

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

July 8, 2015 | Burt Street Chapel



I. Introduction

A. Why Does This Question Matter?

1. Because marriage is one of the most central institutions in culture.
2. Because marriage is a basic human good.
3. Because unless we know what something is, we can't very well defend it, critique it, attack it
4. Because the SCOTUS decision was about the definition of marriage
5. Because thinking well honors God

B. How We Will Approach the Question

- The "gay marriage debate" is not about homosexuality, but about marriage
- Two contrasting definitions of what marriage is
 - Revisionist View
 - Critique of Revisionist View
 - Biblical/Conjugal View
 - Q&A

II. The Revisionist View of Marriage: Emotional Bondedness

A. The View Stated

- “Marriage is the name that society gives to the relationship that matters most between two adults” (9th Circuit Court of Appeals, *Perry vs. Brown*, 2011).
- “The nature of marriage is that, through its enduring bond, two persons together can find other freedoms, such as expression, intimacy, and spirituality... Marriage responds to the universal fear that a lonely person might call out only to find no one there” (Justice Kennedy’s majority opinion, SCOTUS, *Obergefell vs. Hodges*, 2015).
- God gave the gift of marriage “to help people grow in their ability to give themselves completely to another person” (Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, p. 58)

B. The View Analyzed

- These definitions see marriage as a relationship that’s unique because of the **degree** of emotional connectedness. “The relationship that matters most.” Like all other relationships, only stronger.
- If this view of marriage is correct, then of course same-sex unions should be affirmed, because they are capable of the same intense emotional union as heterosexual marriages.
- But is this what marriage is?

III. What Do Wedding Vows Teach Us?

A. Consent

- *1559 Book of Common Prayer*
- “Declaration of Consent”

B. Permanence & Exclusivity

- “till death do us part;” “forsaking all others”
- If marriage is just a strong emotional bond - why would it **require** permanence and exclusivity?

IV. Back to Aristotle: Essence vs. Accident

A. Defining Our Terms

- From the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: “An **essential property** of an object is a property that it **must have** while an **accidental property** of an object is one that it **happens to have** but that it could lack.”

B. Testing The Revisionist Hypothesis

- The revisionist view says: the **essence** of marriage is emotional bondedness. “The relationship that matters most”
- But emotional bondedness can't be the essence of marriage, because:
 - it's not **distinct** to marriage; deep friendships have deep emotional bonds.
 - it's not **essential** to marriage! We all know people who are married, and DON'T have deep emotional bonds. Yet their marriage is still truly a marriage.
- So, deep emotional bondedness is, to use Aristotle's categories, an **accidental** property of marriage. It's something a marriage may happen to have - it's something we WANT marriage to have - but which it CAN lack, and still BE a marriage.

V. The Essence of Marriage: A Comprehensive Union Ordered Toward Procreation

A. Statement of Essence

- The essence of marriage, across time and history, is that it is **a comprehensive union ordered toward procreation**.
 - That is what makes marriage unique and distinct from any other relationship.
 - And THAT is why no same-sex relationship can actually BE a marriage. Because no same-sex relationship is or can be ordered toward procreation.

B. Philosophical Aside: TELEOLOGY

- Teleology - Gk. telos - end, terminus
 - What is the end, aim, goal of this act?
 - TOWARD WHAT is it naturally ordered/oriented?
- Analogy #1: A Gun
- Analogy #2: A Baseball Team

- When we say that marriage is **ordered toward** procreation, we're NOT saying that procreation must happen for it to be a marriage. We're saying: marriage as an institution is ordered toward that end.
- "It is not that the relationship of marriage and the comprehensive good of rearing children always GO together. Rather, it is that they FIT together, like ball and socket. Family life specially enriches marriage; and marriage is especially apt for family life, which shapes its norms" (Girgis, Anderson, & George, 29).
- "While **pleasure** and **delight** [think sexual pleasure] deepen and enrich a marital union where one exists, they cannot be its foundation. They cannot stand on their own... Two men, two women, or a group of people cannot achieve organic bodily union: there is no bodily good or function toward which their bodies can coordinate... In coitus, and there alone, a man's and woman's bodies participate in a function that neither can perform alone" (Girgis, Anderson, & George, 26-28).

C. 2 Thought Exercises

1. If human beings reproduced asexually, and sex was just for orgasm and had no connection to reproduction - would humans beings have devised anything like marriage? Absolutely not. The only reason the institution of marriage came into existence is to unite a mother and father, for life, to coordinate together for the **purpose** of bearing and raising children. (Most childless couples experience their childlessness as a LOSS. It's painful. Why? Because they understand that the bearing of children is the expected outcome of the comprehensive union of husband and wife).
2. Why is it true that in most common-law and religious traditions, a marriage can be annulled IF it is not consummated sexually? WHY is it that sex with no vow is not a marriage; BUT a vow with no sex is also not a marriage? Because the essence of marriage REQUIRES both the vow and the consummation of that vow in bodily union. Those 2 things make a marriage a marriage... because a marriage is **ordered toward** the bearing and raising of children. And so you must have: a) the bodily union that makes children possible and b) the vow and commitment that provides a stable context for raising children.

VI. Summaries of the Argument

A. Summary #1: What Is Marriage, p. 35-36

Marriage is a kind of relationship. An account of marriage must explain what makes the marriage relationship different from others. In our view, the kind of union created by consent to marriage is uniquely comprehensive in 1) how it unites persons; 2) what it unites them with respect to, and 3) how extensive a commitment it demands.

1. *First, marriage unites persons in their bodies as well as their minds... Spouses unite bodily in a way that has generative significance... [and] physically embodies their specific marital commitment.*
2. *Coitus... is ordered toward the good of bringing new human life into the world. New life, in a sense, is one human good among others, but in another sense, it transcends and includes other human goods. Thus, having consented to sharing in the generative acts that unite them organically, spouses cooperate in other areas of life in the broad domestic sharing uniquely apt for fostering the all-around development of new human beings.*
3. *In view of its comprehensiveness in these other senses, marriage inherently calls for comprehensive commitment... Rearing children is an open-ended task calling for unconditional commitment. But friendships require no such promise of permanence and are enhanced, not betrayed, by openness to new members.*

B. Summary #2: The 1559 Book of Common Prayer

*Marriage is an honorable state... instituted by God in Paradise... and therefore is not to be entered into unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly... but reverently, discretely... and in the fear of God, duly considering **the causes for which matrimony was ordained**.*

One was the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and praise of God.

Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin and to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continence might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

Thirdly, for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

VII. Conclusion & Implications

A. Conclusion

We have seen that the only possible account of marriage that can make sense of a) the permanence and exclusivity required in the marriage vow and b) the distinctness of marriage from all other relationships is the **conjugal view** of marriage.

The essence of marriage is that it is ***a comprehensive union ordered toward procreation.***

B. Implications

1. "Same-sex marriage" is not marriage, nor can it ever be.
2. We cannot and should not affirm "same-sex marriage;" to do so would be to call evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).
3. We can and should show hospitality, mercy, and good cheer toward same-sex attracted individuals, disagreeing with them in charity and grace and honoring them as fellow image-bearers of God.
4. We should teach our children earnestly and diligently the biblical, conjugal, one-flesh view of marriage.
5. We should pray that our Congress and courts act to protect Christians' First-Amendment rights to religious liberty on this issue. If ever our religious liberty is compromised, we must be willing to suffer scorn, ridicule, and even punishment for our beliefs.

APPENDIX A

Marriage and the Constitution: What the Court Said and Why It Got It Wrong

By Ryan T. Anderson, July 1, 2015

<http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/07/15247/>

The Supreme Court's [ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*](#) is a significant setback for all Americans who believe in the Constitution, the rule of law, democratic self-government, and marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The ruling is as clear an example of judicial activism as we've had in a generation. Nothing in the Constitution justified the redefinition of marriage by judges. The Court simply imposed its judgment about a policy matter that the Constitution left to the American people and their elected representatives. In doing so, it got marriage and the Constitution wrong, [just as it had gotten abortion and the Constitution wrong in *Roe v. Wade*](#).

The question before the Supreme Court in *Obergefell* was not whether a male-female marriage policy is the best or whether government-recognized same-sex marriage is better, but only whether anything in the Constitution specifically took away the power of the people to choose their marriage policy. Yet the Court spoke almost exclusively about its "new insights" into marriage, and was virtually silent on the Constitution. That's because it had no choice. Our Constitution is itself silent on what marriage is; We the People retain the authority to make marriage policy.

The Court claimed to show that the marriage policy that has existed in the United States for all its history is now prohibited by the Constitution. It failed to do that. As I explain in my forthcoming book, [Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom](#), what the Court actually did was to *assume* that marriage is an essentially genderless institution and then announce that the Constitution requires states to adopt that same vision of marriage in their laws.

This is all the more remarkable, given that [during oral arguments on *Obergefell*](#) Justice Kennedy pointed out that marriage as the union of man and woman "has been with us for millennia. And it—it's very difficult for the Court to say, oh, well, we—we know better." Kennedy at least pretended to be reluctant to redefine marriage judicially. Redefining marriage to include same-sex relationships has, Kennedy pointed out, only been around for ten years. And, he added, "10 years is—I don't even know how to count the decimals when we talk about millennia."

Even Justice Stephen Breyer noted that marriage understood as the union of man and woman "has been the law everywhere for thousands of years among people who were not discriminating even against gay people, and suddenly you want nine people outside the ballot box to require states that don't want to do it to change . . . what marriage is." He asked: "Why cannot those states at least wait and see whether in fact doing so in the other states is or is not harmful to marriage?" And yet, he joined Kennedy's majority opinion overruling the people—overruling the truth—and redefining marriage everywhere.

The first paragraph of the [majority opinion](#) highlights the incoherence of the ruling's logic:

The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity. The petitioners in these cases seek to find that liberty by marrying someone of the same sex and having their marriages deemed lawful on the same terms and conditions as marriages between persons of the opposite sex.

But as Justice Clarence Thomas pointed out in his dissenting opinion, constitutional protections of *liberty* can hardly require governmental *recognition*. The liberty that the Constitution protects is a freedom *from* government interference. And gays and lesbians already enjoyed full liberty “to define and express their identity” and to exercise their “liberty by marrying someone of the same sex” in the house of worship of their choice. Yet Justice Kennedy writes the majority opinion as if governmental recognition of a relationship is a liberty right.

How did Kennedy support such a conclusion?

Kennedy starts with a paean to “the transcendent importance of marriage.” He notes that the “lifelong union of a man and a woman always has promised nobility and dignity to all persons” and that the “centrality of marriage to the human condition makes it unsurprising that the institution has existed for millennia and across civilizations.” He cites a variety of theological, philosophical, literary, and artistic portrayals of marriage and even admits that it “is fair and necessary to say these references were based on the understanding that marriage is a union between two persons of the opposite sex.” Indeed, he points out that for the states defending their marriage laws, marriage “is by its nature a gender-differentiated union of man and woman. This view long has been held—and continues to be held—in good faith by reasonable and sincere people here and throughout the world.”

So why, exactly, does the US Constitution require a redefinition of marriage? Kennedy starts by claiming that the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment—which says that no state shall “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law”—requires states to recognize same-sex relationships as marriages. How? Because the fundamental liberties that the due process clause protects extend to “certain personal choices central to individual dignity and autonomy, including intimate choices that define personal identity and beliefs.” And these choices, Kennedy argues, now require not merely freedom from government coercion, but proactive government recognition. And the Court, apparently, is the one to decide which intimate choices require recognition, and when, and how much recognition each choice is due.

Kennedy is candid about how radical a departure from previous Court cases his ruling is: “It cannot be denied that this Court’s cases describing the right to marry presumed a relationship involving opposite-sex partners.” But that presumption was wrong, according to Kennedy, and he identifies four principles to “demonstrate that the reasons marriage is fundamental under the Constitution apply with equal force to same-sex couples.”

Kennedy’s Four Marriage Principles

First, “the right to personal choice regarding marriage is inherent in the concept of individual autonomy.” This entails that “two persons together can find other freedoms, such as expression, intimacy, and spirituality. This is true for all persons, whatever their sexual orientation.” We might pause here to inquire whether it is also true for all persons, whatever their number. Why Kennedy writes that “two” but not three or four “persons together can find other freedoms” is anyone’s guess. He never says. We might also wonder how “autonomy” gives rise to a right to government recognition.

Second, “the right to marry is fundamental because it supports a two-person union unlike any other in its importance to the committed individuals.” (Note again the arbitrary addition of “two-person.”) There it is: “unlike any other” relationship. Your number-one person. Yes, Kennedy follows nearly *verbatim* the intense-emotional-union view of marriage that Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and I criticize in our book [What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense](#). Nevertheless, Kennedy writes: “Marriage responds to the universal fear that a lonely person might call out only to find no one there. It offers the hope of companionship and understanding and assurance that while both still live there will be

someone to care for the other.” Consenting adult romance and care. Kennedy repeats this claim in the closing paragraph of his decision: “Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization’s oldest institutions.”

This is among the most harmful assumptions of Kennedy’s opinion—that marriage is the only relationship that ultimately matters, that others are somehow *lesser*, and that the unmarried are therefore “condemned to live in loneliness.”

Third, marriage “safeguards children and families and thus draws meaning from related rights of childrearing, procreation, and education.” So in Kennedy’s view, same-sex couples have “rights of childrearing, procreation, and education,” and these bring a right to marriage in their wake since, as a prior decision held, “the right to ‘marry, establish a home and bring up children’ is a central part of the liberty protected by the Due Process Clause.”

Here Kennedy discusses children reared by same-sex couples without once acknowledging that they might want a mom and a dad. And there is no mention—at all—of children’s *right* to a mom and a dad, and preferably their biological mom and dad. There’s only discussion of adults’ rights to children. This section of the opinion raises troubling questions about how two people of the same sex have a right to children.

Fourth “and finally, this Court’s cases and the Nation’s traditions make clear that marriage is a keystone of our social order.” Well, yes, marriage—a union of man and woman, husband and wife, father and mother—is a keystone of our social order, *precisely because* of its procreative character, which same-sex couples lack. So this is actually a point *against* Kennedy’s view. In response, he just asserts—without argument—that “there is no difference between same- and opposite-sex couples with respect to this principle.” As he writes, “same-sex couples, too, may aspire to the transcendent purposes of marriage and seek fulfillment in its highest meaning.” Unless, of course, those purposes and that meaning have something to do with [uniting comprehensively, creating new life, and uniting new human beings with their mother and father](#). Remarkably, Kennedy never once seriously engages with *that* argument.

Equal Protection and History

Kennedy concludes his opinion for the Court by adding, almost as an afterthought, that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment—not just its due process clause—also gives same-sex couples a right to have the government recognize their relationships as marriages. The reasoning here is even cloudier. Kennedy writes that “The Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause are connected in a profound way” and that in “any particular case one Clause may be thought to capture the essence of the right in a more accurate and comprehensive way, even as the two Clauses may converge in the identification and definition of the right.” The conclusion? “This interrelation of the two principles furthers our understanding of what freedom is and must become. The Court’s cases touching upon the right to marry reflect this dynamic.” That’s right, this “dynamic” tells us what freedom “must become.” If ever there was a clearer indication that the Court was legislating from the bench, I haven’t seen it. And if this passage contained an actual legal argument, I haven’t found it.

Along the way, to buttress his opinion, Kennedy cites various ways in which the social practice and legal regulation of marriage historically has changed. He mentions coverture, where “a married man and woman were treated by the State as a single, male-dominated legal entity.” He mentions bans on interracial marriage. He mentions legal regulations that placed hurdles on marriage for potential spouses if they owed child support or were in prison. Never, however, does he acknowledge that none of these practices or regulations redefined *what marriage is*—a comprehensive union of sexually complementary spouses.

Roberts faults Kennedy precisely for his sloppy use of this history:

In *Loving*, the Court held that racial restrictions on the right to marry lacked a compelling justification. In *Zablocki*, restrictions based on child support debts did not suffice. In *Turner*, restrictions based on status as a prisoner were deemed impermissible.

None of the laws at issue in those cases purported to change the core definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The laws challenged in *Zablocki* and *Turner* did not define marriage as “the union of a man and a woman, *where neither party owes child support or is in prison.*” Nor did the interracial marriage ban at issue in *Loving* define marriage as “the union of a man and a woman *of the same race.*” . . . Removing racial barriers to marriage therefore did not change what a marriage was any more than integrating schools changed what a school was. As the majority admits, the institution of “marriage” discussed in every one of these cases “presumed a relationship involving opposite-sex partners.”

The problem with the analogy to interracial marriage is that it assumes exactly what is in dispute: that sex is as irrelevant to marriage as race is. It’s clear that race has nothing to do with marriage. Racist laws kept the races apart and were designed to keep whites at the top. Marriage has everything to do with men and women, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers and their children, and that is why principle-based policy has defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

In sum, Chief Justice John Roberts simply observes that “the majority fails to provide even a single sentence explaining how the Equal Protection Clause supplies independent weight for its position.” Think of a student who can’t find good support for a claim in a term paper and so adds dozens of tangential references—as if many weak arguments somehow combine to yield one strong one. “In any event,” Roberts writes, “the marriage laws at issue here do not violate the Equal Protection Clause, because”—and here he quotes Justice Sandra Day O’Connor—“distinguishing between opposite-sex and same-sex couples is rationally related to the States’ ‘legitimate state interest’ in ‘preserving the traditional institution of marriage.’”

The Role of the Court and Protecting Freedom Now

Justice Kennedy’s most basic error was a complete failure to interpret and apply the Constitution to the case at hand. He simply philosophized about what marriage should be and what freedom “must become.” Chief Justice Roberts opened his dissenting opinion by noting that the Supreme Court “is not a legislature. Whether same-sex marriage is a good idea should be of no concern to us. Under the Constitution, judges have power to say what the law is, not what it should be.” As Roberts notes later in his opinion, “There is, after all, no ‘Companionship and Understanding’ or ‘Nobility and Dignity’ Clause in the Constitution.”

America is in a time of transition. The Court has redefined marriage, and beliefs about human sexuality are changing. Will the right to dissent be protected? Will the rights of Americans to speak and act in accord with what the United States had always believed about marriage—that it’s a union of husband and a wife—be tolerated?

Most Americans say yes, they want to be a tolerant, pluralistic nation. They want peaceful coexistence. I agree with them. It’s only ideologues and activists who want to sow the seeds of disharmony by threatening those with whom they disagree with [revoking their tax-exempt status](#), [taking away their government licenses](#), [suing them out of business](#), or [stripping them of their legal protections](#).

This is why the [First Amendment Defense Act](#) is so vitally important. If passed and signed into law, this act would prohibit the federal government from ever discriminating against any citizen, charity, school,

or business because they believe and act on the belief that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. Just as the pro-life movement ensured that no pro-life citizen would ever have to pay for an abortion or perform an abortion, so too must we work to ensure no one is coerced on marriage. Rather than forcing people and institutions of faith to go to court for their religious liberty, this bill would prevent the government from ever acting unjustly in the first place.

We need good policy at all levels of government. Governors have an opportunity right now to issue executive orders preventing state agencies from discriminating against or otherwise penalizing citizens and organizations that continue to believe marriage is the union of a man and a woman. State legislatures can pass laws doing the same.

The First Amendment Defense Act and its state analogues would achieve civil peace even amid disagreement by protecting pluralism and the rights of all Americans, whatever faith they may practice. Protecting conscience is good policy, and liberals committed to tolerance should embrace it.

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APPENDIX B

Time for A Little Q&A

By Douglas Wilson, July 3, 2015

<http://dougwils.com/s7-engaging-the-culture/time-for-a-little-q-a.html>

[Matthew Vines, a gay-marriage-affirming writer and speaker, is the author of the controversial book "God and the Gay Christian." In this article, Doug Wilson is responding to 40 questions posed by Vines to Christians who do not affirm homosexual practice.]

So in response to [Kevin DeYoung's very pertinent questions](#) to rainbow-affirming Christians, [Matthew Vines has responded](#) with 40 questions of his own, these directed at Christians who are, as he puts it, "non-affirming." Being as I am found in that latter category, let me have a shot at it.

What I want to do is either answer Matthew's questions, or explain why I will not take the bait of answering a particular question. Put another way, I will answer the questions, but not the loaded questions.

1. Do you accept that sexual orientation is not a choice?

First, I do not believe there is one answer that fits for everyone living a homosexual lifestyle. For some it is very much a choice, while for others the inclinations that lead to same sex attraction run very close to the bone. I do not believe there is one Platonic form of "homosexuality."

Having said this, I would then point out that sin is defined by Scripture, and not by our guesswork on the strength of our abilities in choosing the contrary. To assume that sin is absent because of an inability to choose righteousness is to fall prey to Pelagianism.

2. Do you accept that sexual orientation is highly resistant to attempts to change it?

Yes, it certainly can be. But this is true of all sin, and true for all of us. The Christian life is described in Scripture as a life of mortification. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" ([Rom. 8:13](#)). This is certainly true for those seeking to put their same sex attractions to death. But it is also true of all the rest of us. John Owen put it well when he said that we should not think we make any progress in godliness if we do not walk daily over the bellies of our own lusts.

3. How many meaningful relationships with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people do you have?

I could answer this question in a way that defeated the purpose of asking it, but this is one that I will decline to answer. Meaningful relationships with friends and parishioners cease to be meaningful when they are used as pawns in political chess games.

4. How many openly LGBT people would say you are one of their closest friends?

If there were any, you would have to ask them. See above.

5. How much time have you spent in one-on-one conversation with LGBT Christians about their faith and sexuality?

Many, many hours. How much is enough?

6. Do you accept that heterosexual marriage is not a realistic option for most gay people?

No. But I do accept that it is not a realistic option for many. But recall that heterosexual marriage is also not a realistic option for a number of heterosexual people. Our sexual duties are defined by Scripture, and not by our circumstances and desires.

7. Do you accept that lifelong celibacy is the only valid option for most gay people if all same-sex relationships are sinful?

Again, change *most* to *many* and I can accept that.

8. How many gay brothers and sisters in Christ have you walked with on the path of mandatory celibacy, and for how long?

Back to question #3.

9. What is your answer for gay Christians who struggled for years to live out a celibacy mandate but were driven to suicidal despair in the process?

My answer is always to point the struggling Christian to Christ, whatever the nature of the struggle. Christ is the Savior of all who call upon Him. That said, I would caution against a facile assumption that serious attempts at celibacy by people who were later suicidal are causally connected in any straight line way. Say the suicidal thoughts are downstream from these attempts at celibacy, but also downstream from a life of self-loathing, a distant, angry father, three years of promiscuity, and drug use starting in junior high. If you chalk the suicidal impulses up to the attempts at celibacy only, then it appears that your efforts are more political than they are pastoral.

10. Has mandatory celibacy produced good fruit in the lives of most gay Christians you know?

Yes.

11. How many married same-sex couples do you know?

We have only had same sex mirage here in Idaho for week now. Give me a minute.

12. Do you believe that same-sex couples' relationships can show the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

No. The apostle Paul gives us two lists side by side in Galatians. One is the fruit of the Spirit that you mention, and the other one lists the works of the flesh ([Gal. 5:19-21](#)). The two lists are inconsistent, and the works of the flesh include unrepented sexual immorality. Life in both lists is impossible.

13. Do you believe that it is possible to be a Christian and support same-sex marriage in the church?

Yes. I believe that genuine Christians can sin grievously in this way. But if their lives are characterized by the qualities described by Paul under the "works of the flesh," then they will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

14. Do you believe that it is possible to be a Christian and support slavery?

Yes. I believe the apostle Paul was a Christian, as was Philemon.

15. If not, do you believe that Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards were not actually Christians because they supported slavery?

No, I believe they were genuine Christians also. But with this question and the previous one, I would ask you to define what you mean by "support." If you define it as any stance that stops short of demanding immediate abolition, then I agree that all the above "supported" slavery. As did the Lord Jesus when He healed the centurion's slave, but said nothing about setting him free.

16. Do you think supporting same-sex marriage is a more serious problem than supporting slavery?

Yes, far more serious.

17. Did you spend any time studying the Bible's passages about slavery before you felt comfortable believing that slavery is wrong?

Heh.

18. Does it cause you any concern that Christians throughout most of church history would have disagreed with you?

No, because I believe I am in line with what most Christians have thought about this. Slavery as an institution is a sinful institution, and race-based chattel slavery was far worse. But God outlined very specific instructions in the New Testament for abolishing that institution, but doing so without revolutionary means. For more on this crucial subject, [you can check this out](#).

19. Did you know that, for most of church history, Christians believed that the Bible taught the earth stood still at the center of the universe?

Oh, good grief.

20. Does it cause you any concern that you disagree with their interpretation of the Bible?

None at all. This is because the problem the church had with geocentricity was not that they were literalistic Bible thumpers. The problem was that they gotten into bed with the "best science of the day," with respect for established pagan thinkers outside the church required as the price of intellectual respectability. They then found a few Bible verses that could be attached to this view. This is a process not unlike how many churches are rethinking same sex mirage.

21. Did you spend any time studying the Bible's verses on the topic before you felt comfortable believing that the earth revolves around the sun?

I'll bet I didn't do it in your assigned order, but I have studied the subject.

22. Do you know of any Christian writers before the 20th century who acknowledged that gay people must be celibate for life due to the church's rejection of same-sex relationships?

The Bible doesn't require gay people to flee fornication. It requires all Christians to flee fornication. And the church has always taught that the only lawful sexual expression is through heterosexual marriage. This can be arranged in a syllogism.

23. If not, might it be fair to say that mandating celibacy for gay Christians is not a traditional position?

This is an argument from silence, and a particularly bad one. The history of Christian moral theory says nothing about computer porn either.

24. Do you believe that the Bible explicitly teaches that all gay Christians must be single and celibate for life?

Apart from marrying someone of the opposite sex, yes, that is what the Bible explicitly teaches.

25. If not, do you feel comfortable affirming something that is not explicitly affirmed in the Bible?

It does reject homosexual behavior explicitly, but even if it didn't, I would feel comfortable affirming something like that by good and necessary consequence.

26. Do you believe that the moral distinction between lust and love matters for LGBT people's romantic relationships?

No. The sin of homosexual sex is objective. It may be compounded by other sins, like selfishness, or malice, or envy, etc., but even if you take those other sins away, the fact of the homosexual disobedience remains. For a heterosexual analogy, there are some men who are kinder to their prostitutes than other men are to their wives. That doesn't mean that the prostitution isn't fornication. It just means the prostitute's client wasn't as sinful as he could have been. That doesn't mean the husband isn't a jerk, but rather that he is not a fornicator.

27. Do you think that loving same-sex relationships should be assessed in the same way as the same-sex behavior Paul explicitly describes as lustful in Romans 1?

If you limit it to the simple fact of homosexual relations, yes. If you throw in the other sins that Paul mentions in Romans 1, then the situations vary according to how many other sins you throw in.

28. Do you believe that Paul's use of the terms "shameful" and "unnatural" in [Romans 1:26-27](#) means that all same-sex relationships are sinful?

Yes, if sex is included in what you mean by same-sex relationships.

29. Would you say the same about Paul's description of long hair in men as "shameful" and against "nature" in [1 Corinthians 11:14](#), or would you say he was describing cultural norms of his time?

Yes, I would say the same thing about it. Paul appeals to nature itself there, and not to Greco/Romans norms.

30. Do you believe that the capacity for procreation is essential to marriage?

Yes. It is not essential for a marriage to occur or to exist, but openness to children is an essential part of the definition of marriage.

31. If so, what does that mean for infertile heterosexual couples?

It means that God is the one who opens and closes wombs. This does not mean that every act of intercourse must result in a child. It means that healthy sexual expression is what I call liturgically open to fruitfulness.

32. How much time have you spent engaging with the writings of LGBT-affirming Christians like Justin Lee, James Brownson, and Rachel Murr?

Way plenty.

33. What relationship recognition rights short of marriage do you support for same-sex couples?

I support any relationship that any parties might enter by means of contract, provided the contract makes no reference to marriage, civil union, or sexual orientation or behavior.

34. What are you doing to advocate for those rights?

Nothing.

35. Do you know who Tyler Clementi, Leelah Alcorn, and Blake Brockington are, and did your church offer any kind of prayer for them when their deaths made national news?

No, we did not. The way such tragedies are politicized is just shameless.

36. Do you know that LGBT youth whose families reject them are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide than LGBT youth whose families support them?

That wouldn't surprise me. It also wouldn't surprise me to discover that the family's rejection of that child began long before any controversy over sexual issues began, and was a player in that child's vulnerabilities and choices. This goes back to the simplistic approach to counseling that appeared in question #9. This is politics, not pastoring.

37. Have you vocally objected when church leaders and other Christians have compared same-sex relationships to things like bestiality, incest, and pedophilia?

No. Why should I object to that? All the reasons you appeal to in support of your questions do not prohibit such comparisons – rather, they *invite* them. Why do all the yearnings you appeal to, all the innate desires you speak of, the orientations that “are highly resistant to change” that you describe, suddenly become irrelevant simply because the object of desire is an animal, a sister, or underage? Why does the authority of a tough temptation suddenly mean something else?

38. How certain are you that God's will for all gay Christians is lifelong celibacy?

Very certain. But I only apply this to those Christians whose same sex attractions make heterosexual marriage impossible.

39. What do you think the result would be if we told all straight teenagers in the church that if they ever dated someone they liked, held someone's hand, kissed someone, or got married, they would be rebelling against God?

The kids in our church would laugh at us because we had previously given them Bibles, and have taught them how to read them.

40. Are you willing to be in fellowship with Christians who disagree with you on this topic?

No, not if they are teachers. I would be willing to be in fellowship with a Christian who was badly taught on these matters, and needed to have things straightened out for him. But I am not willing to be in fellowship with false teachers who should know better and are deliberately leading people astray.