

Politics According to the Bible

Marriage

Genesis 2:15-25

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Marriage

Scripture

Have I told you the story about how Eileen and I met and got married?

I came to this country in 1983 to study at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, IL. During the summer break between my second and third year at seminary, I met Eileen on August 3, 1985. It was a beautiful summer's day, and it was love at first sight for me. She was beautiful, winsome, and attractive.

Since I was on a summer break I was able to spend a lot of time with Eileen. With each passing day I knew that Eileen was the woman with whom I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

Having come to the United States from South Africa I was rather shy and quite reserved when it came to dealing with girls. Because South Africa was a former British Colony there is a great deal more formality in our relationships with one another. So when I first met Eileen I addressed her by her last name—Miss McCloy—as it was the proper thing to do.

However, after a week or so I knew that I wanted to take our relationship a step further. So, I plucked up what little courage I had, and with apprehension and trepidation asked Eileen, “Miss McCloy, would you mind if I called you by your first name?”

To which she responded, “Why, not at all. In fact, I wouldn't even mind if you called me by *your* last name!”

We were married four months later!

And we have been happily married for twenty-six years.

We are currently in a series titled, “Politics According to the Bible.” We are examining key political issues that confront us today and learning what the Bible says about each issue.

Today, as we continue in our series on “Politics According to the Bible” I want to examine “Marriage.” What does the Bible have to say about marriage? How should we vote regarding mar-

riage?

I would like to draw your attention to Genesis 2:15-25:

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

**“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”**

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:15-25)

Introduction

One of the major issues in this election is marriage. This is particularly true because one of the political parties wants to see homosexuals given full privileges of marriage.

One of the most troubling trends in our day is the growing confusion about marriage. Our society is spiraling dangerously and speedily downwards regarding a biblical understanding of marriage. Led by a supportive media, people with a non-biblical worldview are championing all kinds of relationships that are narcissistic, sodomitic, and debased.

It is time for us to stand and speak up. We must not allow people with an unbiblical and sinful worldview to bully us into silence by telling us that our views of marriage and relationships are old-fashioned and Victorian. We have the blueprints for fulfilling relationships. Unbelievers have no idea about how to do it right.

God created and designed marriage. Every time we deviate from God's design, we reap disillusionment and heartache. It is time for us to lead the way regarding marriage and relationships.

Lesson

So, as we consider politics according to the Bible, let us examine marriage.

Let me use the following outline to guide us:

1. What does the Bible teach about marriage?
2. What is the assault on marriage?

I. What Does the Bible Teach about Marriage?

First, then, what does the Bible teach about marriage?

The oldest institution in the world is not the church. It is not even the state. It is the institution of marriage.

Marriage was created, designed, and instituted by God when he declared, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18).

So God fashioned a woman and brought her to the man. On seeing the woman, the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23).

The Bible then explicitly states what happens when a marriage takes place, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

The marriage that God created, designed, and instituted is a union between one man and one woman that is permanent.

Jesus affirmed God’s design for marriage by performing his first miracle at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11).

He then defended marriage before the Pharisees, pointing out that when men and women departed from God’s design for marriage, it was because of the hardness of their hearts. Listen to how Jesus put it in Matthew 19:3-9:

³And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”

⁴He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

⁷They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”

⁸He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

So, God created, designed, and instituted marriage. Jesus affirmed God’s design. And he also taught that any deviation from God’s design was because of the hardness of our human hearts.

II. What Is the Assault on Marriage?

And second, what is the assault on marriage?

The institution of marriage, at least as God designed it, is un-

der attack today. Nine years ago, in an article titled, “Alternative Marriages Likely to Jump in U.S.,” the *New York Times* declared, “The United States is becoming a post-marital society.”¹ Marriage, as it has been biblically and historically understood, is becoming an institution of the past.

One of the main assaults on the institution of marriage is divorce. Divorce has been around for a long time. Remember Jesus said, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:8).

But while divorce is an assault on marriage, the no-fault divorce has made it even easier for people to divorce. The “no-fault” divorce originated in California on January 1, 1970.

Prior to the no-fault divorce revolution, a divorce could only be obtained through a showing of fault of one of the parties in a marriage. This was something more than not loving one another; it meant that one spouse had to plead that the other had committed adultery, abandonment, felony, or other similarly culpable acts.

But now, after January 1, 1970, a couple simply has to agree to a divorce, without any fault on either side.

The result of the no-fault divorce has been a skyrocketing divorce rate, as well as mountains of evidence showing increased unhappiness. Perhaps no other law has done so much harm to so many people.

I have talked to people who have said that their marriage no longer makes them happy. No-fault laws allow people like this to say, “I am not happy now. But if I get a divorce, I am going to be happy.” The evidence, however, proves that divorce is not a path to happiness.

Studies show that married people, more than divorced or single people, are generally happier. Their lives are more fulfilled in every way. They are happier, they are healthier, and they are better off financially. Further, there is a cost to society as whole due to

¹ Tamar Lewin, “Alternative Marriages Likely to Jump in U.S.,” *New York Times*, November 23, 2003, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4188/is_20031123/ai_n11427113.

the breakdown of marriage. This is what one study shows:

The scientific evidence is now overwhelming. Marriage is not just one of a wide variety of alternative family forms or intimate relations, each of which are equally good at promoting the well-being of children and adults. Marriage is not merely a private taste or a private relation; it is an important public good. As marriage weakens, the costs are borne not only by individual children or families, but also by all of us taxpayers, citizens, and neighbors. We all incur the costs of higher crime, welfare, education and health-care expenditures, and in reduced security for our own marriage investments. Simply as a matter of public health alone, to take just one public consequence of marriage's decline, a new campaign to reduce marriage failure is as important as the campaign to reduce smoking.²

Meanwhile, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead chronicled the fallout for children of divorce in her book titled *The Divorce Culture*:

For parents, divorce is not a solo act, but one that has enormous consequences for children. A mounting body of evidence from diverse and multiple sources shows that divorce has been a primary generator of new forms of inequality, disadvantage, and loss for American children. It has spawned a generation of angry and bereaved children who have a harder time learning, staying in school, and achieving at high levels. . . . Divorce is never merely an individual lifestyle choice without larger consequences for the society. . . . It has imposed a new set of burdens and responsibilities on the schools, contributed to the tide of fatherless juveniles filling the courts and jails, and increased the risk of unwed teen parenthood.³

More recently, Charles Colson pointed out the devastating consequences of fatherlessness and illegitimacy in our country:

² Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 186.

³ Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture* (New York, NY: Kopf, 1997), 188-189.

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Studies reveal that children without fathers are more likely to grow up in poverty, to have problems at school, to commit crimes. Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute wrote that “illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare, or homelessness.” Why? Because illegitimacy drives everything else.⁴

Now, I am not trying to put a guilt trip on anyone. I am aware that some of you have been divorced. You may have fought to keep your marriage intact, but it did not work out that way. You are doing the best you can to raise your children, and you are doing a great job. (For encouragement, look at Debbie Phelps, the mother of Olympic great, Michael Phelps, who raised him and two sisters as a divorced mother.)

Still, the children of divorce face enormous challenges. They drop out more, get worse grades, get into more trouble, are expelled from school more often, are more likely to take drugs and alcohol, and commit more crimes while still in school. And things don't get any easier once children of divorce become adults.

Kennedy and Newcombe are right when they say, “As a matter of compassion, we should care for single parents and the children of divorce. But as a matter of policy, we should support marriage and make divorces harder—not easier—to get.”⁵

A more serious assault on marriage has been waged by homosexuals who are trying to destroy marriage by redefining it. Instead of agreeing that marriage is a union between one man and one woman that is permanent, they argue that a marriage is simply a union between two (or more) persons.

The Bible condemns the practice of homosexuality, just as it condemns premarital sex, adultery, incest, and bestiality. In Leviticus 20:13 we read, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman,

⁴ Charles Colson with Nancy R. Pearcey, *A Dangerous Grace: Daily Readings* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing Co., 1994), 189.

⁵ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *How Would Jesus Vote?: a Christian Perspective on the Issues* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2008), 166.

both of them have committed an abomination.”

In Romans 1:26-28 we read, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

And in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 we read, “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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Even though God’s word could not be clearer, there is still a tremendous assault on marriage by homosexual activists. They have been promoting their agenda in schools, the media, and even on the streets.

But, if that is not bad enough, they are now also being aided by the court system. For example, in California in May 2008, the California Supreme Court, by a vote of 4 to 3, overturned an electoral decision supported by 4,618,673 voters in 2000.⁶ It concerned Proposition 22, which defined marriage exclusively as being between one man and one woman. The margin of victory for this affirmation of God’s design for marriage was 61 to 39 percent.⁷ Even though a significant majority of the voters in Californian understood and wanted marriage to be defined as between one man and one woman, four judges overturned their decision in one fell swoop.

How did the American Civil Liberties Union perceive the decision by the four California Supreme Court Justices? Here is a portion of a message sent to the ACLU supporters following the

⁶ See: http://californiafamily.org/Site/current_detail.asp?IssueID=789.

⁷ See: http://californiafamily.org/Site/current_detail.asp?IssueID=789.

California decision:

We won the marriage case in California. No need for hyperbole here; this is big. . . . And as the *New York Times* recently pointed out, the California Supreme Court is the most influential state high court in America. . . . Marriage in California will transform the discussion of marriage nationwide. . . . The fact that California is marrying same-sex couples will put considerable pressure on the rest of the country to recognize those marriages. Even more important, the rest of the country recognizes that California is America's cultural trendsetter, that cultural change in California is usually a preview of what is to come in the rest of the United States. . . . This was a prize of inestimable value.⁸

Homosexual activist Wayne Besen said this:

If same-sex marriage becomes a reality in America's largest and most influential state—and is not overturned by a Constitutional Amendment—it will be the biggest earthquake to hit in years. The sheer number of couples who will marry (and divorce, it is California, after all), will forever change this debate. It will cause a legal mess, as many of these married couples—often with children—migrate to [other] states.⁹

Is a constitutional amendment the best way to protect marriage? Maybe. Perhaps there are other and better ways to do so. But what I do know is that God created, designed, and instituted marriage as a union between one man and one woman that is permanent.

Imagine someone who knows nothing of music coming across a violin bow. It would be very puzzling. It has obviously been carefully made, they might think; but what is it *for*? It's too narrow to be a kind of polishing implement; it's too delicate to be for practical jobs around the house or garden. It's even got a little screw to adjust it to make the hair tighter or slacker. . . what on

⁸ See: <http://gbge.aclu.org/content/view/261/76/>.

⁹ See: <http://waynebesen.com/columns/2008/04/observations.html>.

earth is one supposed to do with it?

Only when someone produces a violin, picks up the bow and begins to play will the mystery be solved. By itself, you would never have guessed that the bow was for that kind of work, still less what beautiful sounds it could produce. Equally, you would almost certainly not have guessed, from looking at the violin by itself, how it was to be played. And yet for centuries they have been made for one another. Only when they are together will either of them be complete.

Although this illustration is inadequate, it does nevertheless illustrate the point that just as bows and violins are made for each other, so also are males and females made for each other. That is God's divine design. I love the way Tom Wright puts it: "Males and females are very different, and they are designed to work together to make, with God, the music of creation."¹⁰

Conclusion

So, how should we think regarding marriage and the Bible?

I believe we should vote for a politician who understood God's divine design for marriage, family, and relationships. We should vote for a politician who supported marriage as a union between one man and one woman. Amen.

¹⁰ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 1* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 21. The entire illustration is from Wright, pp. 20-21.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

O God, thank you for your Word. Thank you for what we learn about politics according to the Bible.

As we think about the upcoming general election and our responsibility (and privilege) as citizens to vote, help us to understand politics according to the Bible.

O God, your Word teaches us about marriage. You created, designed, and instituted marriage. Your Son's first miracle was done at a wedding ceremony. You have said that the reason marriages fail is because of the hardness of our hearts. You have defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman that is permanent. Marriage is not merely a relationship between two or more persons.

Would you raise up political candidates who understand marriage, and who would support legislation that will protect it?

And all of this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.