

Matthew 5:31-32 - Marriage and Divorce

Introduction: Marriage is a biblical concept which is basic. There are some doctrines in the Word of God which are more difficult, such as the multi-faceted doctrine of the love of God. In fact, New Testament scholar Dr. Donald Carson has written a book called: “The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God.” You will not find, however, books called, “The Difficult Doctrine of Marriage.” There are varied perspectives on the issue of divorce and remarriage to be sure. But as far as what marriage in and of itself is, no biblical teaching could be more straightforward and simple in God’s Word, *and by simply observing the created order itself*. And yet, that which is so simply, straightforward, and clear in the Bible, and that which is attested to so beautifully by the creation-order design itself is being challenged and denied in our day. This should not, of course, surprise us. The battle against unbelief and biblical clarity and authority is always raging in the world and sadly, even in the church. Satan continues to do his work of causing unsuspecting people to ask the question he posed to Eve in Eden so long ago: “Has God really said?”

Illustration: When soldiers are called upon to defend something, they will built their defenses in the places which are most vulnerable to attack, or they will come to the defense where the attack is presently happening. The attack – the frontal assault – of our culture on marriage and family as defined by God in Scripture and in creation itself is raging hotter and hotter. It is *unbelievable* to see the number of books, sermons, talks, conferences, lectures, etc. which are being pumped into the mainstream media outlets trying to normalize what is clearly identified in the Word of God as an abomination. And what is even more unbelievable is that it is working.

The Bible is a comprehensively hetero-sexual, monogamous book. I recently obtained a book by a young man named, Matthew Vines called: “God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships.” He also put out a youtube video presentation he made in a liberal church somewhere in which he summarizes his “case.” Now, in Mr. Vines’ presentation we are told over and over again that there are only 6 passages that deal with homosexuality - and all of them are negative. This seems to be the tactical approach of the rhetoric coming from all quarters in the professing Christian church which is in favor of this. They are saying, “well, there’s just these 6 little passages in this **huge Bible** which has a total of 31,173 verses in it which even address the subject, and we can respond to them all!”

This is the way in which persuasion works on the minds of Americans today: Offer surface, level facile arguments. Shout down the other side by calling them “close-minded, judgmental bigots” when they try to refute those arguments. And then cement your case with subjective personal testimonies and emotion. And ya know what, congregation? *It is working*.

In Response to this approach we need to say: Yes indeed, there are 6 explicit mentions of the sin of homosexual behavior in the Bible, but to say that this is all that the Bible has to say on this subject is *very misleading*. As I said, the entire Bible is *comprehensively* hetero-sexual and monogamous when it comes to sexuality and marriage. There is much positive teaching in Scripture which men like Matthew Vines have either missed or chosen to ignore in their understanding of the issue. What is frightening to see is that the arguments being used by Matthew Vines, none of which are new, are *working*. There is a Southern Baptist Convention pastor named Danny Cortez who has preached a sermon using Vines’ arguments in favor of same-sex marriage. But what I’d like you to see this evening from this and other texts of God’s Word is two basic things:

The Bible's Positive Teaching on Marriage

Application and key point: It is critical to understand that for proponents of same-sex marriage to try to make their “biblical” case, all they can do is try to diffuse the passages which prohibit homosexual behavior. We will not look at those passages this evening, but if you’d like to write down the references they are: Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Romans 1:24-27. There is absolute silence in Scripture regarding same-sex marriage, because the idea is entirely oxy-moronic. The phrase “same-sex marriage” makes about as much biblical sense as talking about “married bachelors.” Marriage by *definition* and by *the nature of the created order itself* is always and only hetero-sexual. Think about it. How could a homosexual couple *in principle* fulfill the creation mandate: “be fruitful and multiply.”? How can one man in a homosexual marriage obey the command to all husbands everywhere: Ephes. 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”? How could a man married to another man meet, in principle, the elder qualifications of being “the husband of one wife,” or “having his children in submission,” etc.? Now, they will respond with, “are you saying those unable to have children aren’t really married?” No. Notice I said, “in principle.” In principle, how can a gay couple “be fruitful and multiply”? In principle, how can one male in a man-to-man “marriage” have “his children in submission.”? Where children are *in principle* impossible, there is no marriage. In no case can a man and a man produce a baby. In no case can a woman and a woman produce life. “Marriage” in the Bible assumes *in principle* the presence of “husband” and “wife,” who have the potential to be “father and mother.” Where there is no “husband” and “wife,” there is no marriage *in principle*. Where there is, in principle, no potential for multiplication, there is no marriage. These people are really wanting to redefine the meaning of the word “marriage” to mean nothing more than: “a union of any 2 living creatures.” Of course, if you dig around on-line (which isn’t overly edifying seeing that it is virtual sewer), you can find court cases of people wanting to marry their computers, their siblings, their pets, and I saw an article about a woman wanting to marry *herself*.

Application: And please do not buy the rhetoric of our society today about “marriage equality.” No one crying for “marriage equality” really wants “marriage equality.” What they want is very simple, and I hope you will write this down: *What they want is control of the definition of the word “marriage.”* As R. J. Rushdoony put it: “He who defines the meaning of words, wins.” And no proponents of same-sex “marriage” are going to come right out and tell you that they are attempting to high-jack the definition of the word “marriage.” They deceptively, smoothly try to couch it in terms of a human rights issue, often equating it to racial discrimination, and then cement their case with emotion. Sadly, this is working.

The saying, “Jesus never says a word about homosexuality” has almost become a mantra in the contemporary debate in the church. This is, of course, irrelevant because the Lord Jesus taught us that His Apostles carried His own authority – and we have the teachings of the apostles in the non-red letters of the rest of the New Testament, which clearly condemns homosexual behavior:

Luke 10:16 “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

Furthermore, Jesus validated every “jot and tittle” of the OT law:

Matthew 5:17-19 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. [18] For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or

one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. [19] Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And yet, Jesus does give clear teaching on the *nature* of marriage. And thus, while this passage (Matthew 5:31-32) is not addressing the sin of homosexuality, it is very relevant to the debate about whether or not God “blesses” same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage.

But first, I’d like to read in your hearing, what the Word of God clearly teaches about the *nature* of marriage:

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Exodus 20:14 You shall not commit adultery.

Exodus 20:12-14 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” [no one ever has “father and father,” or “mother and mother.” Again, remember, where children are *impossible in principle and by nature, there is no marriage* – there is no one-flesh union.

Deut. 5:18 You shall not commit adultery. [Addressed only to a marriage consisting of a man and a woman – this commandment assumes the creation order mandate – a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This creation-order design requires sexual fidelity between the two parties for life.]

Malachi 2:14-16 Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. [15] But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. [16] “For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

- ⇒ **Notice**, no such rebukes are ever found to men for committing treachery against “the husband of your youth...” or any language to a man speaking of his male partner as “your husband by covenant.”
- ⇒ **The marriage covenant**, by God’s design and decree, is limited solely and only to one man and one woman – by nature and design this is the case.

Ephes. 5:22 [22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. [24] Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. [25] Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, [26] that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word

- ⇒ **You will find no such instructions** regarding the roles of “husband and husband,” or “wife and wife.” And in all passages of Scripture which address married people, “husband” (Greek: *Andros*) and “wife” (Greek: *Gune*), the “husband” is always a male and the “wife” is always a female.
- ⇒ **Question:** Wouldn’t you think that if the Bible blessed the idea of same-sex marriage as something pleasing to God, and that all of the explicit prohibitions against homosexual behavior really aren’t condemning the monogamous, “loving,” committed homosexual relationships which Matthew Vines and others are pushing for, that there would be a mention

of it somewhere? Wouldn't we find at least a little bone thrown to them in some text in this big book we call the Bible?

- ⇒ **Another Question:** For 2000 years, the Christian church has stood clearly opposed to homosexuality for the sin that it is. *Do you think it is a coincidence that in light of our cultural apostasy and the collapse of marriage, family, and sexual morality that all of a sudden some "Christians" are discovering things in the Bible which no Christian person has ever seen in 2000 years of collective reflection on the Biblical text?* No, it is not a coincidence.

Ephes. 5:31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Matthew 19:3-9 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?" [4] And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' [5] 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'? [6] So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." [7] They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" [8] 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. [9] And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Romans 7:2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

- ⇒ Where are the instructions for the man whose "husband" dies in God's Word? Answer: No such instruction would make any sense since men cannot have "husbands." And the same applies with a woman having a "wife."

1 Cor. 7:39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

- ⇒ Again, what is the natural, creation-order, biblical assumption here? Marriage by definition is one man married to one woman.

Deut. 24:1-4 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, [2] when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, [3] if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, [4] then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

- ⇒ Again, with such specific and detailed laws about such things regarding marriages between a man and a woman, where are the instructions about man to man and woman to woman marriages?
- ⇒ As we will see next Sunday night when we look more specifically at divorce, even the biblical teaching on the nature of divorce assumes what the Bible has always meant and what Christians have always taught concerning the *nature* of marriage – that it is one man and one woman committed to one another for life.
- ⇒ **Conclusion:** The Bible is a comprehensively heterosexual, monogamous book.

Everything we just now covered from God's Word is left entirely out of Matthew Vines' presentation in his viral message called: *The Bible and Homosexuality*. In light of what we read through and looked at concerning marriage throughout the entire Bible, let us now hear those 6 passages listed in on p11 of Matthew Vines' book.

Genesis 19:5 And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

Leviticus 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

Romans 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. [27] Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

1 Tim. 1:8-12 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, [9] knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, [10] for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Now, there are more passages in Scripture on this issue, and Vines' citations here are not complete, for example – he quoted only from Romans 1:26-27, but to understand those two verses you really need to read v 24-25 *right before them*.

Romans 1:24-25 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, [25] who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

⇒ You see, what is described in v26-27 is perhaps the greatest and most defiant example of human rebellion against God. It is the greatest example of the degradation and dishonoring of the human body.

Conclusion: In light of what we saw in the *positive* biblical teaching about the nature of marriage and the rules governing the marriage relationship, along with the 6 passages Matthew Vines himself quotes in his book as the "only passages in the whole Bible" which address the issue of homosexuality, I want to ask a simple question: How is it possible that any dispassionate person could know what Scripture says over and over and over again concerning the nature of "marriage" and what it says concerning God's stance toward homosexual behavior actually believe that God "blesses" same-sex relationships? There is only one conclusion: Such individuals are spiritually dead and blind, unregenerate and unable to discern truth from error, right from wrong, righteousness from wickedness.

What can we say then to the person who can stare into the face of the law of God and boldly contradict what it says plainly and repeatedly? I'd like to quote the tail-end of Matthew Vines' 67 minute long presentation:

Gay people are just as much children of God, and just as much a part of His creation as everyone else. And there is something terribly unseemly about straight Christians insisting that Gay Christians are somehow inferior to them, or broken. Or that gay people only exist because of the fall. And that God really intended to make everyone straight like them. But, you know, I

am a part of creation too – including my sexual orientation. I am a part of God’s design. That’s the first thing that I learned growing up in Sunday school – that God created me – that God loves me. That I am a beloved child of God, no more or no less valuable than anyone else. I love God. And I love Jesus. I really do. But that doesn’t mean that I need to hate myself, or somehow wallow in self-pity, misery, and loathing for the rest of my life. That’s not what God created me to do. ... Jesus placed a particular focus on those others overlooked, on those who are outcasts, on mistreated and marginalized minorities. ... Hebrews 13:3 says “remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” How fully have you absorbed not just the existence of gay and lesbian Christians, but the depth of the pain and the hurt that their own brothers and sisters have inflicted on them? Does that pain grieve you as if it were your own? ... It’s still commonplace for straight Christians to say, “yes, I believe homosexuality is a sin, but don’t blame me - I’m just reading the Bible, that’s just what it says.” But no, you’re not just reading the Bible. You are taking a few verses out of context, and extracting from them an absolute condemnation that was never intended. But you are also striking to the very core of another human being, and gutting them of their sense of dignity and of self-worth. You are reinforcing the message that gay people have heard for centuries: you will always be alone. You come from a family, but you’ll never form one of your own. You are uniquely unworthy of loving and being loved by another person. And all because you’re different – because you’re gay. Being different is no crime. Being gay is not a sin. And for a gay person to desire and pursue love and marriage and family is no more selfish or sinful than when a straight person desires and pursues the very same things. The Song of Songs tell us that King Solomon’s wedding day was the day his heart rejoiced. To deny to a small minority of people not just a wedding day, but a lifetime of love and commitment and family is to inflict on them a devastating level of hurt and anguish. There is nothing in the Bible that indicates that Christians are called to perpetuate that kind of pain in other people’s lives. Rather, we are to work to alleviate it. ... The Bible is not opposed to the acceptance of gay Christians. ... If you are dead set against the idea of two men or two women being in love, then I am asking you to try to see things differently, even if it makes you uncomfortable. I’m asking you to ask yourself this: How deeply do you care for your family? How deeply do you love your spouse? And how tenaciously would you fight for them if they were ever in danger or in harm’s way? That is how deeply you should care. And that is how tenaciously you should fight for the very same things for my life - because they matter just as much to me. Gay people should be a treasured part of our communities and families. And the truly Christian response to them is acceptance, support, and love.

On the coming Sunday nights, we are going to analyze Vines’ arguments from Scripture and respond to them, but **In closing, in light of Matthew Vines’ emotive closing statements, I’d like us to consider these three verses of the Word of God:**

1 John 2:3-5 [3] Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

[4] He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

[And clearly, John is implying that there were, are, and always will be many, many people who say “I know Christ,” “I love God,” and “I love Jesus. I really do!” who do not keep God’s commandments.]

[5] But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.