know that there's actually a sacredness to the model, to the pattern that God made.

And when Christians get married, they are consciously intending to form a union that depicts that pattern as God made it. I think it's a shame, really, that the world a long time ago lost sight of what the pattern of marriage is. Certainly, non-Christian people don't think of it as a picture of Christ and the church.

And ever since the invention of birth control, people haven't really seen it as something for the purpose of reproduction. The idea that birth control is a normal thing, that marriage doesn't have to be fruitful anymore, is something that's kind of a modern change in the attitude about what marriage is about. The fact that marriage isn't necessarily permanent is something that became established in the 60s here, through the no-fault divorce laws.

So the reproductive function of marriage we lost somewhat before the 60s. The permanence of marriage we lost in the 60s. And now we've even lost the participants in the marriage.

And there's very little left in the world's eyes that resembles what God had in mind for marriage. But the question I have is, how should the Christian react to this? This lecture is about a Christian response to same-sex marriage. Many Christians are grieved to see Christian conventions abandoned by the secular world because we've come to be thinking of America as a Christian country.

We've come to think that we should really maintain, as much as possible, a Christian nation. But Jesus didn't actually encourage his disciples to turn pagan nations into Christian nations, but just turn pagans into Christians. He started his own kingdom, and we have been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his son, it says in Colossians 1.13. We belong to another kingdom.

Our citizenship is not on earth, it's in heaven, Paul said in Philippians chapter 3, verse 20, I believe it is. So we actually belong to another kingdom, as well as the one we're in. And

the one we're in is secular.

It's true our country was very much influenced by Christians in its founding documents and in its culture for several hundred years, not so much now. This is a grief to us as Christians, partly because it makes it harder for us. It's easier being a Christian in a country that more or less affirms what Christians believe about ethics and morals and don't think you're really weird for being moral.

And through most of American history, Christian morals were pretty much accepted as culturally norm. But we're living at a time where living for Christ, taking a stand for what's true, is no longer comfortable for us. There's much of that we're not going to be able to change.

And we need to just change our perspective then. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul is talking about fornication. And that is definitely very much related to what we're talking about tonight, too.

But he says in 1 Corinthians 5, 9, I wrote to you in my epistle. He means a previous one that's now been lost. He had written an earlier letter to the Corinthians.

He says, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters. Since then, you need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, that's a Christian, who is sexually immoral or covetous or an idolater or reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person. For what do I have to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are inside, but those who are outside God judges? Therefore, put away from yourselves that evil person. Now, Paul sees the church as needing to regulate its own membership, need to enforce its own morality.

He says, what do I have to do with judging those outside the church? They're not my problem. I mean, they may be a problem, but they're not my problem because God will judge those. We are not supposed to judge those who are outside the church.

Paul says, I don't do that. I want to judge those who are inside the church. Our churches have done just the opposite, as many of you know.

We pointed the finger at all the sinners outside the church who are changing the culture in a bad way and so forth, and we're scolding them and so forth. And yet inside the church, all kinds of sin goes undisciplined. There are divorces and remarriages that shouldn't happen.

There are people just living together that shouldn't be in the church. The church should

be disciplining its membership like Paul was in that place. He says, we need to judge those who are inside the church.

God will judge those who are outside. Don't you? He says, don't you judge those who are inside the church? Of course you have to get rid of that person from the church. But you see what he's saying is we have to kind of expect sinners to be sinners.

But we want to expect Christians to be Christians. If a person is a Christian, we expect them to behave like a Christian. And if they don't behave like a Christian, then we've got to address that.

And if they won't behave like a Christian, Paul says, then they're going to have to leave the fellowship because they can't profess to be a Christian and not be one. Our churches are very different than that. We want as many non-Christians in the church as we can because they at least put something in the bag when it goes by.

And so, you know, the church for a long time has been encouraging bring your non-Christian friends. And they've seen the church meeting more or less as an evangelistic service that sort of also gives a little bit of food, hopefully, to the saints. Paul didn't have that view of the church.

The church was a fellowship of dedicated disciples of Jesus. And that's the position we all have to decide about. Am I a disciple of Jesus or not? You see, we have couples in the church who shouldn't be there unless they're going to repent.

Some of them are people just living together who shouldn't be living together. Some of them are married to people they shouldn't be married to. Whether it's a guy who's married to someone else's wife who divorced her first husband without any grounds and is therefore living in adultery.

Or whether it's now it's going to be people who are of the same sex and that doesn't qualify as marriage, but they're having sex together and living together and they're called a marriage. These are situations the church has to deal with. It's interesting, though, if you'd exercise church discipline against almost anyone else who's committing any of the sins Paul named, there won't be any lawsuits.

But if you do church discipline against people who are a same sex couple and say, I'm sorry, if you're not going to follow Jesus, you're not supposed to be in the church. And if you're going to follow Jesus, you're not going to be living contrary to his teaching. There's probably legal repercussions.

I believe it's not going to be very long in this country before people like me end up in jail. It's been a long time coming. I expected it back in the 70s.

I've been expecting it almost from the time I went into the ministry. I thought the time

would come when people like me would be in jail, but it's been slow coming. So this is the world we now live in.

It's a world that will persecute people who stand for what Jesus said. But the church at least should be prepared to stand for what Jesus said, regardless of persecution. Throughout history, the best churches have always done that.

The best ministers have always stood up for what is true, even though some of them died as martyrs, many of them in the early days of the church and in more modern times, too, in places, communist countries and things like that. A lot of pastors have been killed and many of them are still in prison and tortured. That's not what we are used to here in this country.

And we have to ask ourselves, how committed to Jesus are we? A lot of Christians, or people who think they're self-Christians, are confused about this very issue. And certainly the idea that we might have to experience legal prosecution for taking a Christian stand on the issue of same-sex marriage, a lot of people like to wiggle out about it if they can. And frankly, some people are genuinely confused.

Because there are churches that are open to homosexuality as a norm and homosexual marriage, and those churches are becoming more numerous all the time. Partly because it's now legal to be married to someone of your same sex. And many Christians don't realize that what's legal isn't always moral.

Legality is determined by courts and legislatures and things like that. And in our country, most of those are not governed by people who have a Christian worldview at all. But morality is still defined by the Bible, still defined by Jesus.

And so Christians are going to have to say, even if it is legal, it is not moral. Now the problem with saying something like that is, even though that's a very unemotional statement, to say that is to make you a hater by modern parlance. You see, the way that the homosexual activists have won the day to a very large degree is by capturing the language.

If you own the language, you can own the ideas that are expressed in language. And so words that didn't used to mean certain things now mean those things. So the word love means have sex with.

So when somebody says, who are you to tell me who I'm allowed to love? What they mean is, who are you to tell me who I'm allowed to have sex with? See, I can't tell you who you're allowed to love. I could love my neighbor's wife, but I can't have sex with my neighbor's wife. In fact, I should have I should love everybody.

I should even love my enemies. The Bible says that who I love is not the issue. It's who I have sex with.

That's the issue. It's not a question of telling people who they're allowed to love. But you see, as soon as love has suddenly included sex in the definition, then you sound like a very mean person to be telling people they shouldn't be loving somebody of the same sex.

Well, I don't mind how many people of the same sex you love. I love a lot of people of the same sex as me. I've got a lot of Christian brothers that I love very much.

David and Jonathan loved each other. It says even above the love that a man has for a woman, David and Jonathan loved each other. Of course, you know what they've done with that in the gay community.

But there's no suggestion at all that there is any homosexuality between them. They were just fast friends. To love someone of the same sex is not forbidden.

To have sex with them is. And where is it forbidden? Well, among other places, in Leviticus chapter 18. Leviticus 18.22 says, you should not lie with a male as with a woman.

It is an abomination. Here, it's made very clear. If a man lies with a man the way a man lies with a woman.

Now, notice it's thinking of lying with a woman, not in an immoral way. The assumption is marriage. A man lies with a woman legitimately when he's married to her.

But a man cannot lie with another man that way. Now, I'll tell you what Christians who believe that homosexuality should be allowed in the church say about this. They say, well, why should you go by what Leviticus says there? When in fact, there's lots of things in Leviticus we don't do anymore.

The Mosaic law said that you can't wear clothing of wool and cotton together. It also said you can't eat shellfish and a lot of other things that we gladly eat. And those are forbidden in Leviticus.

They're even called an abomination, just like homosexual sex is called an abomination. So why would we say that just because Leviticus says this, that it's wrong? Well, the reason is because the laws of Moses fall into different categories, and Paul made a reference to those differences, as also did Jesus. Jesus made it clear, and so did Paul, that some of the laws in the law of Moses are of a moral nature, which cannot be changed because morality is based on the character of God, which doesn't change.

So morality doesn't change. Murder will never be right. Adultery will never be right.

Stealing will never be right. Morality doesn't change. But there are things in the law that are mere ceremonial laws, including laws about what you can eat and what you can't

eat.

And Paul made this distinction to the confused Corinthians, because the Corinthians remembered that Paul had said to them that all things are lawful. He meant foods, but they decided that included all sex partners are lawful because the Corinthians were very lascivious, and there was a lot of fornication in their culture. He says in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 6, All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. They're not eternal.

Food and the stomach, your body that you have now is not going to be around forever. Food's not going to be around forever. It's not eternal.

These are passing things, no pun intended. The point is, it says, now the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. Some of the rules that God gave to Moses through Moses were simply about things like food.

These things, they don't stay. They're not eternal. They'll eventually pass away.

But the body that God's given you is not for immorality. Sexual immorality is one of those things that doesn't change. By the way, the same chapter of Leviticus forbids having sex with animals.

Most homosexuals do not believe that having sex with animals should be called marriage, or even should be called moral. And so if they're going to argue, why do you forbid homosexuality on the basis of Leviticus when you don't forbid eating shellfish, which is also forbidden in Leviticus, you might just say, well, would you forbid a man having sex with an animal? Why do you forbid that when you don't forbid eating shellfish? Because everybody knows there's a difference between what you eat and your sexual morality. If a man steals my food from my cupboard, and this is brought up in Proverbs 6, if a man steals when he's hungry, you know, he'll have to repay it.

But if a man sleeps with another man's wife, he's going to die for that. That's what Solomon said, and of course not about homosexuality, but it's about the difference between stealing somebody's stuff and stealing somebody's sex partner, somebody's mate. What you eat is not anywhere near as important as the faithfulness of the partner that you're with, and therefore marriage and sex, as God designed it, is something that's far more transcendent than laws about what you put on your body or what you eat and things like that.

And Paul himself made that point, and Jesus did too. Jesus made it very clear that some laws are ceremonial and others are moral. And he basically chastised the Pharisees because they didn't know the difference.

The point I would make is if somebody says, well, what do you think about same-sex marriage? I'd want to say, well, what is marriage? According to God, a man and a woman leave their former homes and become one flesh together, permanently, at least until one of them is dead. Now, that should tell you what I think about divorce. That should tell you what I think about same-sex marriage.

That should tell you what I think about a number of things related to marriage, because that's what marriage is, and its very definition answers the question. There are a number of objections that are raised against the Christian view of marriage, excluding homosexuals, because people say, well, homosexual people, that's an orientation that some people are just born with. And that being so, why should they be denied the right to the satisfaction of marriage? Well, nobody has a human right to satisfaction in marriage.

If so, then probably the vast majority of married people are being deprived of that right for one reason or another. Most people get married all dreamy-eyed about what marriage is going to be like, and five, ten years later, they realize it's not exactly as they pictured it. Sometimes they're still happy, other times they're not happy at all.

Given the high percentage of marriages that end in divorce, I'm going to suggest that probably a very large percentage of marriages are not happy, and are not fulfilling. But that doesn't mean they're allowed to get a divorce, because we don't have a human right to be happy in marriage. We have every right to do all we can to make our marriage a happy marriage.

And if both people try, they can usually do it. The problem is when one really wants it and the other doesn't, or when neither of them want it. If both parties in a marriage really want to have a happy marriage, there are ways that they can almost always pull it off.

Even so, that doesn't mean they'll have a great sex life. There are happy marriages where the man or the woman, because of some health condition, simply can't be engaged in that. There are marriages where the wife is no longer physically attractive to her husband.

And he could easily perhaps be interested in another woman that was more attractive, but he's not allowed to go there. We are not allowed to just say, I want to be with this other person, so I have a right to be with this other person. There are many godly men and women in marriages that are no longer satisfying to them.

But they are faithful to them because satisfaction in marriage is not the highest goal. But pleasing God is the highest goal. Now we live in a time where that sounds very, very strange to anyone's ears.

What do you mean satisfaction is not the highest goal? You mean pleasing God when you're not happy about it, that that somehow is a good thing? If you wonder that, I just have to inform you, you're a product of modern culture far more than you realize. Anyone who's a Christian, who's really been born again, has made a decision at the point that they became Christian that it's not going to be about them anymore, it's going to be about the will of God. Jesus said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Taking up a cross is not what anyone enjoys doing. Denying oneself is the first step. What does it mean to deny yourself? It means you say, it's not about me anymore.

It always was. As far as I was concerned, it was always about me. It's not going to be about me anymore.

I'm denying my role as the head and the center of my universe. God is in that position now. I'm converted, I've changed, I've repented, I've changed my mind, turned around.

Now, from now on, it's God's will, not mine. Paul said, if I was still pleasing men, I could not be the servant of Christ. But he also said, we ought to not please ourselves.

Because pleasing ourselves is what you do when you're not concerned about what God wants. Now, there's a lot of people in churches who call themselves Christians who've really never been converted. They've never actually come to a place where they said, not my will, but thine be done.

They weren't told that that's what it means to become a Christian. They were told, you say a sinner's prayer, you go forward at an altar call, you've got your ticket to heaven in your back pocket, do as you will, you'll end up in heaven. And that's an awful lot of people were converted under no more demanding preaching than that.

I'm sorry to hear it because it's hard for them because they've come to think of themselves as Christians. But they are not disciples. They are not followers of Christ.

They are opportunists. You see, there's two ways the gospel can be preached. One of them will lead people astray and the other one will bring true conversion.

One is to preach the gospel as something that will benefit you. Now, I want to say this, obeying Christ will benefit you. It might not feel like it because trials don't feel good.

But the Bible says that no chastening seems joyous at the time but grievous, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it. Trials, chastening, things that come with the package of being a follower of Christ, they don't always feel good, but they're good for you. Some medicines don't feel good, but they're good for you.

My friend David who's having his leg cut off tomorrow, I imagine he doesn't feel real good about that, but apparently it's good for him or else they wouldn't do it. There are things that we would not choose because we would choose the easy way. When we want to appeal to people and say, listen, come to Jesus and it'll be all good, and we sell Jesus like we sell soap.

Say this soap is better than this soap because today your life isn't very good, but if you come to Jesus, your life will be good in all these good ways. Who could turn that down? Well, some people manage to, but a lot of people come right up forward and they say, yeah, I want that. I want that.

I want to have eternal life. I want to go to heaven when I die. I don't want to go to hell.

I want to be able to feel like God is not angry at me. But they don't know what they're supposed to do to become Christians. They don't know they're supposed to deny themselves, take up their cross, become disciples of Jesus, follow him, be loyal to him even till death.

That's what the message is. The message is there's another king, one Jesus, and he demands obedience. He demands loyalty.

If a person defects from his country in the heat of battle because it's hard being there, he's a defector. If a person defects from obeying Christ because it's hard in the battle to obey Christ, they're a defector. They're not loyal to their king.

Coming to Christ means I'm putting everything that are my interests, subordinating them to the interests of God. Of course, I'd love to have a lifelong marriage to somebody who fulfills my every desire. Some of you have had that.

My parents have that. My parents have just celebrated their 66th anniversary last week. And as near as I can tell, they've been happy the whole time.

They seem happy now. I've never known them to seem unhappy. Never even seen them argue.

They're one couple in a million. Most people want a marriage like that. Most people don't have one.

Why? Because life doesn't deliver all of our desires to us. God is not required to make us happy. His interest is to make us holy.

If you're happy to be holy, then you can be happy all the time as a Christian. If you're happy to be carnal and meet your own needs and your own desires, well, then you might not always be happy as a Christian because Christianity won't always guarantee those things. If you don't have the marriage you wish you had, you can be happy anyway.

Happiness is a decision you make. Being grumpy and resentful, that's a decision you make too. Now, if a person says, I've had same-sex desire all my life, I don't even have any attraction to the opposite sex, how can I be deprived of sexual happiness? Join the club.

Join the club. I'll bet there's a number of married people here in long-lasting lifetime marriages, probably. I don't know you guys, but just by what I know from statistics, I'll bet there's a lot of people here who aren't sexually satisfied.

I've had a Christian friend I knew, he said he and his wife had not had sex for seven years because she had physical pain. But they loved each other and they were happy. It was hard on him.

I'm not going to say it wasn't. It was hard on him, but he just adjusted. So I guess this is what God has for me.

And he could be happy. Now, we live in an age where sex is considered to be everything. All satisfaction, all happiness is somehow related to your sexual satisfaction.

That is a delusion. That has been advertising in Hollywood movies and everything, has given people the impression that sex is supposed to be exciting, satisfying all the time. And if it isn't, find somebody else with whom it will be.

That is a fairly modern idea, and it's not an enlightened idea. It's an idea that has wrecked homes, destroyed children. The sooner we get it out of our heads that sexual satisfaction is guaranteed to me, and we come back to reality and say, listen, being a good person, an honest person, a faithful person to my promises, faithful to God, that's what's good.

That's what's good. And that's also what's ultimately good for me. And it's going to be make me a blessing to God and to others.

And that's my goal. Well, if I have same-sex attraction and not opposite-sex attraction, I'm going to have to assume I'm not one of those people who's going to get, as a Christian, I'm not going to get sexual satisfaction. But it's not just the gay person who's in that boat, but a great portion of people, Christians and non-Christians, who are not gay, but for whatever reason, they also are deprived of sexual satisfaction.

Get over it. Deal with it. Get on with your life.

If you're not going to get happiness there, look for the ways that God's going to make you fulfilled in other things. There are things more important after all. I'm not trying to minimize sex.

Sex is a sacred thing in marriage. But because it's sacred, we're not allowed to tamper

with it. We're not allowed to redefine it.

Believe me, I'm sympathetic. I feel very, very sorry for people who feel like they can never be in a heterosexual marriage, and therefore they're looking at either having gay sex or no sex. And there are some of that type who are choosing no sex.

I have a friend who's been in ministry for 40 years in San Francisco, gay, and he got saved about 40 years ago. I asked him once, I said, you know, you've been a Christian for decades now. How's that gay thing? You know, does that change? Have your desires shifted at all since you've been out of the gay scene and thinking more like a Christian? He said, I think it works for some people, but it hasn't for me.

He still struggles with it. 40 years of struggling with his sexual desire, but he doesn't cheat. He doesn't get that satisfaction.

But you know what? Christians are supposed to believe that the satisfaction we're going to have for the most part is going to be in eternity. We need to conform to the will of God here so that in eternity there will be no question about our satisfaction. In his presence, his fullness of joy and his right hand are pleasures forevermore, the Bible says.

Not sexual, but you see, our sexual pleasures that are built into us at creation. We're built there to be a picture of something that's not sexual, namely our relationship with Christ. Our relationship with Christ is not sexual, but why did God create something like sex to be a picture of it? Certainly sex is one of the most ecstatic and enjoyable activities that God has given to man to do.

Certainly it is a type and a shadow of something that's not sexual, but it's certainly more ecstatic, something more satisfying. We have the shadow here. We'll have the light in all its brilliance there.

I don't know what the resurrection will be like with Christ, but Jesus said there'll be no marriage there. Jesus said they won't marry in the resurrection, but that's not going to mean, oh, we're going to be deprived. Now, I got a feeling there's going to be no marriage because what we have there is something so much better that we won't even miss it.

You tell a kid who has a tricycle that someday he's going to give up his tricycle and ride a two-wheeler. He doesn't want to do it, but once he rides a two-wheeler, he doesn't want that tricycle anymore. Paul said, when I was a child, I thought as a child and I spoke as a child, I acted like a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

This life is childhood, and the toys and the activities that enamor us so much in this life are temporary. They're part of this infantile stage of our existence. When Jesus comes, we're resurrected, we live forever, we live as adults.

We have desires that we never thought we'd have. A friend of mine in school, when I was maybe in like third grade, described to me what sex was like. He'd never done it, but he heard.

It wasn't all that accurate, but the truth is, when I heard what sex was like, I thought, I'll never do that. That's awful. That sounds horrible.

But you see, when I became a man, I put away childish attitudes. I realized after I passed a certain stage that I would appreciate things I didn't appreciate as a child. And likewise, my dad, when I was a little kid, I said, what's heaven going to be like? He said, well, there you'll have everything you want.

And as a kid, I thought, well, I'll have all the toys and all the candy and all the ice cream that I'll ever want. That's great. Heaven's going to be great.

When I got older, I realized that I don't want heaven to be a place where I get all the toys and ice cream and candy I want. There's things that are more satisfying to an adult than that. We cannot imagine what there will be instead of sex, of which sex is only a type and a shadow here, as marriage is a type and a shadow of our relationship with Christ.

Now, the person who doesn't have sex, you know, they're missing out on something, but they're missing out only for a short time on something that's temporary. And they're going to have, if they're Christians, the thing itself forever and ever and ever. It's something we cannot even imagine how enjoyable it will be or in what way it will be.

There are people who separate themselves from marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God. In Matthew, chapter 19, the passage we were reading earlier, when Jesus said that a man can't divorce his wife and marry another unless it's for the cause of adultery, to his disciples who had been trained under the Jewish way of thinking, much more light thinking about divorce, they said, well, if that's the way it is, then it's good for a man not to marry. In other words, in verse 10, they said, if you can't get out of marriage any easier than that, it's better not to go in in the first place.

Now, Jesus didn't even deny that. He just said, not everyone can accept that. Not everyone can accept that idea of singleness.

Only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb. And there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men.

And there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it. Now, I was actually reading what was written by a gay Christian using this verse saying, you see, Jesus said that people cannot remain celibate unless they've been given the gift of celibacy.

Not all can receive this, but those to whom it has been given. But if you are a kind of

person that cannot marry biblically, then that celibacy is something God's given you. You may not feel that it's easy, but the Bible doesn't say life is easy.

There are great temptations in life that we have to face, and we have to overcome them. And to overcome temptation is everybody's responsibility, whether they're gay or straight. I realize it must be hard for a person who's gay to think, I can't live my whole life without sex.

But you know what? You don't have to live your whole life without sex right now. You just have to live right now without sex. If you aren't in a situation where you can legitimately have sex with a wife or a husband, then you just have to live without sex right now.

And then a moment from now, you have to live without sex then, too. And ten years from now, you'll have to be doing it again. But you don't ever have to live a lifetime without sex at any given moment.

You only have to live at this moment, as without anything. In my first marriage, there wasn't much sex. And there was none at all after the first six months.

Was that easy? It was not easy. If a gay person is here, what I'd say, they can't say, Steve, you don't know what it's like to have to abstain. I know what it's like.

It's harder to be married and not have sex than to be single and not have sex, because you can stay away from the people who tempt you. If you're not married, when you're married, you have to be with them, intimately, but not in a way that satisfies your drives. When my last wife left me, I spent ten years as a single man.

For all I knew, I might remain a single man. If I were a homosexual man, I'd be exactly in the same position that I was in for those ten years, and that, for all I knew, I might be in for the next 40 years. But I only had to do it one day at a time, just like everybody else.

When someone says, I can't think of going my whole life like this, you don't have to right now. You just have to go through this day like this. And if you are determined to please God, there are ways that can be done.

There are ways you can avoid the temptations. The Christian church has got to uphold the standard of discipleship. Christianity is not just living kind of a nice life, that's a big umbrella for everyone who wants to live kind of a nice life.

They have to refrain from things that the Bible forbids. Now, it is sometimes said that Jesus never forbade homosexuality. Jesus, as far as we know, never spoke about homosexuality specifically, for the simple reason that he lived in Israel, where homosexuality was either nonexistent or very much in the closet, because people could be put to death for homosexual acts.

I don't think homosexuality was a very major factor in Jewish society. When Jesus was here, there wasn't much for him to address about it. But he wasn't silent on it, because Jesus did speak against fornication.

And fornication is not just premarital sex. In our modern English, when we talk about people fornicating, we fear they're not married to anybody and they're having sex together, because we've kind of limited fornication to that one definition. But in the Bible, the word *porneia*, which is fornication, or in the translation I read tonight, sexual immorality, *porneia* is a Greek word that refers to all forms of sexual activity that are not lawful.

Now, when Jesus used the word *porneia*, the standard of what was and was not lawful sexual activity was certainly defined in his culture by the law of Moses. And he didn't ever give a different standard. When Jesus said sexual immorality, that's an umbrella term.

He didn't say that the umbrella contained fewer or more items under it than they already knew about from their law. He was a Jew, speaking to Jews. He never redefined morality or immorality.

He accepted it. He said that what Moses wrote was from God. And so Jesus was not favorable toward any sexual practice that was other than what he described as marriage.

Any sex outside of marriage is fornication, and fornication is forbidden both by Christ and the rest of the New Testament. By the way, the fact that fornication includes homosexual sex, but is not limited to it, is seen when you look at the book of Jude, for example, in verse 7, as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in similar manner to these, having given themselves over to *porneia*, sexual immorality it says here, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Now, it says that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah went after strange flesh and they were guilty of *porneia*, that's fornication.

We know the specific fornication that they were interested in was sex with two men, men with men, so it was a homosexual kind of *porneia*. But that's not the only kind of *porneia*. Christian churches should discipline members who are engaged in *porneia*, regardless what kind it is.

If young people are sleeping together and they call themselves Christians and they're in the church and they're not married to each other, they should come under church discipline, even if they're male and female. If someone's sleeping with somebody else's wife or someone else's husband, that's *porneia* too, that should be disciplined. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5, which we read a moment ago, we read this verse in 1 Corinthians 5, 9, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with people who are fornicators,

porneia.

And he said in verse 11, Now I've written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is a fornicator, porneia. So no form of fornication is to be tolerated in the fellowship of the saints. It doesn't cease to be fornication if a judge says it's a marriage.

If a judge says it's marriage and the Bible doesn't say it's a marriage, then it isn't. Jesus said if a man divorces his wife for any cause other than porneia and marries another, he's committing adultery. But wait, he's married.

He married the other. He married the new woman. He's got a marriage certificate from the courthouse.

He's still committing adultery. Why? Because Jesus said so. Not everybody is free to marry, including people who are still married to somebody else because they never had grounds for divorce.

Lots of people don't get to marry. Lots of people don't get to marry someone they'd like to marry. Some people do marry and don't have sexual satisfaction marriage.

So all of these arguments that appeal to our compassion, which we certainly must have, we should have compassion for anyone who's struggling with something as severe as same-sex attraction. But we shouldn't be redefining marriage over it. After all, in the censuses that have been taken in recent times, no more than 3% of the population claim to be homosexual, and actually half of them claim to be bisexual.

So really, something like 1.7% of the population claim to be homosexual exclusively. Well, I feel awfully sorry for that minority. They are people.

We should not pity them. But there are larger percentages of the population that we feel sorry for, too, but we don't normalize their situation. Homosexuality is not normal sexuality, no matter how much people try to make it so.

It has not been shown to be genetic. It has not been shown to be hereditary. And even pro-gay sources have gone on record saying that the American Psychiatric Association is very pro-gay.

They've said there's no evidence for a genetic component in homosexuality. Many pro-gay researchers have said that. In fact, one pro-gay researcher said there's virtually no evidence whatsoever for a genetic cause of homosexuality, but it's a great political way of getting sympathy.

If someone says, hey, we're like black people. No, they're not like black people. Black people were born black, and they can't conceal the way that their skin color is either.

Furthermore, being black doesn't predict for bad behavior. There are black people who live righteous, godly lives. Now, to be same-sex, you can still live a godly life.

There are, as I said, many same-sex attracted people, gay people, who are living godly lives. They're just not living sexually satisfied lives. If we're going to make sexual satisfaction the value that redefines everything God has set up in Scripture as the norm, then we have made an idol out of sex.

You see, just because you have sexual desires, that doesn't define what you are. I'm a heterosexual, but I still have to restrain myself, because as a heterosexual, I've many times had lengths of time when I wasn't allowed to do anything about it. And even when I am allowed to do something about it in marriage, what if I'm tempted outside the marriage? Men have temptations all over the place, but temptation isn't sin.

Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. The Bible doesn't forbid you to be tempted, it forbids you to sin. If you say, but my strong desires, they have to govern who I am.

Well, I thought Jesus was governing who you are. Being a heterosexual is not how I identify myself, it's one of the things that is true about me, but I don't walk around thinking, I'm proud to be straight. Well, I'm not particularly proud about it, it's something that is true about me, but it isn't what defines me.

Things more important than that define me. And I don't know why any Christian, and I'm only concerned right now about Christians who are gay, Christians who want to be married and be in the church and so forth, who are gay. A Christian's identity is not as gay, but as a follower of Christ.

And if a person says, well, but I insist that I also must have my gay relationship and follow Christ. Well, if Christ says no, and you say yes, it's because you're idolizing sex. And believe me, you're not alone.

Our whole culture idolizes sex, but that's one of the things we need to change when we become Christians. We have to change our mind. Sex is not a god.

Sex does not call the plays for our game. It can't be allowed to. Sometimes it does.

I have to admit, almost all Christians, myself included, have allowed sex drive to move me to think, thoughts, or do things that I really wouldn't have done if I was only thinking about Christ and nothing else at that moment. So, I mean, it's one of those temptations. People face it.

We all succumb to temptation sometimes. But we can't change the definition of sin to match our failures. We can't celebrate dysfunction.

Do you know there's more people who are bipolar than there are gay in the population? But we're not going to celebrate bipolar disorder. It's not normal. We're not going to have bipolar pride parades.

We're going to say, let's see if we can help you here, some medication, maybe fix that. You know, there's all kinds of non-normal situations that we call pathologies. We call them diseases in some cases.

A larger percentage of the population are in that condition than are gay. And we don't celebrate the dysfunction. We try to do what we can to cure it.

Now, the conventional wisdom is that you can't cure gay orientation. Almost all the gay actives are very rabidly against any kind of attempt for a gay person to go straight. In fact, it's becoming illegal for counselors to try to help a gay person go straight even if they want to, which is very strange because if a straight person wanted to go gay, I'm sure the government would be all for counselors helping in that direction.

Someone who's always been straight who discovers when they're in their 30s that, hey, I think I'm gay, well, they're all about that. I changed my orientation in the middle of my life. I know a woman who was married for many years, has several children, and by the time her children were teenagers, she discovered she was gay.

And so she left her husband and went off with a gay lover. Well, what was she all those years when she was having children with her husband? Now, she might say, but I never really got total satisfaction out of sex with my husband. Well, again, welcome to the club.

Lots of women who aren't gay don't find total satisfaction in sex in their marriage. But that doesn't mean that you're gay, and it doesn't mean anything about what you ought to do and run off and leave your responsibilities so that you can be satisfied with someone that you're more attracted to. How did you get all of a sudden to realize I'm attracted to women when you're a woman? In the middle of your life.

And can't a person who is gay when they're younger change and realize, hey, I think I want to be interested in the opposite sex now? No, that's not allowed. Politically, that's not allowed. But there are many people in ex-gay ministries who have changed.

Now, let me just say this. Ex-gay ministries, and there are many of them, if they're honest, they do not promise that you can change. If you are gay and you want to change, there's no promise that you can do it.

Many people who've gone into ex-gay ministries have failed to change. They went in there hoping to get rid of their same-sex attraction and to develop instead heterosexual interest. And they failed.

It didn't happen. Like my friend. He never went into such a ministry, but he's still, he's

been in the ministry for himself for 40-something years, he still has same-sex attraction, he just avoids it.

He avoids the temptations. Well, that's the way it is for many people. There's no guarantee in Scripture that becoming a Christian or living a Christian life will remove all the temptations to do the wrong thing and will change you in ways that you just don't want those around you.

I know people who, when they got saved, they didn't want a cigarette ever again. I knew people who, when they got saved, they just weren't interested in marijuana again. I also knew people who had been saved for years and they struggled with smoking cigarettes and still crave marijuana and things like that.

There's people, some people get over it, some people don't. There's just no way to predict for that. But there are a significant number of people who were homosexual who have become married.

Now, most homosexual activists would say, well, they were bisexual and they weren't truly homosexual because if they could get married, they weren't really homosexual. Well, but they thought they were homosexual. Just like maybe you, Mr. Gay or Ms. Gay Advocate, maybe you think you're homosexual like they thought they were, but they got over it.

Or frankly, if half the gay people in this country believe that they're bisexual, well, since marriage is monogamous, why not pick someone of the opposite sex and be monogamous with them? It really comes down to only about 1.7% of the population that really say they're uniquely gay. I really feel very sorry for them because if someone told me, when I was single, if someone told me, you can't remarry, and I could have reached that conclusion because I'm divorced. And there's lots of Christians who believe that divorced people shouldn't remarry, no matter what their divorce situation is, that all divorce and remarriage is wrong.

There's lots of Christians out there believe that. If I had become persuaded of that, I would have had to accept, OK, as a divorced person, divorced against my will. I fought tooth and nail against the divorce, but it happened anyway.

OK, so I can't remarry. If I had concluded that, I didn't. But that's only because I read the Bible more carefully than some people do, I think, and realize that that isn't the case.

But I realized that there are divorced people who believe they cannot remarry and they have to do what a gay person has to do, say, I guess I'll never be married. I was single for 10 years. I thought it might be 50.

I didn't know how long it would be. But if I had concluded I could never remarry, I would simply have avoided the kind of situations where I might be tempted by women. And

that's what I would, of course, do if I were limited to same sex attraction.

You know, Jesus said there's some people who are eunuchs from the womb. Now, eunuch in the old days was actually somebody who was castrated, usually by a king. He castrated his servants, especially those who watched his harem before him.

But sometimes even servants of kings who didn't watch harems were castrated just so that they'd be undistracted from their duties. That's why Jesus said some people are made eunuchs by men. Others are born eunuchs.

Now, I'm not sure exactly what that means unless it's talking about people who are kind of just born deformed in a way that they don't really have normal sexual equipment or desire. I have a friend I knew in the 70s who had organs of male and female, and he was an adult. And it was really, obviously, a horrible, horrible thing for him to go through.

But he's a Christian and he was making it as a Christian. But it was really a really strange and rare thing. Maybe that's what Jesus meant.

Some are born eunuchs from the womb. But he said some have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Now, that's not the easiest thing in the world to do.

But I believe that if we walk in the spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of flesh. And we can't necessarily live sin free, but we can live a life that's the trajectory is toward holiness, even if there's some failures once in a while. But holiness is the direction we're going.

Now, some people in church history have actually castrated themselves. When Jesus said some have made themselves eunuchs, Origen, the church father in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century, castrated himself, taking that scripture very literally. Most scholars believe that he's not really talking about literal castration, but more or less the mentality of being a eunuch.

I did want to talk about this whole issue because it's a shift in the mentality of Western civilization that we in the church are going to have to live with. We're probably not going to turn it back the other way. And I know that some people think, well, with this kind of a irreversible change in culture, it must mean we're in the end times and Jesus is coming back.

I hope he may. That will make things easier for us if he does. If he doesn't come back for a while, we're going to become more and more countercultural or else more and more compromised.

Those are the two options. We can either compromise with the world or we can be more and more radically countercultural. Now, frankly, if we had all been living as radical disciples up to this point, we would have been fairly countercultural even before the

issue of same sex marriage came along.

Christians are not all that interested in being countercultural. When you go against the culture, the culture is against you. And there's more of them than there are of us.

And a lot of people don't like to be in a persecuted minority. But now there's just going to be no choice. I mean, the churches are making a choice.

Some of them are going the way of being gay affirming. And they're going to go the way of the world because they're not going to be following Christ. A Christian is somebody who follows Christ.

Now, I realize that gay Christians do redefine and reinterpret passages of Scripture, but they don't do it very well. When Paul talks about homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6, verses 9 through 11, he doesn't only talk about homosexuality. He talks about a lot of different things, but includes homosexuality in his conversation.

And notice what he says about it in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators. Okay, that's anyone who's sexually immoral in any way, but he gets more specific too. Nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Okay, people who do those things are not going to inherit the kingdom of God. Does that mean they're not saved? Sounds like it. So if churches are going to go against that and say, well, we're going to let our people fornicate and commit adultery and be homosexual and sodomites and so forth, well, that's just the way we're going to do it.

Well, I'm going to say that they're not going to inherit the kingdom of God. Sounds like they've stopped being a church. They've stopped being a community of disciples of Jesus.

Those who are going to stand with the scriptures are going to be facing more challenges. Now, one of the challenges we have is even to know how to talk about marriage, because the word marriage always meant something, and it doesn't mean that anymore. And yet, what marriage used to mean is still a very sacred thing to Christians.

Christians are still going to want to get married. But in our day, marriage is used so loosely in the culture. It doesn't mean that you're of opposite sex.

It doesn't mean that you're committed for life. It doesn't mean that you have any interest in starting a family. All those things that marriage used to be are not assumed in the word anymore.

And it's almost the place where Christians are going to decide, are we going to go for a

different word? I don't have another word to offer, but I think that thinking Christians are going to probably have to come up with something, because marriage doesn't mean the same thing anymore. When we say marriage, people are not going to understand what we're talking about anymore. They're going to think we're talking about something else.

And Christians need to have a distinctive testimony about what marriage is, what Christian marriage is especially. And so the new ruling about same-sex marriage has done a great disservice to society. In the interest of maybe less than 1% of the population who actually are same-sex people who actually want to get married, most don't.

Most homosexuals don't want to get married. Only a small fraction of them want to. So less than 1% of the population wants to have same-sex marriage.

The rest of us now have to find another word for what it is that we believe marriage is. Because the word we've been using has just changed in the dictionaries, and we have to find some other word to be precise. I don't know what that word is going to be.

I'm not going to be the one changing it, but I think it's going to have to be done. It's also the case that we might have to start doing what I've thought for a long time the church should do. But churches aren't necessarily listening to me, so they're not going to do it because I say so.

I think they're going to just intuitively have to make this change. They're going to have to start licensing their own marriages in the Christian community and skipping City Hall. Now City Hall licenses for marriages give some kind of, supposedly, give some kind of security, financial I suppose, in the case of a divorce.

But people who get married and promise to stay married forever shouldn't be thinking about divorce anyway. Christians should preach a biblical thing of marriage that has all the features of biblical marriage, and we should license within the body of Christ, the leaders of the church, the church congregation, the family, the spiritual family of the couple should license the marriage, should witness the vows, and the church should give the license and bypass City Hall. And it should be understood that that marriage cannot be broken.

City Hall can't divorce them because City Hall didn't marry them. Any divorce will have to come through the church, and the church is going to only do that on a biblical basis. As soon as the City Hall started giving divorces for no reason at all in the 60s, it made it very clear that marriage isn't the same thing to the courts as it is to us.

So why should they be the one licensing? Why should they be giving us permission to be in a relationship that God created and the state did not? Now, most of us who are married already have a license from the City Hall. I remember Joni Mitchell had a song,

We don't need a piece of paper from the City Hall keeping us tried and true, but I doubt if she's still with the same man now that she was then. Maybe she needed a piece of paper from the City Hall, but probably it wouldn't have done any good because a piece of paper from the City Hall doesn't keep people married.

That's just it. It's the only contract that the government recognizes that it won't defend. It won't defend the contract.

It'll break it up as soon as someone wants to. And so maybe the courthouse, the church may have to evolve a new mentality that we don't really care what the courts say. They don't determine who's married and who's not.

The courts have for a long time been calling people married who are actually living in adultery according to Jesus. And so the church maybe is a little slow on the uptake here, but needs to really say, you know, marriage to us is something sacred. To the courts, who knows what it is? The courts don't even know what it is.

They don't even know what they think it is. They don't even have a definition anymore. So why don't we just, in the Christian community, license our own marriages and enforce those contracts before God in the Christian community? I believe that that's probably one of the changes the church is going to have to do.

And we're going to have to be prepared to be persecuted, but at the same time loving the people who are persecuting us. That's what Jesus did. The people who crucified him, he said, They don't know what they're doing.

And they had tortured him and were murdering him in a horrible way. He knew that they didn't know better, and he had grace toward them. We need to be that way too.

Now, not all homosexual people are persecutors. Many homosexual people really are Christians, and they're living celibate lives. And they really love the Lord as much as you do, and they're living just as holy as you do.

They're just wrestling with different demons than you're wrestling with, different temptations than you have. And we've got to pity them and consider them to be just like any other Christian. It's only when somebody says, Because of my sexual orientation, I'm going to have sex as I please, not as God pleases, that that's when church discipline has to come in.

That's when something is being done wrong. It's not wrong to be gay. It's not wrong for somebody to have same-sex attraction.

It's wrong to act on it. Temptation is not a fault of yours. Sin, the choice to obey temptation, is where the fault lies.

So, the church has got to stop being gay bashers. And I have to say, the church has a reputation for being gay bashing. But I don't really know very many Christians who aren't gay bashers.

It's a funny thing, you know, I always hear that Christians are haters, and they're really anti-gay. And, you know, most evangelicals I know do believe that gay sex is wrong, but they also believe that heterosexual sex is wrong outside of marriage. It's not really picking on the gays.

And I don't know anybody who hates gays. I don't think I've ever met a Christian who hates gays. But if you disagree, that's called hate.

That's, like I said, that language capture. To them, love means having sex, so you can't tell them who they're allowed to have sex with because you can't tell them who they're allowed to love. To them, hatred means you don't agree with them.

And so you've got to be silent or be accused of being hateful, even if all you're trying to do is help them. After all, there are objective medical reasons for saying that being gay isn't as healthy, statistically, as being straight. There's far more diseases of a venereal sort among the gay community than there are in the straight community.

And that's not good for people. And for someone to say, you know, I'd like to help you not take those risks and instead to live a life that's the way that God made life to be lived in your circumstances, that's not hateful, but it'll be deemed hateful because you're not affirming. If you're not affirming, you're hating.

You can't simply just disagree. They can disagree with you, and that doesn't make them haters. But if you disagree with them, you're a hater.

See, they've captured the language which makes it almost impossible to communicate without getting yourself into trouble. I don't believe that gay marriage is right. I don't believe gay sex is right, so I'm intolerant.

No, I'm not intolerant. If I didn't tolerate it, I mean, I'm intervening to make them, you know, stop. I tolerate lots of things from non-Christians I don't approve of, but they don't tolerate us.

We're supposed to tolerate everything, but we're not supposed to be tolerated ourselves. And so tolerance and love and hate, all these words mean something else now in communication. And so the church is in a pickle because we do live in this culture where these words have changed, where attitudes have changed, where sex is a deity, where even God is not allowed to tell you not to do what your sex drive tells you to do.

And if anyone thinks that you shouldn't do it, they're evil and probably need to be silenced. We haven't been silenced yet, but that's probably coming. And so I would just

say that as Christians, we need to think like biblical Christians did, that the world's going to hate us for just loving them, just because we love them, and because we want to help them, and because we want them to have a relationship with God that is as good as it can be in their circumstances.

Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 4, Don't think it a strange thing when fiery trials come upon you as if some strange thing happened to you. James said, Count it all joy when you encounter these trials. What trials? Persecution is mostly what they had in mind.

And we're going to be having those kind of trials here too. We already do somewhat. The cases are few enough now that they make the news and stay in the news for several weeks when these things happen.

If a florist or a baker doesn't want to participate in a gay wedding, that makes the news because there's so few cases. Or a clerk doesn't want to issue a marriage license to a same-sex couple. That gets in the news now.

I believe it'll become so common that the news doesn't even pay attention anymore because it's not news. I believe that we're looking at the hardest times we've faced as Christians in the West in modern times. But we are, insofar as we suffer persecution, imprisonment, or whatever, we are not really different than Christians have been through most of history in pagan culture.

Our pagan culture has persecuted Christianity all along. And we've been living in the delusion that we're not in a pagan culture. I guess once in a while we need a wake-up call.

And the Supreme Court decision in the last few months was a wake-up call. It reminds us we're in a pagan world, a pagan country, a country that does not want anything to do with God. They don't want God telling them anything about what's right and wrong.

And they don't want Christians standing up for God about those things.