

PCA Parent Pages

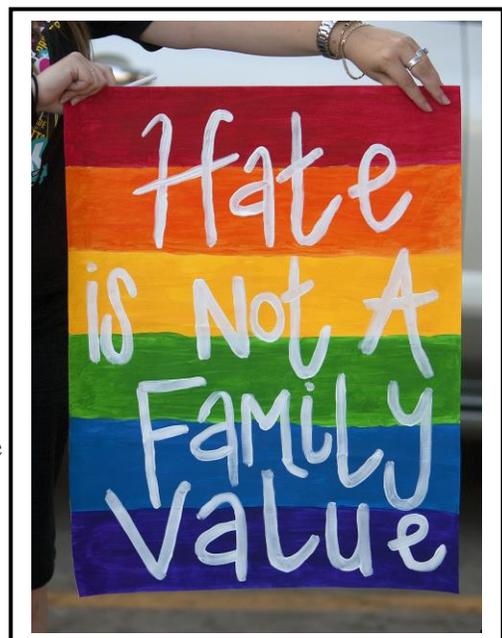
Valuable information for parents intentional about raising godly and responsible children.

How Do I Talk to My Teens about “Same Sex Marriage”?

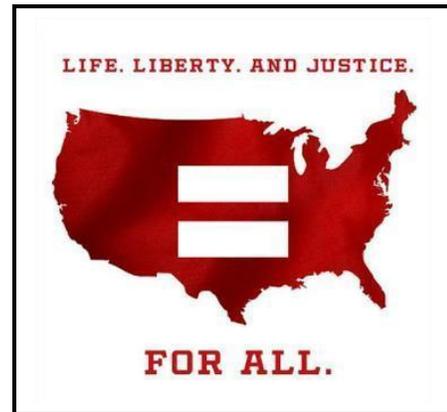
As a parent, your first reaction to this Parent Page may very well be – why would you want to talk to your children about same sex marriage (SSM)? I understand that sentiment, but the reality is that the door has been opened and our culture is moving in a direction where same sex marriage is likely inevitable. In March 2013, the Supreme Court heard two landmark cases that specifically address this issue. On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in a controversial 5-4 decision on one of those issues striking down the federal Defense of Marriage Act signed into law by then President Bill Clinton which effectively prohibited the federal government from defining the institution of marriage – a privilege under the Constitution left to the states. Yet similar to the issue of abortion (where the federal government struck down a state law criminalizing abortions), the federal government has already demonstrated its intent by striking down state laws prohibiting same sex relations and is positioned to strike down state laws prohibiting same sex marriage.

This paper will not be a political discussion as to the legitimacy of this federal government usurpation – although that is another great conversation to have with your children about the proper role of government in society. The primary focus of this paper is laying the groundwork for a proper understanding of the importance of marriage (traditional marriage, if you will). If one properly understands marriage, the arguments in support of what is being called same sex marriage can be examined and weighed – and will be found wanting.

As you undertake this conversation, a number of preliminary issues need to be addressed. First, you must understand that any opposition to same sex marriage will be viewed as opposition and hatred of the homosexual individual themselves. While these personal attacks are generally unfounded, they are grounded at least in some sense of reality. There are those who call themselves Christians who are very adamant about their hatred of the homosexual – not just the lifestyle choice or the damage that lifestyle does to the individual or society, but a hatred similar to racism that views the homosexual as less than worthy. While most Christians do not oppose same sex marriage with any animosity in their hearts, those supporting same sex marriage know that using this argument puts those in opposition on the defense and in a very uncomfortable position.



Another thing to understand is where to have these conversations with others. Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase, “The medium is the message,” and the wisdom found in this concept is vital when addressing a complex issue and desiring to engage the culture in a meaningful and persuasive manner. If you are active on any social media, you’ve probably noticed the recent explosion of “equality” symbols seeking to promote SSM. Several of these are displayed in the picture below. Understand that while you may desire to engage in cultural discussions on this topic, you need to be as “wise as serpents and as innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). This means that you must take into consideration the medium of social media and understand that this platform is not the best place for meaningful, persuasive and intelligent dialogue. Social media is a platform for concise, and usually light, thoughts and statements. The discussion about SSM is a much heavier, more profound dialogue that needs time and space to develop. So, be careful using an inadequate tool for the job you are hoping to accomplish.



This PCA Parent Page is intended to equip you to discuss this controversial issue with your children to equip them to defend a biblical concept of marriage. There are two essential arguments that will be addressed – first, from a cultural position that addresses the role of the state in defining marriage; and secondly, from the Biblical position which looks at what God’s Word says about marriage and human sexuality.

1. The Cultural Argument

When discussing the issue of marriage, the question always arises addressing the role of the state in licensing the institution of marriage. People will question why the state even needs to be involved in this most intimate of human relations and the reality is that the “stamp of approval” of the state is not really necessary for two people to be “married.”

If you remember the beautiful “marriage” scene in the movie *Braveheart*, you’ll recall that the “state” (king in that instance) had issued a decree stating that the king himself was to be able to sleep with a bride on her wedding night – this doctrine of “Prima Nocta” (or First Night) was instituted to continue the domination of the English over the Scots. If the “state” does not recognize a union, that relationship chooses to forego the protection and benefits offered by the state. In *Braveheart*, they also chose to forego the penalties!



That is the role of the state – to provide benefits and penalties for citizens in order to reward and promote certain activities and decisions and to penalize and dissuade others. In simplest terms, the state is the “collective good.” Those actions and behaviors that most deem appropriate and beneficial are supported by the state; while other actions and behaviors are not.

The state, then, has three primary methods to address these actions and behaviors:

- Prohibit
- Permit
- Promote

If society deems that an action or behavior is so inappropriate or harmful to the person or others, that action or behavior may be prohibited. A person may choose to continue this action or behavior, but if caught, they face prosecution and the penalties that the state can employ (fines or jail time). Up until the *Lawrence v. Texas* case in 2007, homosexual relationships were prohibited by numerous states – these prohibitions were struck down by the Supreme Court at that time. When Utah entered the United States, it had permitted polygamy (more than one marriage partner allowed) – but as a condition of statehood, Utah had to prohibit polygamy.

Generally speaking, the law reflects the attitude of the majority of the people governed. This is not always the case, but is true in most instances. By 2007 the American society, generally speaking, was far more accepting of homosexual behavior and relations and the *Lawrence v. Texas* case striking down sodomy laws reflected that attitude. Now homosexuality was to be permitted in society – no longer prohibited and facing prosecution. But that still doesn’t mean that this behavior and relationship enjoyed the “stamp of approval” and benefits of marriage – and for good reason.



What does “promoting” SSM mean?

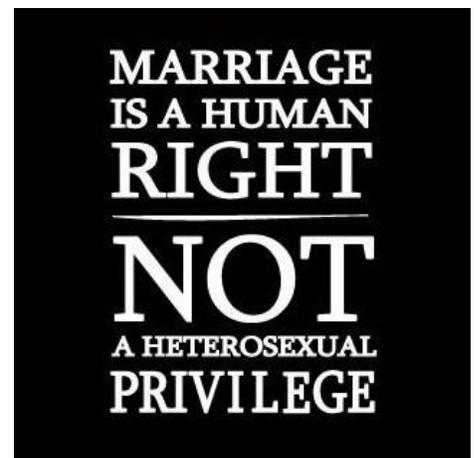
If and when the United States of America legally endorses same sex marriage as equal in status to the traditional heterosexual marriage union, our country will join 18 other countries (as of 2014) where homosexual marriage is legal. This transformation of the law began in 2000 with The Netherlands becoming the first country to legalize same sex marriage. Currently in the United States, there are 19 states which have legalized same-sex marriage – those states include: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington state – and the District of Columbia. Additionally, the Supreme Court struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013 requiring the federal government to recognize same-sex marriages from the states where they are legal. To add to the confusion, the 6th Circuit appellate court overruled a lower court decision that had struck down various state laws defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The higher court ruled that states do have the right to limit marriage stating that it considered not only the overwhelming history and tradition of marriage, but also listened to the overwhelming voice of the people on this topic.

So, while SSM is not “inevitable” at this point, the legality of SSM lumes large at this point and many outside the political arena are lining up in support – not only celebrities, but also surprisingly many evangelical pastors. Recently a Southern Baptist congregation voted to become an affirming church – one that allows its members to be openly gay. Jim Wallis, founder and CEO of Sojourners, was interviewed by the Huffington Post after announcing his endorsement of SSM saying that he supports same-sex marriage as part of the ongoing conversation about how to “commit liberals and conservatives to re-covenanting marriage, restablishing, renewing marriage.” Wallis said, “I want a deeper commitment to marriage that is more and more inclusive, and that’s where I think the country is going.”

SO LETS GET THIS STRAIGHT...

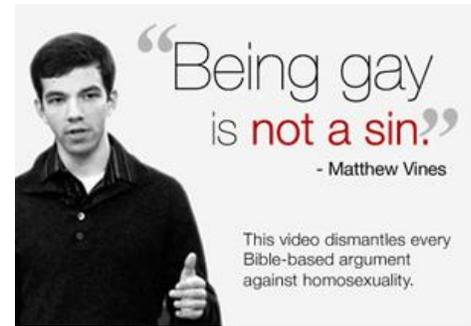
CHARLIE SHEEN CAN MAKE A "PORN FAMILY"	BRITNEY SPEARS HAD A 55 HOUR MARRIAGE
KELSEY GRAMMER ENDED HIS 15 YEAR MARRIAGE OVER THE PHONE	JESSE JAMES & TIGER WOODS WHILE MARRIED WERE HAVING SEX WITH EVERYONE
LARRY KING HAS HAD 8 DIVORCES	43-50% OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES END
KIM KARDASHIAN'S MARRIAGE COST 10 MILLION DOLLARS & IT LASTED 72 DAYS	BUT SOMEHOW IT IS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE THAT IS GOING TO "DESTROY THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE"
NEWT GINGRICH HAD AFFAIRS WHILE HIS 1ST & 2ND WIVES WERE VERY ILL	REALLY? PLEASE REPOST THIS IF YOU ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT EQUAL RIGHTS

But, just because something looks inevitable and is currently the “popular” opinion, it still doesn’t mean that the government must support and endorse it. While the government has moved from at one point prohibiting same-sex relationships to permitting these, it is still a major jump to move from permitting to promoting. Generally the question I ask students is “how does same-sex marriage improve or benefit the community at large?” The answer for heterosexual marriage is that a male-female relationship provides the best environment for the rearing of children and it also has the additional benefit of improving the situations of both the man and the woman. Same-sex unions accomplish none of this. While it is true that a same-sex marriage would be, at some level, a benefit to the two individuals, this is not reason enough for a government to endorse and promote this relationship to the status of marriage. In other words, there is a distinction that can be made between the relationship of a man and woman vs. two individuals of the same sex. That distinction involves what is best for others – and this is the interest of the government.

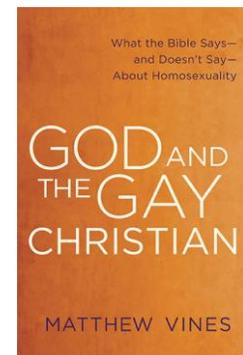
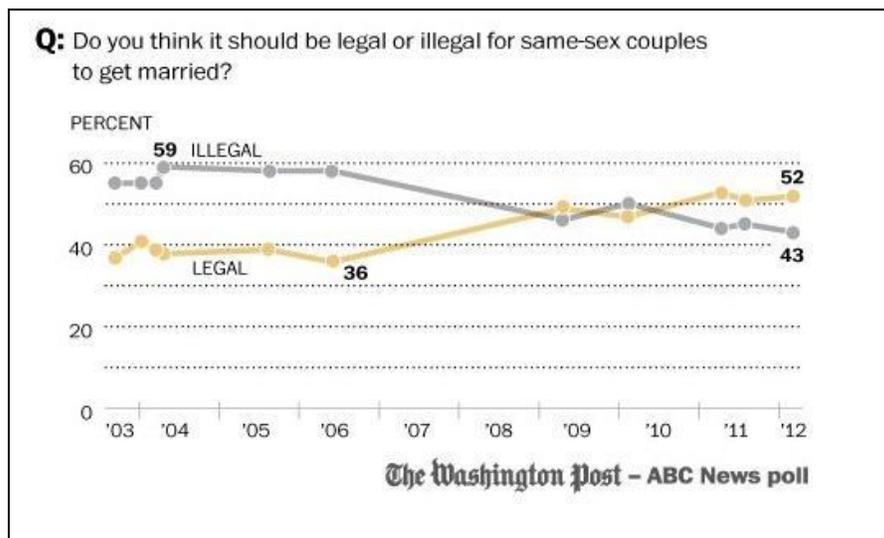


2. The Biblical Argument

The Biblical argument is essentially two-fold. First, the question must be answered whether homosexuality (in practice, as a lifestyle) is a sin or not. Matthew Vines in his book *God and the Gay Christian* makes the argument that homosexuality is essentially the same as heterosexuality – that the sin aspect of each is when it is practiced outside the bonds of a loving, committed relationship. According to Vines, simply “being gay is not a sin.” This differs greatly from the position that homosexuality is a sin, but that a Christian could be celibate or not engage in sexual practices – while they may “struggle” with a same-sex attraction, as long as they didn’t act upon it, there was no sin. Temptation, in other words, is not a sin.



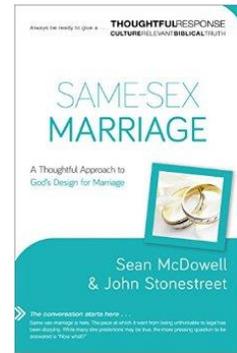
This is a very important discussion – if homosexuality is not a sin, then Vines makes the case that not only should the state endorse same-sex marriage, but the church should endorse and embrace it as well. Numerous evangelical pastors are beginning to take this position – one that was only supported by more liberal ecumenical groups in years past. It appears that the change in the pulpit mirrors the change in the culture on this issue. While ten years ago a majority of Americans agreed that same-sex marriage should not be legalized, those numbers have essentially flipped today – with a majority not supporting the legalization of same-sex marriage.



Others would counter the statement of Vines by pointing out a few issues. First, there are a number of verses in Scripture that clearly mention homosexuality as a sin. These verses are easy to find and easy to understand in context. While Vines and others have sought to distort their meaning, the biblical position that homosexuality is a sin is clear and settled. What isn’t clear is why people choose to ignore the obvious.

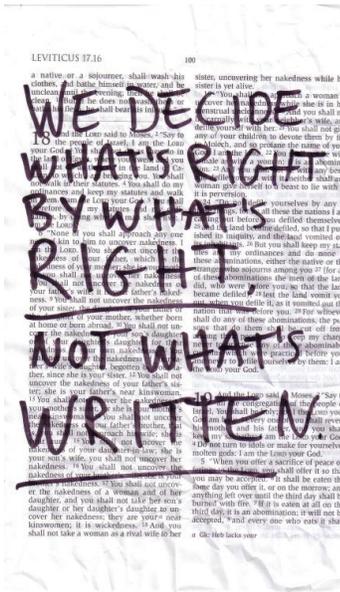


Sean McDowell and John Stonestreet recently published a book titled *Same-sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage*. This book is an excellent resource to helping shape a biblical understanding for the importance of marriage as a union of one man and one woman for life. McDowell and Stonestreet claim that marriage is the fulfillment of God's design for the great work of mankind – to fill the earth and rule over it. Marriage was the instrument that God designed for man not merely as an outlet for his sexual drive, but as the foundation for civilization – the family. In fact, in Malachi 2 where God mentions that He hates divorce, He gives insight into His divine plan for the family – to promulgate the gospel from generation to generation. Again, Psalm 78 tells how each generation is to pass on their legacy of faith to the next generation – the vehicle of faith is the family.



The idea that marriage is simply a union for the sexual enjoyment of two people misses the larger picture – that marriage is a responsibility. Marriage is a responsibility to the other person as well as to the community at large – and to the children who are the potential offspring of that union. Whether or not a married couple has children, the relationship remains the best environment in which to rear children and the church and the state both have a very strong interest in protecting and promoting strong and healthy marriages.

FOR THIS REASON
a Man
 WILL LEAVE HIS
 FATHER AND MOTHER
 AND BE UNITED TO
his Wife,
 AND THEY WILL
 BECOME ONE FLESH.
 GENESIS 2:24



As Christians we must consider what the Word of God says about these important issues. We cannot be swayed by popular appeal, rousing rhetoric or stirring sympathies even for individuals we know and like. And we cannot be silenced by those who argue that we are imposing our morality on others – God's Word is truth and it is true for all, whether they choose to believe it or not! Notice this image to the left – “We decide what’s right by what’s right, not by what’s written.” Consider that logic for a minute. Right makes right. Ridiculous. Right by that concept is forever changing – there was a time in Germany when many believed it was right to exterminate a race of people. There was a time in the United States when many believe it was right to own another person as property. These things are not right – and they have never been right. God's Word remains true and as Christians we must stand boldly for that Truth.

Our nation stands at the crossroads. We must equip the next generation to think critically and Christianly about important and complex issues that they will face. Already Christian businessmen and women have faced persecution for standing for their beliefs in the truth of God's Word and there are even communities that are seeking to silence the preaching of the truth of God's Word on this particular issue.

**Christian
 Persecution
 in Houston,
 Texas?**

www.kathyhoward.org

Parents, at some point with the overwhelming influence of homosexuality in the media today, this issue will make it to the dinner table. As your children talk about this, here are some helpful words of wisdom and questions you can ask as part of your dialogue:

Words of Wisdom

1. Listen. Don't immediately tell your children what they are to think. Listen to their arguments, thoughts and opinions – remember that their faith has to become their own. While you may not agree with everything they say, remember that your parents thought rock 'n' roll was “the devil's music.” Young people need to be free to share their thoughts and feelings and the reality is that many young people today have friends who are either gay or are struggling with same-sex attraction. Empower your children to search for the truth by guiding them in this process – but not “giving them the answer.”
2. Don't be shocked. Don't be shocked if your children are very sympathetic, tolerant and even supportive of homosexuality – they have grown up with homosexuality as normative – you didn't. You didn't grow up with homosexuals on every TV program you watched (in a positive fashion), with dozens of popular songs telling you that every someone is born that way and that every lifestyle choice is normal and needs to be embraced.
3. Don't lose hope. The truth is still the truth. God's Word remains our standard, our guide, our wisdom. If your children are connected to God through Christ, then they have the “mind of Christ” and the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them. It is a difficult process to turn against the wisdom of the world and not fall prey to the hollow and empty philosophies of the day – Paul warned the church in Colossae about the same thing thousands of years ago! God is in control, He is not worried and He is at work in the midst of this cultural crisis. Our children are very concerned about how they are perceived by others on this issue – we need to balance that concern with a concern for the truth as well. Truth and grace – great combination!

Discussion Questions

1. If a person is born gay, does that mean that a person can never change their sexual orientation? A “straight” person could never be “gay” or vice versa? What if just one person who was gay turned away from that lifestyle?
2. When you read the Bible, what do you make of the focus on the male/female gender as well as the concept that marriage is described in terms of husband and wife? Is there anything unique or special about the husband/wife relationship that would be missing in a male/male or female/female relationship? What about from the angle of children growing up in a homosexual home – is this a positive environment for them?
3. Why do you think that God created a woman to be man's companion and life-mate? Is there something special about the design of a woman vs. a man that makes you think that God's design for this relationship would exclude other options? Is marriage solely for the enjoyment of the couple or is there a larger responsibility to the community and to future children as well?
4. Many will argue that if marriage is opened up to include same-sex couples, then other relationships may also be validated – polygamy (more than one wife) and pedophilia (adult/child sexual relationship) are two of the most commonly mentioned. Do you think the state should endorse these relationships?