

The Supreme Court's Ruling for Same-Sex Marriage

A 19-Minute Bible Study

(with additional content for a 45-minute study)

by

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Leader's Guide

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Introduction

Imagine that you had the opportunity to talk to someone who supports same-sex marriage.¹ Take two minutes to write down the biblical points you think would be important to bring up in the conversation.

Note to the leader: Have the participants write down their answers but not share them at this time. At the end of the lesson there is an opportunity for them to express what they think.

Bible Study

1. The early church father Augustine conveyed the idea that many things in the visible world mirror things in the spiritual world. Numerous biblical concepts key off earthly things such as darkness and light, sleeping and waking, or eating and drinking. With such a thought in mind, as we begin to consider marriage and the recent Supreme Court ruling allowing for same-sex marriage, recall what the blessed institution of marriage² reflects spiritually. Consider Ephesians 5:31,32 for some help in answering that question, which is divided more specifically into the following two questions:

- Who does the husband picture?

¹ For Bible passages that demonstrate that homosexuality and lesbianism attack God's plan for humanity, see Romans 1:18-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. The Bible makes it clear that these lifestyles are sinful. Just because the United States Supreme Court has said that gay marriage is to be allowed, it doesn't mean that God's design for marriage has changed. The Bible says marriage is to be between one man and one woman for a lifetime. We also want to remember that while homosexuality and lesbianism are against God's will, these lifestyles are no more and no less sinful than other thoughts, words, and actions that go against God's holy will.

² Jesus defines marriage as the divine uniting of one man and one woman for a lifetime in Mark 10:1-9 and Matthew 19:1-12. In connection to Jesus' definition of marriage in Matthew 19, Jesus underscores that human sexuality is only to be practiced among people within the marital union. Because of Jesus' definition where he upholds the reference of Genesis 2:18-24, humankind is not free to redefine marriage any other way, as we have seen done recently in our country.

Christ and all that he stands for as recorded in the inspired, inerrant Word. The leader may also want to have the group read Genesis 2:18-24 where God institutes marriage.

- Who does the bride represent?

The holy Christian Church and all that Christ has called her to be in is holy Word.

2. If marriage is redefined to allow for two men, or two women, or one man plus two women, etc.; spiritually speaking, what are we saying about Jesus Christ and his relationship to the holy Christian church or about the church's relationship to Jesus?

By introducing another "suitor" to the institution of marriage, spiritually we suggest that Jesus could forsake his people for another, when he could not (Hebrews 13:5), or that it would be okay for his people to run after other gods, when it is not (Exodus 20:3). This is precisely why the Lord often speaks of the sin of idolatry as spiritual adultery. Consider Jeremiah 3:8 among other verses. The former suggestion about Jesus is outright blasphemy and the latter about the church is flat out idolatry. Blasphemy and idolatry, of course, are direct attacks against saving faith. There is nothing more serious. Note: You could also say "redefining marriage" applies to all forms of violating the Sixth Commandment: unscriptural divorce, lust,* pornography,* cohabitation,* sexual immorality of any kind.* (*These forms are extra-marital.)

3. Marriage wasn't just given, however, to be a spiritual picture of our relationship with God and from that a portrayal of the way spouses are to treat each other. It was also given to be a blessing for society. Look at the passages below and discuss the following questions:

- What are three purposes (which are also blessings) God gives for marriage?
- In what ways are these three purposes a blessing to society?

Genesis 1:27,28 – The blessing of children.

Children are given to ensure the sustaining/increase of humanity and society. If raised in the Lord, in general, they ensure societal growth and prosperity of every kind.

Genesis 2:18 – The blessing of companionship.

God designed marriage so that people in society could experience the closest kind of companionship possible between two people, a companionship that promotes

equality among both genders as each equally complements the other in his/her respective role.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5,9 – The blessing of chastity or sexual contentment.

God designed marriage to protect the gift of sexuality, and in that, children are protected from being born out of wedlock (instability) and adults are protected from depraved minds and sexually transmitted diseases, which can be life threatening, among other things.

4. Let's reconsider those three gifts.

- When God's design for marriage isn't followed, in what ways are each of those three gifts impacted?
- When God's design for marriage isn't followed, in what ways could society be negatively impacted?

Note to the leader: It is possible that participants will discuss these two questions together, and that's fine.

Children

- In a same-sex marriage, children are not a natural possibility. Children are also deprived of either a biological mother or father, neither of which is to be considered dispensable in regard to a child's well-being. Furthermore, spiritually, children are unable to see a reflection of Christ and the church but, instead, are provided with spiritual pictures of blasphemy/idolatry.
- When God's design for marriage isn't followed, apart from God's providential care and saving grace, the children may become broken people and often are hindered in being of benefit to society. In many cases, they go on to have relationships that do not follow God's design for marriage, which bring more harm to society.

Companionship

- Though some believe a marital companionship may be experienced by a same-sex couple, the opportunity to profess that the opposite gender is one's equal and a perfect complement cannot be expressed. Such a marital companionship, therefore, is mere illusion. In fact, homosexuality and lesbianism, by their nature, devalue the opposite gender of any same-sex couple as it claims, presumably inadvertently, that there's no place or need for the opposite gender in the highest of human unions.
- When God's design for marriage isn't followed, there is a companionship that models abuse of or a living outside of God-ordained roles. This is detrimental for society.

Chastity or Sexual Contentment

- Any deviation from what the Lord *designed* for sexuality cannot promote true chastity/sexual contentment (sexuality is alone to be expressed among people within God's design for marriage). Such a deviation can only lend a mind and body over to depravity.
- When God's design for marriage isn't followed, it has an impact on the blessing of sexual contentment. God's gift of sex will not be seen as a selfless-giving blessing for a man and woman who have committed themselves to each other for a lifetime. Society will see sex as just two people who are doing something to please themselves, turning sex into something selfish instead of selfless.

SUMMARY TRUTH

It is for scriptural reasons such as these that marriage is to be protected in society by Christians as they wisely live out their sanctified lives under an earthly government.³ It is falsehood to conclude that same-sex marriage is of no consequence to individual Christians, congregations, pastors, or society at large. Same-sex marriage is harmful for all, even if one does not perceive or seemingly experience any harmful effects by it. Anyone who approves of same-sex marriage or remains unconcerned by it fails to keep God's law: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart" ... and, "Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Luke 10:27).

Out of love, Christians will want to look for opportunities to help connect misguided souls to Jesus, who alone can change hearts and attitudes. It's important that we share the truth of what God intends marriage to be. It's also vitally important that we proclaim the truths about Jesus and his forgiving love. We do so remembering 1 Peter 3:15, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

After our study today, pick out three points you will want to remember as you talk to someone who supports same-sex marriage.

Note to leader: If you are going to use the additional material, save this exercise until the end of the lesson. Participants can also compare what they wrote down at the beginning of the lesson with the points they will want to remember.

³ Some helpful resources concerning engaging our wayward culture in light of this issue: chapter 7, "The Christian and Politics," of *Civil Government* by Prof. Daniel Deutschlander; Chapter 11, "Sweet Land of Liberty," of *Rainbow Savior* by Rev. William Monday. Both resources can be ordered through www.nph.net.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Many Christians are especially distressed by others whom they know and love—family, friends, fellow church members—who have openly celebrated the ruling of the Supreme Court in very visible, public ways (Facebook, Instagram, social occasions, etc.).

1. In the book of Ephesians (Ephesians 5:3) God tells us we are to avoid every hint of sexual immorality. Since same-sex marriage is sexually immoral, it would be sinful for us to support it. Consider the following passages and share thoughts on what we should do if a fellow Christian shows support for same-sex marriage.

- Matthew 18:15-18

Jesus is very clear that if a brother or sister in Christ sins, we are to point out their fault to them discreetly for the sake of their soul. Eventually that admonition may need to become public if the person refuses to listen, but we will be patient as we approach them.

- Galatians 6:1,2

As we look to correct, Paul reminds us to do so gently. The verb used here is a picture of one resetting a bone that has been broken. GENTLY!

2. Apply the truths of these two passages by specifically addressing the following scenario:

Facebook Post (6/26/2015)

Aunt Jenny (Christian): Hooray for the Supreme Court! Love wins!

You: _____ (Fill in the blank.)

In keeping with the above two passages, we are called to reach out to Aunt Jenny. But to do so discreetly and in all gentleness, we would be wise not to post a reply that everyone can see about her sin of celebrating same-sex marriage. Though her sin is public, we will want to do all we can to speak to her gently and privately, looking for an opportunity to understand why she is saying what she is saying, and to bring the light of the Scriptures to her softly. Hopefully, she will listen, repent, and remove her post as a fruit of repentance. If she won't listen, then we bring two other Christians along who are close to her, who agree with the Scriptures, and whom she respects. This too we do discreetly—not online in full view of everyone. Reaching out to her, of

course, assumes we have a clear understanding of what the Scriptures say about same-sex attraction. If one is unsure, speak to your pastor or other Christians who are knowledgeable in the Scriptures on this topic.

3. What would you do if a nonbeliever you knew (family, friend, coworker, etc.) posted a similar thought as Aunt Jenny's, a thought that supports the Supreme Court's ruling? In groups of three or four people (or on your own if you prefer) summarize what guidance is given in the following passages. Begin with the first and move down to the others as much as you have time, or assign passages to various groups.

- Titus 2:11,12
- John 13:35
- Acts 17:16,22,23
- John 4:7-26

Tactics for reaching out to a nonbeliever in light of this issue will be quite different than how we would approach an erring Christian. Before someone knows Christ, that person will not be able to embrace the scriptural teaching on homosexuality, at least not for the right reason (Titus 2:11,12). Furthermore, the person's view on homosexuality stems from the greater issue of not knowing their Savior. That issue of not knowing Jesus must be addressed first (John 13:35). The issue about homosexuality, as important as it is, is only a side issue in regard to the salvation of the soul. Again, sharing the gospel for the hope of salvation must come first. We need to keep the major things major. Just as we would forego talking to a Mormon about the shady character of Joseph Smith, or their once-held doctrine of polygamy because the greater issue to put those issues to rest is who Jesus truly is and what he truly accomplished, so too with a same-sex marriage advocate we will want to establish who Jesus really is. Following that, we will also want to work to establish that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant Word—relevant in every place for all times.

Acts 17 and John 4 are examples of Paul and Jesus speaking to unbelievers, unbelievers who were also guilty of publicly embracing particular sins (idolatry, immorality). Note how in their witnesses, attention is drawn first to the gospel and who Jesus truly is. Such an approach gives hope, before the law as a guide is applied to the soul. These passages remind us that we ought to pray for more of the Holy Spirit and for insight on how to rightly apply the law and gospel and how to speak the truth in love. We do not want to alienate nonbelievers on any issue other than the gospel. Even then, in sharing the gospel, we hope that they will receive it. If nonbelievers reject us, let it be first and foremost for our hope and for our sharing of the gospel in all truth and love.

Lastly, be careful with the use of social networks or other online communication. Though these can be excellent tools for the spread of the gospel, they can also be tools the devil uses to portray Christians as unloving and, in that, to further harden the hearts of nonbelievers toward the sharing of the gospel. It's good to remember that our audience online is often a mixed crowd of believers and nonbelievers. The same is true at work and in other places where we sometimes meet nonbelievers embracing and celebrating what is ungodly. The issue is the gospel! Be wise as we share it!

4. List things that our church can do in light of the Supreme Court's ruling for same-sex marriage. (For help, see Mark 2:17b; Ephesians 4:11-15; 5:15,16; Matthew 10:16-20.)

Answers will vary. A number of things we can do as a church family follow:

- We can continue to work on understanding the temptation that homosexuality is for precious souls among God's people and seek to provide a welcoming environment in the church where they can freely confess their sin and receive the life-giving message of the gospel with open arms. This is not so easy to do, so we would do well to pray on this and strive for perfection. We can also continue praying that the Lord would help us treat this sin like any other sin as we seek those straying who are embracing a homosexual lifestyle. These words of Jesus apply to such people: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17b).
- We can mutually encourage one another by growing together in the Scriptures on this most pressing issue (Ephesians 4:11-15). There is much to review in the Scriptures on this issue.
- In light of this issue, we can train one another in how to share the gospel to a wayward culture, making the most of every opportunity while recognizing the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15,16).
- We can protect our church by adopting clear policies and practices that uphold the Scriptures and are communicated to our membership and beyond in regard to same-sex marriage and our facility/property usage—policies that at this time are still protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Go to www.wels.net or see page 8 of the August 2015 edition of *Forward in Christ* for such a suggested policy for churches. To not have such policies can open up a church to lawsuits and, as such, threaten its gospel ministry.
- We are to pray that the Lord would cause us to be wise like serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16-20). We pray that he give us the words to speak so that we might rightly confess our hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ to all. God bless us to this end, and may more souls be won over to the kingdom of God at this time!

Note to leader: If you have not used the exercise at the end of the Summary Truth section, you can insert it here.

For a more in-depth resource on issues of Same-Sex Attraction (SSA), check out the books *Rainbow Savior* or *Forgive Us Our Sins*, both of which can be found at www.nph.net. You can also keep up on this issue by following the work of People of Grace, Inc. (POG). POG is a parasynodical organization (WELS) focused on equipping God's people to rightly address SSA. Go to www.poglutherans.org.