

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND “GAY MARRIAGE”

A sermon preached at FBCD on December 9, 2004

1 Corinthians 13:6 ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

This verse of scripture, right here in the middle of the famous “love chapter,” sounds a loud word of correction to modern ideas of so-called “unconditional love.” Love does not mean “never having to say you’re sorry,” as I heard that particular heresy worded when I was a boy. Loving people means loving God and His truth first, and then seeking what God says is best for the people He brings across your path. John, the “apostle of love,” says the same in his little book: “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.” (1Jo 5:2) In our text, the apostle Paul, carried along by the Holy Spirit to say exactly what God wanted said, says this: “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”

If that’s what love is really like, then love cannot mean “a blanket acceptance and approval of whatever the loved one says or does.” Quite to the contrary, love will often have to question or challenge or even oppose what the loved one is doing in his life. As Christian love runs up against the issue of so-called “gay marriage,” then, there are at least two major conclusions we reach fairly well immediately:

1. Real love seeks truth & speaks truth; self-love hides from truth & hides truth from others.
2. Christians are right about some things related to marriage, but not all

Real love seeks truth and speaks truth; self-love hides from truth and hides truth from others.

Let me be clear what I’m talking about when I refer to self-love. It may be fashionable these days to say that you have to learn to love yourself before you can love anyone else, but that’s not what the Bible says. Of course it is important to be content with what God has made given you, and to be patient as the Holy Spirit slowly remakes you into the image of Jesus Christ. But nowhere does God say we should work at loving ourselves. Instead, we read things like this in God’s Word:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

God never commands or commends love of self. He simply assumes that every man will love himself (that is, take care of himself), and makes that normal love of self the measure of how each of us is to love every person God brings across his path: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Do you seek your own good? Well and good. Be just as concerned to seek the good of others. But that has nothing to do with accepting and affirming anything I ever find myself thinking or feeling or saying or doing. And it has nothing at all to do with our accepting and affirming anything and everything about each other’s lives. So let me say this again: Real love seeks truth and speaks truth; self-love hides from truth and hides truth from others.

Here is the truth God wants me to tell you because I love you: the normalization of the abnormal is not on the path of love.

Homosexuality is not normal, nor is it safe, nor is it right. For me to say that it is normal, or safe, or right, would be for me to lie to you. For us as a society to send the message that homosexuality is normal (by changing the legal definition of marriage to include same-sex couples) would be for us to lie. And it would not be loving in the least.

I have said that homosexuality is observably abnormal, sterile, and dangerous. Let me explain what I mean and show you why it’s true – if that’s not already clear to you. Homosexual behavior is self-evidently abnormal; just

check the plumbing God installed in male and female bodies for half a second, and you'll see that it's true. Homosexuality is undeniably sterile: creation itself passes judgment on homosexuality by affording no natural means of homosexual reproduction. And this behavior is clearly dangerous. The average male homosexual has hundreds of sex partners in his lifetime. A study on the sexual profiles of 2,583 older homosexuals, published in the *Journal of Sex Research*, found that only 2.7 percent claimed to have had sex with one partner only. And shudder at these findings:

24 percent of gay men had over 100 partners

43 percent of gay men had over 500 partners

28 percent of gay men had over 1000 partners

Taking a behavior that is observably unnatural, unproductive, and unhealthy, and trying to convince the rest of us that it is normal, healthy, and good, is neither loving nor honest. It is unloving and deceptive. True love will tell that truth.

As you think about so-called "gay marriage," two further facts quickly become clear:

"Gay marriage" is a contradiction in terms

The words "gay" and "marriage" simply cannot fit with each other. This is true whether you look at it from the human perspective, or from God's point of view.

Never in human history has there been any society that accepted the idea that marriage can be a relationship between persons of the same sex. This is because perpetuating the race by having and raising children has normally been seen as the primary purpose of marriage – throughout history until very recently. We know almost instinctively that marriage is designed for male and female. Even societies that practice polygamy recognize this. And that's only the human perspective.

In God's eyes, marriage is one man and one woman becoming one flesh by public covenant, private coupling, and physical conception. The Bible clearly teaches four things: marriage involves a man and a woman; it involves their lives being joined into one in a publicly recognized covenant; it involves their bodies being joined into one over and over again in the act of marriage; and it normally involves their flesh and blood being joined into one permanently in their children.

Whether you look at it from man's perspective or from God's, "gay marriage" is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

There's another fact that becomes clear more or less immediately.

"Gay marriage" is a confusion of truths

Again we'll look at it both from man's view and from God's.

Both common sense and solid research show that "traditional marriage" is normally the safest place for solid child-rearing, lifelong satisfaction, and mutual care. While there are some who claim that homosexual relationships are just like heterosexual ones, common sense says the claim is bogus. "Bobby and Susie sittin' in the tree" is not at all the same thing as "Bobby and Joey sittin' in the tree," and everyone knows it.

There are even some from the gay community who admit it to be a false statement. Andrew Sullivan, a prominent conservative gay author, says that gay couples adhere to a very different moral standard than straight couples do. He says their moral standard recognizes "a greater understanding of the need for extramarital outlets" – in other words, a greater openness to promiscuity. Also, two researchers who identified themselves as a "gay couple" came to the conclusion that gay relationships between men rarely survive if they are not open to outside sexual contacts. In other words, sexual looseness is part and parcel of most "gay marriages."

On the human side, “gay marriage” often, perhaps even usually, confuses marital faithfulness and sexual freedom. “Married” and “dating around” do not mean the same thing.

As God sees things, the confusion involved in so-called “gay marriage” is even more pronounced. In His eyes, both the public and the private side of marriage are honorable and pure, while both homosexual deeds and desires are dishonorable and impure. I know this because God’s Word says so:

Hebrews 13:4 ⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

I said that both the public and the private side of marriage are honorable and pure in God’s eyes, because that’s what God’s Word says.

Now listen to this:

Romans 1:24-27 ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

I also said that both homosexual deeds and desires are dishonorable and impure because that’s what God’s Word says. If the Bible is God’s Word (and a majority of Americans still believe it is), and if the Bible teaches that homosexuality is wrong and heterosexual marriage is right (and it most certainly does), then to say something other than what the Bible teaches is not love or compassion. It’s a cruel disregard for the eternal well-being of eternal souls.

Real love seeks truth and speaks truth; self-love hides from truth and hides truth from others. Two truths in particular we’ve seen together so far: “gay marriage” is a contradiction in terms, and “gay marriage” is a confusion of truths. Christian, do not let the world intimidate you from believing and speaking the truth. Do let the fear of God and the love of Christ guide you in what to say and how to say it. Speak the truth in love.

That, then, provokes me to remind you to do what Jesus told us to do: before we concern ourselves with the specks in other people’s eyes, we had better deal with the logs in our own.

Christians are right about some things related to marriage, but not all

We are right to condemn homosexuality, but wrong to condemn homosexuals

I know that you know this to be true, because I’ve heard it from many of your lips: hate the sin, but love the sinner. I expect we’re all well-trained in what to say, and I expect we would all more or less mean it in the moment that we said it. What I’m asking you to do is measure what’s really in your heart by the casual, off-hand comments you make when you’re relaxed among people you trust, or by the spontaneous judgments that rise in your soul when you see two men flirting with each other. You will hear your own heart more clearly in those moments than in anything else you say or do.

You know we’re all sinners, all equally deserving of condemnation from God. You know you have no business harboring a spirit of condemnation toward anyone, ever. You know you find a condemning spirit within yourself from time to time anyway. I know you know because I fight the same battle, and sometimes lose. Those moments of

defeat, when the Accuser has turned me into a little copy of himself for a brief span, are precious weapons to use against him. If it humbles you to find yourself being a little devil, praise God! Real humility will keep you from repeating the sin.

We are right to honor marriage, but wrong to assume the world will

If you don't know it yet, you need to know that the law of the state of Maryland currently defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman. You also need to know that the American Civil Liberties Union has brought a lawsuit against that state law, asking a judge to overturn it, claiming that it's a violation of the state constitution. You also need to realize that there are already similar lawsuits in other states asking that laws against polygamy and group marriage be overturned. You also need to know that all this was planned and publicly announced thirty years ago by a group of radical gay activists, when they published a strategy for the complete transformation of American society by convincing people to drop all sexual taboos and restrictions, to accept homosexuality and other forms of perversion as natural and normal, and above all, to gradually do away with the legal institution of marriage – at least as we have known it throughout our history. You also need to know that there is a state delegate named Don Dwyer from Anne Arundel County who has courageously taken a stand for marriage in Maryland, and who is organizing a rally for Thursday, January 27, from 2pm until 4pm in Annapolis, praying for 100,000 Marylanders to come and make God's position on the issue known by peaceably and prayerfully assembling – as is our right as Americans. You also need to know that I plan to be there with my family, and that I'm inviting and even urging you to come if you can. You also need to know that you can find more information about the rally and the issue at www.defendmarylandmarriage.com.

If you think that Maryland marriage will save itself, or that the people of the world will care enough about the issue to take a stand, think again. You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. It's up to us to salt Dundalk down and light Maryland up with the truth and the love of God.

There is one more point that needs to be made, though. If we will not face it squarely, we'd better just sit down and shut up. We'll have no right to claim to be sincere, and no reason to think we're truly acting in love, unless we deal with this one last thing.

We are right to defend marriage in principle, but wrong to neglect marriage in practice

Real love doesn't simply accept divorce as a matter of course, but sometimes Christians and churches do. There is no love there, because divorce is the single most damaging thing two parents can do to their children, and one of the most damaging things two Christians can do to the Kingdom of God.

Real love doesn't simply accept the idea of unmarried couples' living together in the same dwelling as "the way things are done these days," because couples who cohabit before marriage have been shown to be significantly more likely to divorce, and because cohabitation and fornication almost always go hand in hand.

Real love doesn't simply accept fornication, or sexual activity outside of marriage, because there is no medically safe sex outside of marriage, and because all sex outside of marriage stands under the strict condemnation and stern warning of Scripture, as we read in Hebrews 13: "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Fornication is not making love, and condoning it is not living love.

Real love doesn't simply accept the mental adultery that is lust. "Look all you want, so long as you don't touch," is in direct rebellion against our Lord's clear teaching, and is bald-faced nonsense. No wife feels loved when she catches her husband leering at another woman. It's not just my body that belongs to my wife exclusively: it's my mind, my heart, myself that are pledged to her alone.

Real love doesn't simply accept abuse. How many supposedly Christian men are among the ranks of the abusers? Are there some here today? Don't ask her to forgive you because you "love her so much." No, sir! If you love her, you'll cherish her and protect her: otherwise, you defile the word "love" when you take it on your lips.

Real love doesn't simply accept neglect. Men, we can be as straight as rails when it comes to moral living and responsible citizenship and careful parenting. But if we aren't shepherding our wives' hearts with tender strength and lavish generosity, we aren't loving them, and we aren't defending marriage – no matter how many rallies we go to.

Real love doesn't settle for anything less than God's love. And God's love speaks truth to us whether we want to hear that truth or not. As any father would, God tells us, not what we want to hear, but what we need to hear. Will we listen to our Father? Or will we insist that the world listen to Him while we keep our fingers in our ears?

So what exactly does God's love mean for us, where we live? If you are single, it means that you love God first, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that you then love your neighbor as yourself. If you are married, love is the same, only your closest neighbor is always your bride or your groom. Loving God and loving others both require absolute purity, unflagging self-control, and an unremitting pursuit of joy in God's purposes. For single people, that will include sexual abstinence. For married couples, that will include sexual indulgence with each other alone. For all, it will include an earnest solicitude to guard one another's purity before God, as well as to urge the same purity upon all.

That loving purity will recognize that real marriage takes a bridegroom and a bride. After all, marriage is a pantomime of the eternal love relationship between Christ and His church. Perhaps the highest joy in marriage is the solemn sweetness of knowing that you as a couple are acting out that drama for God's glory and pleasure. Same-sex couples cannot know that joy, and that is yet another reason Christian love calls on us to oppose same-sex "marriage."

Yet opposing sin isn't any more than the fringe of the hem of the garment God wants us wearing. God loves sinners of all stripes, including gay sinners. He saved us from our sins. For many of us, He freed us from behaviors that so enslaved us we couldn't even conceive of being free. God wants to set your gay friends and neighbors free from their sin, too. Some of them may never feel normal feelings for someone of the opposite sex; He may have something for them to do single and chaste, that they could never do any other way. For others, He'll restore them completely and give them happy, whole, heterosexual lives, perhaps married, perhaps even with children. That's up to Him. But one thing you may be sure is not a preferred item on His agenda is this: He doesn't want them to stay lost, and He doesn't want them to continue finding love only in illicit ways that destroy their souls.

Christian love wants gay people as saved people. In fact, it wants all people to know the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Please: turn from your sin and trust in the Savior today.