

## A Biblical View of Marriage

- Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25
- I have heard this my whole life. I heard it when I was a child. I heard it as a teenager. I heard it as a 20-something, and every decade since. I have heard, “We are living in the most dangerous time ever.” Or, “We are living in the most important time ever, in the history of the world.” And I know that has always been true, but never more than it is now. As Vance Havner used to say, “It’s later than it’s ever been.” And it is. We are closer now to eternity, for sure, not just as individuals but along with all of creation. But it’s later, and darker, than it’s ever been for another reason. There are seeds that were sown in the hearts of men and women in the garden, when Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan, that are just now coming into fruition in ways that they never have. Those seeds were certainly watered over the centuries, and they were heavily fertilized during the so-called ‘sexual revolution’ of the 1960s, but now the fruit is ripe.
- Some of you heard John Stonestreet at the NCHE conference a few weeks ago as he addressed the issue of same sex marriage. It was excellent, and I am going to be sharing a lot of his quotes and ideas from that talk. As you know, we are waiting for the Supreme Court to hand down its decision any Monday now that could make same-sex marriage the law of the land. It could be tomorrow. Or next Monday, or the one after that. But no later than June 29, we will know whether the most profound shift in our culture in the past two thousand years will be upheld by the court. Or whether it will remain a state-by-state decision. No matter what the decision is, the cultural shift has happened in a profound way. Already, nearly 70% of the US population lives in a state where same-sex marriage is legal. Never mind that of the 37 states where it is legal, only 11 of those states held a referendum to let the people decide. The rest of the decisions were made by state or federal courts, through judicial fiat. Stonestreet said, “We just saw one of the most successful social revolutions that we have seen in our lifetimes, certainly, and maybe in the history of the country. The speed at which same sex marriage went from unthinkable to now unquestionable has been absolutely remarkable.” In the history of the world, there has **never** been a nation to legalize same sex marriage.....until the last 15 years. Think about it. Marriage has been around for 6000 years, since Adam looked at Eve and said, “Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” For 6000 years, every civilization, no matter how they dealt with the issue of same-sex attraction, every society, every culture, every civilization defined marriage as between a man and a woman. **For 5,985 years.** Then the definition of the basic building block of society was changed. And make no mistake: the definition of marriage has not been expanded. It has been changed. As John Stonestreet says, the biological argument that can be made from simple observation, that the marriage design only works between a man and a woman, has been set aside. And what happens to societies that embrace same-sex marriage? The truth is, no one knows. But actually, we have pretty good evidence from Scripture, particularly in the days of the Judges and the Kings, that when a nation rejects God or God’s design, its days are numbered. So it is critical that we act now, inasmuch as we are able to act. But first we must know what we believe and why we believe it. Lord willing, we will talk about what we can DO next week. But today, let’s look first at how this shift has taken place, and second, what the Bible says about marriage.
- **How has this cultural shift taken place?**
- Cultural shifts are normal and are sometimes good and sometimes not so good. John Stonestreet and Sean McDowell wrote in their book, *Same Sex Marriage*, “Twenty years can be the difference between notepads and iPads. Thirty years can be the difference between Elvis and Eminem. Forty years can be the difference between Jim Crow laws in the South and the first black President of the United States.” OK, but how did we go from same-sex marriage is unthinkable to same sex marriage is unquestionable in just the past 5-10 years? How did we go from the Defense of Marriage Act being signed into law in 1996 and then essentially struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013? How did we go from 27 percent approval for same sex marriage in the US in 1996 to more than 70 percent

approval among the 18-29 year olds today? How is it that more than 80% of voters today believe same-sex marriage will be legal across the United States within the next 5-10 years?

- John Stonestreet talks a lot about how television not only reflects the culture but how it also affects the culture. He traces the change in just one decade at how family was portrayed on television. In the 1980's the most popular show on TV was The Cosby Show. Some of you remember it well. Everything in that show revolved around the family and every problem was ultimately solved by the family. In just 30 minutes, just like at your house and mine! ☺ But nonetheless, The Cosby Show was about a stable marriage with two parents, a husband and a wife who loved each other and their five children, four girls and one boy: Theo. Just hearing that reference reminded me of reading the book *Father Fiction* by Donald Miller several years ago who wrote about his struggles growing up without a father in the home. Even though he was white, he dreamed of being Theo Huxtable, because Theo had a father who loved him. That was the 80s. The most popular show in the 1990's was *Friends*. I never saw it, but I know that it did NOT revolve around family. And the solution to problems was not family. In fact, Stonestreet says, in *Friends* and in *Seinfeld*, when family showed up in these shows, it was the problem! That shift happened in just one decade. Then from 1998 until 2006, it has been argued that the most influential TV show was...*Will and Grace*. I never saw that one either, but it changed the perception of a nation about same-sex attraction. Stonestreet said, "Will was a gay man and he was the one who always solved the problems. He was for that show what Cliff Huxtable was for The Cosby Show." Larry King asked a gay activist in the late 90's if he was discouraged about how slowly the gay revolution was going. He said, "No, because *Will and Grace* is the number one show on TV." Vice President Joe Biden said on *Meet the Press* in 2012, "I think *Will and Grace* probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody's ever done so far." A few days after the Vice President made that comment, Barack Obama became the first U.S. President to officially endorse same sex marriage.
- There's a lot more than can be said about how the cultural shift has taken place. And I encourage you to read McDowell and Stonestreet, and I encourage you to subscribe to Al Mohler's daily podcast called The Briefing. But let's turn to the next and most important consideration:
- **What does the Bible say about marriage?**
- Jesus was the agent of Creation. We know that because of John's prologue, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3) So when Jesus was questioned in Matthew 19 about divorce, which is the dissolution of something He created, He took them back to the beginning, because He was there. He said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" (Matthew 19:4-5) We will look at that passage in a moment, but let's go back to the beginning and see what God created and how He created it.
- **Genesis 1:** The first chapter of Genesis takes us through the days of creation with a similar pattern. Let there be light...God saw that it was good...Let there be an expanse...and it was so...Let the waters be gathered together and let the dry land appear... it was good...Let the earth sprout vegetation...it was good (did you hear that, men? Vegetables were created by God. And they were called good.)...Let there be lights in the heavens...it was good. And so on. So the first chapter starts with God filling and forming the earth by simply speaking it into existence. Until for the first time, in Genesis 1:26 God says, "Let us make." And instead of just creating a man out of nothing, we are told in chapter 2 that God forms the man out of dirt, breathes life into His creation, and makes a man. And God says about this new and special creation, "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea..."and over every living thing. God now creates man and woman in His own image, not just to be spectators in paradise, but to be agents of creation themselves. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." They cannot be agents of creation unless they are

male and female. Because God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...” Just as God did in the first five days, Adam and Eve are called to do: fill the earth. To bring order. To bring new life into creation, and for that purpose God created marriage.

- Remember the first negative statement in the Bible? Right, Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.” McDowell and Stonestreet wrote, “Note that nowhere in this story are we told that the man was *lonely* and in need of *companionship*. Rather, God’s verdict is that he is *alone*, and in need of a *helper*.” This is what makes marriage different from every other relationship on the planet. Only the union of a man and woman can create human life, and the context in which God ordained that to happen is marriage. Companionship is a purpose of marriage but it is not *the purpose*. The purpose of marriage is to “produce, protect and preserve future generations of image bearers who will continue the human task of ‘filling and forming’ God’s world.”
- **What does Jesus believe about marriage?**
- **Matthew 19: 4-6**
- First, it is between a man and a woman. Notice that Jesus says that gender is binary. There are only two: male and female. And in answering the question about a man divorcing his wife, Jesus states clearly that marriage from the beginning was God’s design, for a man and a woman to become one flesh. God-ordained marriage requires a man and a woman. Same-sex unions where children are involved guarantees that the child will not have either a mom or a dad in the home.
- Second, marriage is oriented toward procreation. “So they are no longer two but one flesh.” That does not speak to emotional oneness but to physical oneness, which we know is the only biological process that can produce children. We know that some couples cannot have children, and that doesn’t make them any less married! But the normative truth is that marriage produces future generations. Same-sex marriages are unable to do this.
- Third, marriage is before God and between one man and one woman for life. Whenever I officiate a wedding I like to remind the couple that though there are many human witnesses seated behind them, the most important witness is God Himself. He attends every wedding He ordains. And HE is the one who brought them together and HE is the one who will keep them together. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” The Pharisees protested and reminded Jesus that Moses had allowed a certificate of divorce to be given. Jesus said that was an accommodation, “but from the beginning it was not so.”
- Fourth, marriage is a creation of God for all people, not just for Christians. It was not created by governments, it was created by God and it was defined by God. That means that no matter what the Supreme Court rules in the next few weeks, the Supreme Judge has already ruled. He has defined marriage. He sustained marriage after the fall and with sinful human beings throughout six thousand years of human history. It became much harder after the fall, but it did not become any less God’s design and purpose for men and women for whom He has chosen marriage. Let me add that this does not minimize the importance singles and children and widows and others who are not married. They too are image bearers and called by God to take dominion over the earth and represent Him and His Word to all people.
- Fifth, marriage is a picture of the Gospel. We know this from what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5, when he repeated what Jesus said in Matthew 19 and what God said in Genesis 2, that a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Then Paul adds, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:31-32) The Gospel is on display in a godly marriage, the sacrificial love of a husband for his wife and a wife for her husband. It strengthens the church, the community and the nation. A godly marriage is a blessing not only as long as the couple lives, but long after they are gone.

