

Hot Topics

LGBTQ+
Matthew 19:4, 5

With Study Questions

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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’ (Matthew 19:4, 5)?

Introduction

I am old enough to remember a time when associations of amorous (sexual) were almost uniquely that of a man and a woman in wedlock. It wasn't until college that I was confronted with a departure from this. I had come to faith by this time and though a novice in Christianity, I knew enough Scripture to realize this departure did not seem to comport with what the Bible taught concerning human sexuality.

Engaging in a conversation with one a learned friend, he somewhat chastised me for my relatively undeveloped opinion on the matter. I later came to realize that his chastisement was not of his own creation. It became a bit of a mantra for those seeking to advocate for this divergence from what some have called the more traditional household. With a strident tone, my friend asked, “What do you care about how people behave in the privacy of their own bedroom?”

I must say, the argument seemed to have some teeth. I felt stultified. The anchor on my boat of ethics and logic had rapidly hit the bottom and was hooked on the coral reef. Yet the winds kept beating and I felt the anchor begin to loosen. “If this is all about what people do in the privacy of their own bedroom,” I thought to myself, “then why do I know about it?” I couldn't answer that question about the behavior of my closest friends.

Yet this argument has now gone the way of all the earth. Tolerance has evolved into acceptance and then acceptance into sanction and celebration. And a lack of willingness to celebrate will not be tolerated. I daresay a general fear has hit the atmosphere on this issue. A mere whisper of disapproval can be met with severe social castigation. Believing that romantic relationships belong to men and women within the covenant of

marriage has now become a discussion relegated to the privacy of one's bedroom.

On the off chance that you've been in hibernation, our culture is on the throes of pride month and there may not be a hotter topic than the one under our current consideration. Target is under fire for going too far in their pride celebration by hiring a satanist to design clothes for kids and then reversing their decision. Budweiser is hitting record lows hiring a trans person to sell their beer. The Dodgers can't seem to decide if it's appropriate to honor a demonic hate group whose sole agenda is to blaspheme the Roman Catholic church. Biological men are entering and (usually) winning women's sporting events. Drag queens are offended because parents are resistant to their story telling time to small children in public libraries. This paragraph has gotten too long, but you get the idea.

And civil discourse is discouragingly elusive. The entire topic is like a team of Dutch-boys snapping to pull their fingers out of the shaky, hole-ridden dam the moment they're tapped on the shoulder.

I am reminded of a private thread I had a few years ago with a writer from *Wired* magazine who had requested to be removed from the distribution list of columns I wrote for a local newspaper. Though he and I did not agree on many matters, I enjoyed the dialogue because he was smart and engaging. I found it valuable. But this topic ended all of that. The dialogue proceeded:

Me:

I'll certainly respect your wishes. But since I enjoy the measured and rational approach you take toward your topics, I'd be interested to know what bothers you in my apologetic for biblical Christianity; either way I'll remove you from this list, whether you respond or not. Good Day.

Him:

The anti-gay bigotry is what "bothers" me. Thank you for removing me from your list.

Me:

Please indulge me because I would like to understand your point. Are you saying that if someone believes homosexuality or adultery or polyamorism, etc. is immoral, that it naturally

follows that they're a bigot? What about NAMBLA (an organization seeking to lower the consent age to foster physical intimacy with young boys)?

Him:

You have a feeling of enormous confidence. But in long years of reporting, I've learned that being right does not correlate reliably with feeling right. And though you make an outward show of niceness and reasonableness, the assumptions you make are vicious. A simple statement that I abhor your anti-gay bigotry brought forth a cheap and ugly reply, linking homosexuality with child abuse. You can dress this up any way you like, make whatever little excuses and rhetorical maneuvers that might please you, but you've made yourself clear, and your message is ugly.

I must say that I found this conversation emotionally disturbing. Whether justified or not, it is difficult to be accused of being vicious, bigoted, cheap and ugly. I was not seeking to take a cheap shot. I sincerely wanted to hear from a cultural icon; by what standard do you say 'yes' to one intense desire and say 'no' to another. The members of one people-group can just as easily assert that they are wired (excuse the pun) that way as the members of another group.

It is a logical/ethical investigation by analogy, and it really needs to be answered.¹ Fifteen years have come and gone since this little dialogue. NAMBLA has most certainly gotten legs and I am curious what this Wired reporter would have to say about drag-queens in the children's section of the local library.

With a recognition of the delicate nature of this issue, what is the Christian take on this? The ethical waters of the culture in which we live have become a swamp (not merely in this issue) and we're continually getting caught on logs and snagged on the moral marshlands. Do we just get the axe out and start swinging? Do we moor our dinghies to the dock of

¹ Investigation by analogy is a valuable hermeneutical tool. It tests the leak-ability of a person's convictions. For example, a common ethic in our increasingly godless society, ironically, comes from a 18th century Irish reverend, Francis Hutcheson. His philosophy was, "That action is best which accomplishes the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers." So we test this. What if it makes 51% of the people most happy to steal the property of the 49%? Is that still the best action?

the institutional church while the swamp around us gets deeper and deeper? Are we so naïve to think this will not impact us and our children?

I will approach this in four sections: 1. is this, in fact, a departure from Biblical sexuality? 2. Where does this come from? How has this confusion become so prevalent? I call this the great exchange 3. Some answers to common objections. 4. How do we engage the world, or the church, when it comes such a powerful force as this?

Biblical Sexuality

First, over and against some modern expositors, the lifestyle² is perspicuously unbiblical. The Apostle Paul calls it a behavior that is “**against nature**” in Romans 1:26, 27. The passage is not (as many wish to insert without warrant) addressing some unacceptable variation of the behavior (e.g. temple prostitution) but the behavior itself. Other passages which affirm the same are:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination (Leviticus 18:22).

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination (Leviticus 20:13).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

Paul also lists it among those who are unholy and profane...

...for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ in accordance with the gospel

² I have my own reservations about calling this a “lifestyle.” What constitutes an ‘identity’ may be a message for another day. To be more accurate, we’re not talking about a lifestyle or identity as much as a behavior.

of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted (1 Timothy 1:9-11).

This should not be a matter of confusion. When Jesus was asked about divorce, He explained that from the beginning God made us **“male and female”** and that a **“man”** is to be **“joined to his wife, and the two become one”** (Matthew 19:4, 5).

The Great Exchange

A second question is from whence does this come? The norm which began with Adam and Eve has always (in virtually every culture) been predominant. Yet history has its flare-ups of this departure. There is pretty ample documentation of significant sexual deviations among the Greeks and Romans, especially just prior to their collapse. How is this explained? How do these flareups begin?

There are many theories on this. But in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle speaks of a great exchange (great is not necessarily synonymous with good). In all humility, we must keep in mind that Paul is making an argument for the depravity of the entire human race. He is writing of the natural direction we (as a result of the fall) would all take.

Though all men know that God is, we exchange the worship of the Creator for the worship of the creation (Romans 1:23). The rejection of God, apart from the common atheistic assertion, is not merely subtraction. It's an exchange.

That exchange is followed, according to our nature to **“exchange[d] the truth of God for a lie”** (Romans 1:25). It is in our fallen human nature to live a lie. Psalm 58:3 speaks of sinful man going **“astray from birth, speaking lies.”** That exchange is followed by another exchange. **“Women exchange the natural use for what is against nature...men leave[ing] the natural use of the woman, burned in lust for one another”** (Romans 1:26, 27).

It is a mistake to minimize the darkness of this. Paul will crescendo his argument by including a large (not exhaustive) list of evils that sinful man will aggressively pursue (and approve others to pursue-Romans 1:32). But the initial behavior involves a departure from Biblical sexuality. In this respect, the LGBTQ+ is distinct. One does not see a pride month for other

violations of the Ten Commandments. There is no adultery pride month or stealing pride month or lying pride month.

As a Christian, what we might find a bit overwhelming is the preponderance of the behavior. And not only is it massive emblazoned in every conceivable venue, but we also all know people who are by other human metrics, wonderful people who happen to be, for lack of a better term, non-binary.

The question the Christian must ask is, are we willing to avoid taking rank with something that has such massive appeal? Are you willing to be that one person in the room who says 'no?' Do we really believe the Bible when it says, "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). Easier said than done.

And let us not forget, that Paul, on these pages, is offering an indictment against the entire human race. *There, but for the grace of God go I* is no empty slogan. If you have the courage to say 'no,' that 'no' must be attended with love and humility.

Common Objections

Answering all the possible objections is more than one message can handle. I'll just hit on those most asked.

It is very commonly asked (and a great deal of research has been devoted to proving this), how there can be an objection if God made someone a certain way? It hardly seems reasonable to object to hard-wired machinery. First, it has not been proven, but even if it could be, it wouldn't sufficiently address the issue.

Desires may be attached to our biological make-up; some may be psychological or environmental. But ethics must transcend human desire since both our physical and psychological make-up are subject to the fall. In short, whether or not someone is born with strong, even overwhelming (regardless of what those desires might be) is moot (by moot, I don't mean we should be insensitive to another person's struggles. It is moot in terms of what's right or wrong.

For example, if I am born with a strong (even overwhelming) desire to do violence, that desire must be overcome or somehow restrained. We certainly shouldn't redefine our ethics to accommodate our strong passions. That man **"comes forth from the womb speaking lies"** (Ps. 58:3) does not justify lying.

Isn't it unloving and judgmental (a bad judgmental) to be unaccepting of the behavior of others? Didn't Jesus dine with sinners? It is a very common critique that it's wrong to be unaccepting of the behaviors of others. Of course, what goes unnoticed is that the person offering these critiques is generally trying to change the behavior of the person they're critiquing.

It is true that Jesus dined with sinners. But in the account where we read of that taking place, we also read His words, **"For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"** (Matthew 9:13). Jesus did meet people in their sins. But He didn't leave them there.

We need to be willing, and have the courage, to recognize that it is a great act of love to care for the well-being (especially spiritual well-being) of another person. After all, Paul was clear that those embracing this as an acceptable behavior will not **"inherit the kingdom of God"** (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

It is often argued that the self-destructive nature of those who have moved away from the Biblical model of husband and wife is due to their being unaccepted by society. But one is hard-pressed to find a persecuted people group (black slaves, Jewish prisoners, the oppressed Armenians, etc.) who had a problem with self-destructive behavior. If you love someone, they need to hear the truth.

Didn't Jesus teach the Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you? Aren't Christians cherry-picking? Why is this sin such a big deal?

First, we must realize the Golden Rule has boundaries. If someone is a masochist, they shouldn't assume that makes it acceptable to hurt others. Jesus taught the Golden Rule in the context of the loving and sacrificial nature of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31).

As far as cherry-picking goes, if people have a predisposed distaste for LGBTQ+ and pick a religion that accommodates their distaste, that would be a pretty dark move. The world enjoys criticizing Christians for cherry-picking because it is easy for the world to avoid cherry-picking when they have no tree.

This sin, as we discussed earlier, is a big deal because of the aggressive effort at sanctioning and celebrating it. It is unique in that way.

How To Engage

Finally, where do we go from here? How do we engage a world so committed to calling good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20)?

First, we must be firm in our convictions. James teaches that the **“double-minded man” is “unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).**

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word (1 Kings 18:21).

Also, with great love and wisdom, we need to be willing to engage.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret (Ephesians 5:11, 12).

In your efforts to accomplish this, always consider your tone. What must it have felt like for those sinners having dinner with Jesus? Are you known as someone who truly loves and cares? Do people you know feel like you’ve earned the right to give them counsel? Will people be offended by you or by the truth you speak?

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are outside*, redeeming the time. ⁶Let your speech always *be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one (Colossians 4:5, 6).*

Do you realize that over and above a behavior changed, we should seek a soul won. The natural, carnal mind is incapable of subjecting itself to the law of God (Romans 8:7, 9).

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:11).

The answer to this problem is redemption. There is a bigger problem here than sexual desires and there is a bigger answer than overcoming

them. As John Daniel Davidson mused in writing about, not the culture war, but religious war in which we find ourselves. This is merely...

...the latest iteration of the rebellion that began in the Garden. This is what J.R.R. Tolkien meant when he said, "all stories are ultimately about the fall."

Questions for Study

1. Why do you suppose LGBTQ+ is such a hot topic? How have your conversations gone on this subject matter (pages 2-4)?
2. What does the Bible teach when it comes to sexuality (pages 5, 6)?
3. How do you suppose the departure from biblical sexuality becomes so predominant in a culture? What exchanges are made (pages 6, 7)?
4. What are some common objections to biblical sexuality and how do you answer them? Are people born a certain way? Is it unloving to question a person's sexual decisions? Didn't Jesus dine with sinners? Do Christians cherry-pick (pages 7, 8)?
5. How should Christians engage this issue (pages 8, 9)?