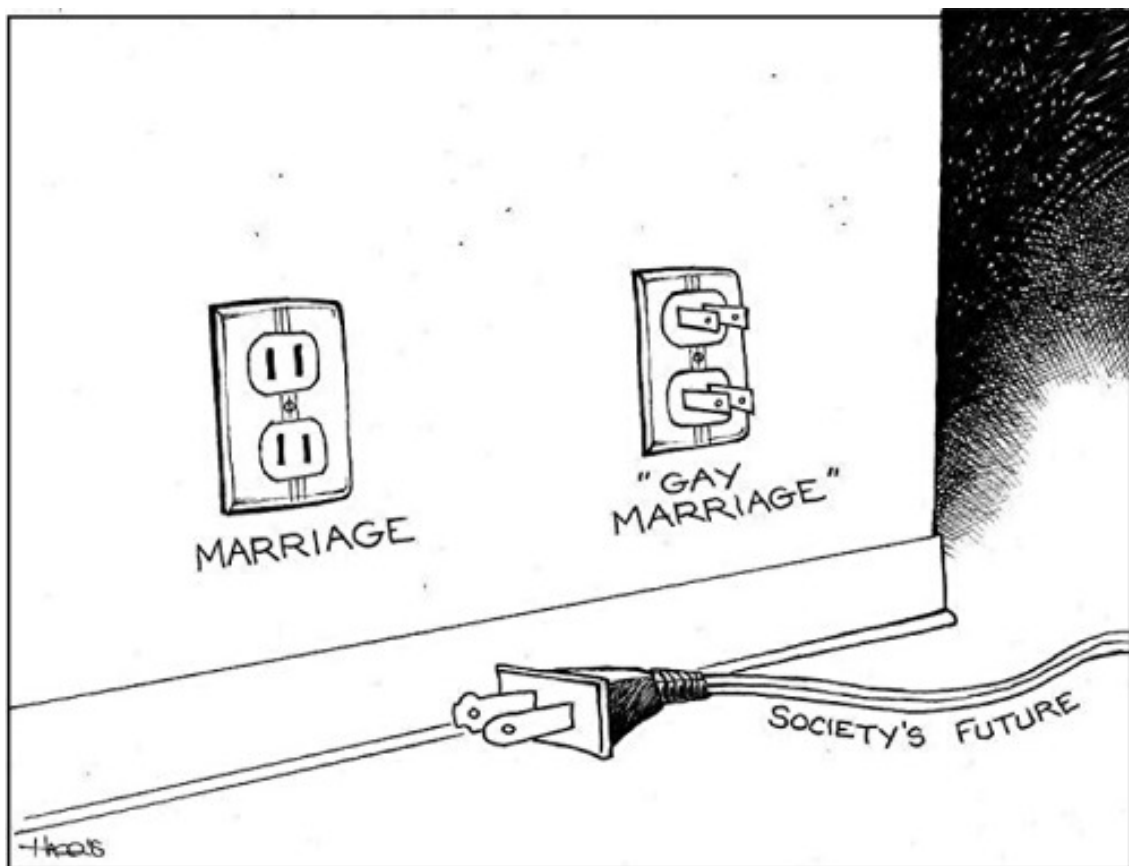


HUMAN SEXUALITY – THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DEBATE



Session Notes – **WEB VERSION**
5PM Church Together – August 2015

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Human sexuality – the Same-Sex Marriage Debate

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Target Audience: *New and Established Christians*

Purpose: *To understand the history and underlying assumptions of the Same-Sex Marriage debate; and to be equipped to explain what the Bible teaches about Christian marriage*

OUTLINE

- a) **Welcome and Introduction** [10 mins]
 - a. Welcome [3 mins]
 - b. Introduction – Who supports Same-Sex Marriage? [2 mins]
 - c. **GROUP FEEDBACK:** What Questions about SMM have you had? [5 mins] - **WHITEBOARD**
- b) **How did we get here?** [15 mins]
 - a. Brief History of the Gay Rights Movement? [5 mins]
 - b. The Impact of the Gay Rights Movement in Australia [5 mins]
 - c. **GROUP FEEDBACK:** Questions and Observations [5 mins]
- c) **Understanding the Same-Sex Marriage Debate** [20 mins]
 - a. **WHITEBOARD** - What are their argument FOR and AGAINST? [5 mins]
 - b. Common arguments *for* Same-Sex Marriage [5 mins]
 - c. Common arguments *against* Same-Sex Marriage [5 mins]
 - d. Where is the Disagreement? [5 mins]
- d) **Understanding the Underlying Presuppositions** [20 mins]
 - a. **GROUP WORK:** What the Bible teaches about Marriage [10 mins]
 - b. **GROUP FEEDBACK:** Questions and Observations [5 mins]
 - c. *The Essence of Marriage* [5 mins]
 - d. *Sex and Gender* [5 mins]
- e) **How to explain ourselves in the Public Square and to our Friends?** [20 mins]
 - a. Possible [*Pastoral*] ways to answer difficult questions about SSM [5 mins]
 - b. **WORKSHOP** – Which Question to Answer [5 mins]
 - c. Possible [*Apologetic*] ways to answer difficult questions about SSM [10 mins]
 - d. **GROUP FEEDBACK:** Questions and Observations [5 mins]
- f) **Conclusion and Closing Prayer** [5 mins]

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INTRODUCTION

Public support for Same-Sex Marriage (SSM) in Australia is at an all-time high

- Galaxy Research poll results (2009-2012)ⁱ commissioned by the *Australian Marriage Equality* lobby group shows that 64% of Australians support SSMⁱⁱ (29% Strongly Agree; 33% Agree)
 - But there is a GENERATIONAL DIVIDEⁱⁱⁱ
 - 81% of 18-24 year olds support SSM
 - 51% of 51-64 years olds support SSM
 - A POLITICAL DIVIDE (that has lessened since 2010 poll)
 - 80% Labour Voters (78%)
 - 75% Coalition Voters (48%)
 - 88% Green Voters (81%)
 - A SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDE
 - Higher level of support in white collar, high income households (35% vs. 19%)
 - And a RELIGIOUS DIVIDE
 - 28% of Australians are 'more willing' to support SSM if churches were guaranteed the right to refuse to marry same-sex couples
 - 53% of Christians support SSM

Global trend *in the Western world* to support SSM

- According to *Pew Research* the following (22) countries have put in place legislation to support SSM (as of June 2015)^{iv}

○ Argentina (2010)	○ Belgium (2003)
○ Brazil (2013)	○ Canada (2005)
○ Denmark (2012)	○ England / Wales (2013)
○ Finland (2015)	○ France (2013)
○ Greenland (2015)	○ Iceland (2010)
○ Ireland (2015)	○ Luxembourg (2014)
○ The Netherlands (2000)	○ New Zealand (2013)
○ Norway (2009)	○ Portugal (2010)
○ Scotland (2014)	○ South Africa (2006)
○ Spain (2005)	○ Sweden (2009)
○ United States (2015)	○ Uruguay (2013)
- Mexico (2009) allows SSM in some of its jurisdictions
- Together these (Western) countries represent about 20% [1.4 Billion] of the current world's total population (of 7 Billion people)^v

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HOW DID WE GET HERE?

What can account for the seismic social shift [in the Western world at least] in personal and political attitudes towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Intersex (**LGBTI**) people in general, and same-sex marriage in particular?

For millennia monogamous life-long marriage between a man and a woman has been recognised and celebrated as the stable basis for building society and raising children but now “...*in only a decade, gay marriage has gone from joke to dogma*”. (American journalist Christopher Caldwell)^{vi}

When did homosexuality and gay marriage become not only tolerated in Australia society, but fashionable and even promoted for its goodness? As you might expect, there are a complex range of reasons for this remarkable transformation in community attitudes to SSM and broad societal acceptance, if not its enthusiastic promotion. The multivariate reasons are historical, sociological, political and legal, medical and psychological, philosophical and theological; *some* of which are only *briefly* touched on here.^{vii}

- **PHILOSOPHY** – the ‘Enlightenment Period’ (17th-18th centuries) valued personal, individual choice (rather than acceptance of biblical values) as the true basis of morality. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) said that all knowledge is experiential and conceived (by the human mind) so that ‘*things that shape our being*’ [who we are] (*such as gender*) are *merely categories of thought*. Martin Hegel (1770-1831) said that ‘*truth is related to cause and effect; rather than an absolute position, all possible positions of truth are relativised such that truth is found only in the synthesis of reason rather than absolutes of truth*’ (such as the Bible). Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) built on these foundations to say that synthesis could not be arrived at by reason but ‘*anything of real importance could only be achieved by a leap of faith that had no rational basis*’. In doing this he separated rationality and faith, ignored absolute (propositional) truth (such as the Bible) and separated rationality and logic from faith; faith (in anything) therefore became ‘illogical’ and ‘irrational’.
- **PSYCHOLOGY** – the impact of the founding father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), is immense. Particularly noteworthy, for our purposes, is his theory that homosexual desire underlies all heterosexual desire. When this claim is combined with Freud’s view that belief in God and transcendent morality can be set aside as an illusion based on an infantile need for a powerful protector and ethical absolutes, and his idea that sexual repression is likely to cause neurotic illness, then a number of conclusions seem unavoidable. First, for the sake of their own psychological wellbeing, it is essential that those who experience homosexual desires act on them. Second, homosexuals are actually more authentic and free than heterosexuals (**GAY GURUS**), because only homosexuals have come to grips with who they really are and what they really desire. (Peter Scanlon, ‘Queer Theory’ = Homosexuality is superior to Heterosexuality)
- **ANTHROPOLOGY** - Margaret Mead (1901-1978) published ‘*Coming of Age in Samoa*’ (1928) and claimed to have found ‘free love’ in Samoan culture that substantiated her own personal ideology. She identified the idea that nurture (not nature) is what determines the restrictions and taboos of our sexual ethics. Subsequently we should allow nature to guide us so that we are less inhibited in our sexual practices and much less concerned about issues like monogamy and fidelity. Mead’s work has subsequently been exposed as unscientific and false, however it has impacted the later part of the 20th century.

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- **SOCIETY** – The (now famous) [Alfred] Kinsey Report (1948) claimed that roughly 10% of the world's population were predominantly homosexual and contributed to the overthrow of conventional sexual orientation and ethics. Kinsey is regarded as the man who made the modern gay movement possible. However, only later was it discovered that Kinsey deliberately distorted the figures and that Kinsey himself was a homosexual with a compulsive interest in extreme forms of sexuality. Despite these things Kinsey's report underlies 'proof' that homosexuality is not sexual deviancy; and it supported the rise in the 'liberation movement' of homosexuals worldwide. Current [large scale] population, demographic and sexual health survey data shows a different picture: **USA = 1.7% (vs. 1.8% Bisexual); UK = 1.1%; Australia = 1.2%.**^{viii}
- **SEXUAL REVOLUTION OF THE 1960'S** – The 1960s saw human sexuality become a political issue like never before, emerging as a kind of hub around which various student protests and other counter-cultural movements and events organised themselves. The advent of the contraceptive pill, in late 1961 significantly contributed to sexual promiscuity. It was also aided by advances in modern medicine that made it possible to more effectively treat the rising number of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These developments led to a loosening of the connection between (heterosexual) intercourse and conception, and to a greater level of sexual experimentation (both heterosexual and homosexual), without the fear of pregnancy or other unwelcome (or, at least, untreatable) consequences. These developments led to and ignited what has become known as the 'gay rights movement' – which initially involved several significant events between 1966-1970.
 - **5 January 1967** – a number of protests were organised by P.R.I.D.E (Personal Rights In Defence and Education) in response to a New Year's Day event in which 12 plainclothes police officers raided 'The Black Cat Tavern' in LA and beat and arrested a number of employees and patrons. This connection led to the term 'Pride' becoming associated with LGBTI rights.
 - **27 June 1969** – riots began in the Stonewall Bar in NY City's Greenwich Village when police attempted to arrest patrons engaged in homosexual activity. 'Stonewall' has now become a symbol for gay pride and militancy.
 - **January 1970** – Carl Wittman (member of the national council of Students for Democratic Society (SDS) and activist for LGBTI rights) wrote 'A Gay Manifesto' (1970) to provide a clear statement of the goal of the Gay Liberation movement: to free gays from oppression and also to free straight society from it's own repressed homosexuality (a la Freud). Whitman used the concept of 'orientation' to reject the genetic basis for homosexuality and said that exclusive heterosexuality is '*a disease*'.
 - **17 March 1970** – the film version of the 'off-Broadway' play 'The Boys in the Band' premiered as the first major Hollywood picture to revolve around gay characters and to look at gay life.
 - **24 August 1970** – the NY Times ran a front page story titled 'Homosexuals in Revolt' that reported '*a new mood is taking hold among the nation's homosexuals who publicly identify themselves as homosexual, take a measure of pride in that identity and seek militant action to end what they see as society's persecution of them*'.

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- **POLITICAL PROPAGANDA** – In 1989 two Harvard graduates, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen published *'After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s'*. It combined neuropsychiatric insights and public relations insights in order to call homosexuals to lose their image as a promiscuous and deviant sexual minority seeking greater freedom, and provided detailed instructions as to how to repackage themselves as decent, mainstream citizens, deserving of equal treatment. It was a powerful handbook for a homosexual revolution. They wrote at the peak of the AIDS crisis and they both saw an opportunity to win public sympathy and to change public opinion. 'As cynical as it may seem', they wrote, *'AIDS gives us a chance, however brief, to establish ourselves as a victimised minority legitimately deserving of America's special protection and care'*. The idea of playing the victim card would be the key to their success. They explained that *'The purpose of victim imagery is to make 'straights' feel very uncomfortable; by shaming them with self-righteous pride that would ordinarily accompany and reward their anti-gay belligerence, and to lay the groundwork for the process of conversion by helping straights identify with gays and sympathise with their underdog status'*.
 - **Advertising** – they articulated an advertising campaign to implement a desensitisation program to 'normalise' homosexuality through rejecting stereotypes of homosexuals (no moustachioed, leather-clad men or drag queens to appear in any gay commercials or other public presentations) and replacing them with conventional people of all ages and races including straight people. They made clear that *'groups on the farthest margins of acceptability (within the gay community)'* would play no part in the campaign because *'Suspected child molesters will never look like victims'*.
 - **Open and constant talking** – were important to build the impression that public opinion is at least divided on the subject and that a sizeable bloc of *'the most modern and up-to-date citizens'* accept or even practice homosexuality.
 - **Not Sex but Rights** – they qualified that when talking about homosexuality in the early stages of their campaign that there should be no exposure to homosexual behaviour itself, but rather the imagery of sex should be downplayed and the issue of gay rights raised as far as possible to an abstract 'social question'.
 - **Nature versus Nurture** – they proposed that when answering questions about homosexuality in public, that to suggest that homosexuality may be 'chosen' rather than being the result of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors, would only open up a can of worms labelled *'moral choices and sin'* that would give religious intransigents a stick *'to beat us with'*. They said that 'straights' must be taught that it is as natural for some persons to be homosexual as it is for others to be heterosexual because *'wickedness and seduction have nothing to do with it'*.
 - **Muddying the Waters** – Madsen and Kirk's final piece of advice was to muddy the moral waters in order to undercut rationalisations that justify religious bigotry. This is done by publicising support by moderate churches and raising serious theological objections to conservative biblical teachings. It also means exposing the inconsistency and hatred underlying anti-gay doctrines. Also, the moral authority of conservative churches can be questioned as being antiquated backwaters badly out of step with the times and latest findings of psychology. But the ultimate solution is to cast conservative Christians as *'victimisers'* and vilify them as *'homo haters'* and to link them to hate organisations like the KKK and Nazi Extremists. This is in order for society at large to disassociate with them through contrasting conservative Christian teaching as hateful compared to loving 'normal' homosexuals.

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THE IMPACT OF THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

All of these events and developments prompted Australian activists to seize the moment and take a variety of initiatives.

- Although varied Australian activists and movements started, a debate at Melbourne University [1972] about the legal status of homosexuality that was won by the team arguing for decriminalisation of homosexual acts made national headlines in *The Australian* and triggered a wider community discussion. Subsequently a range of public figures expressed their support for decriminalisation, including the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. This triggered Australian states to begin decriminalising homosexual acts across the country.
- In 1978 Sydney's Gay and Lesbian community decided to hold a parade that the organisers dubbed 'Mardi Gras' in order to mark the ninth anniversary of the Stonewall riots in NY. A heavy police presence and highly charged atmosphere resulted in several clashes and arrests, the names of whom were published by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This 'outed' many people and a number of them consequentially lost their jobs and suffered personal humiliation with family and friends that then galvanised public sympathy and public support for the homosexual community.
- In 1984 the NSW government decriminalised homosexual acts and the Australian Medical Association also removed homosexuality from its list of mental health disorders.

As a consequence of these and other well-organised actions, Australia today is celebrated as one of the most 'gay friendly' countries in the world with a 2013 Pew Research Poll indicating that **79% of Australians viewed that homosexuality should be accepted by society and SSM should be supported under law.**

Today's reality as Peter Sanlon (Author of 'Plastic People – How Queer Theory is Changing Us') sees it is that *'all people have been changed by the impact of Queer theory – not just homosexual people. There are deep-seated fears and misunderstandings in both gay and straight people about what the claims of Jesus mean for their gender and sexuality'*.^{ix}

Our response to the Same-Sex Marriage agenda that continues to unfold around us, is one that we must take very seriously indeed.

At the same time, our answers to the questions and challenges of the moment – must not be anything less than completely Biblical, truthful and conveyed with **Christian love**.

But please realise that love is not an alternative to truth, just as biblical faithfulness is not an alternative to compassion.

The Bible calls all Christians to love those who disagree with us (ultimately expressed in the way that God sent Jesus into a world that hated Him in order to save them back to Himself [John 3:16]). **Love doesn't mean we have to agree with someone; true love is loving someone despite our lack of agreement.** Love is inviting people into an eternal relationship with Jesus and the gospel message that brings healing and hope.

American Baptist Pastor and Theologian Al Mohler makes a heartfelt plea to all Christians about this issue: **'The church has often failed people with same-sex attractions and failed them horribly. We must not fail them now by forfeiting the only message that leads to salvation, holiness and faithfulness'**.

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UNDERSTANDING THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DEBATE

COMMON ARGUMENTS *for* SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

The following is a [highly summarised] list of common arguments used to support the case for SSM:

- **It's all about Social Justice and Human Rights**
 - It's about 'Marriage **Equality**' [see Kirk & Madsen – not sex but rights / abstract social question]
 - Until 1967, in the USA, it was illegal for a white person to marry a black person
 - It discriminates on race and considered wrong, unfair and racist
 - In the same way, to deny a person the right to marry someone of the same sex
 - Discriminates based on sex / gender
 - Denies a basic human right
 - Is wrong, unfair, homophobic
 - Oppresses, Victimises and Demonises
- **Socially Progressive Societies [support SSM]**
 - In the past societies have been
 - Pro-slavery
 - Women couldn't vote
 - It was mono-cultural → White Australia Policy
 - But as society progresses it becomes
 - Less oppressive
 - More Open-Minded
 - Welcomes Diversity
 - Ends Slavery
 - Gives Women the Vote
 - Is Multi-Cultural
 - In the past societies have been oppressive
 - Anti-gay (First Mardi Gras in Sydney was illegal)
 - But as society progresses
 - We celebrate people of any gender, race or 'orientation' (Sydney Tourism now celebrates the Mardi Gras as '*it puts Australia in a good light*')
 - Progressive **Western societies** around the world celebrate SSM
 - But repressive (non-Western) societies such as the Middle East and North Africa don't support SSM
 - THEREFORE – by not supporting SSM you end up on the wrong side of history as a repressive, narrow-minded and unenlightened society

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- **It Achieves [Cultural] Acceptance**

- Marriage will give same-sex couples something that civil unions cannot
 - Acceptance in society (and the church)
- Same-sex couples will be
 - Part of the basic social fabric of society
 - Normal
 - Legitimate
- They will be
 - Welcomed
 - Approved
 - Accepted
- SSM would be a powerful sign that same-sex couples are included rather than excluded from society

Under law, civil unions have the same rights as marrieds:

- **Marriage Act 1961 / Amendment 2004 = no SSM**
- **Section 4AA of Family Law ACT 1975 + 2008 Reforms**

- **Being Gay is not Wrong**

- Apart from conservative religious objections, it's hard to see how anyone could object to anyone being gay –
 - I was born this way [*religious argument = God is responsible for my genes; He made me this way, so it's His fault ... therefore*] ...
 - I cannot change
 - It is central to someone's identity and background
 - It is not wrong
 - It's not a disease (no longer listed in American Psychological Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM] as a mental illness, but only as a condition [like being left-handed])
 - We should love people for who they are

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COMMON ARGUMENTS *against* SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

The following are typical [highly summarised] responses to advocates of SSM:

- **The (re)Definition of Marriage**
 - The definition of marriage is between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of others
 - In Australia
 - In Other Countries and Cultures
 - For 1000's of years
 - So Marriage by definition is *discriminatory*
 - Not only that it's between a man and a woman
 - But that they can't be related
 - Need to be mature adults (>18 years of age)
 - Exclusive to each other to the exclusion of others in the relationship
 - Marriage discriminates against
 - Incest, under-age marriage and polygamy
 - Supporters of 'Traditional' Marriage believe same-sex couple have every right to marry, as long as it's to someone of the opposite sex
 - Supporters of SSM say
 - Definitions come and go
 - They are socially defined anyway
 - We need a better to suit our progressive society
 - It needs to be more in-line with cultural mores and expectations
- **Allowing SSM is a slippery slope to allowing Polygamy, Incest or Under-Age Marriage**
 - If we can change the traditional definition of '*the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life*' then surely we can also change all the other bits of the definition
 - 'to the exclusion of others' → Polygamy
 - 'voluntary' → Forced
 - 'man and a woman' → Animals
 - "not related" → Incest
 - >18yo → Under-Age Marriage
 - SSM advocates respond with
 - This is not what we are asking for
 - What we are asking for reflects what society is demanding
 - Society is *not* demanding Polygamy, etc
 - And besides, what's wrong with Polygamy
 - It's just that we're not used to it, but other cultures are fine with it

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- **Children need to be raised by a biological mother and father**

- Marriage is the traditional relational unit in which children are born and raised because it
 - Provides love and nurture
 - Stability
 - A biological mother and father
- The many advantages of biological parenting of children is established in well documented studies including –
 - Loren Marks, “*Same-sex parenting and children’s outcomes: A closer examination of the American Psychological Association’s brief on lesbian and gay parenting*”, Social Science Research 41 (2012), 735-751.^x
 - Mark Regnerus, “*How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study*,” Social Science Research, 41.4 (July 2012), 752-770.^{xi}
- Though the SSM lobby provides powerful anecdotal evidence of good parenting by gay couples, the studies demonstrate that these are exceptions to the general trend
- SSM lobby responses to these findings are
 - Not all marriages result in children
 - Does this mean that couples who are infertile or >50yo should never marry?
 - What about divorces, separation and death in marriages?
 - What about children who are orphaned, adopted or cared for by foster parents?
 - Besides which there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of well-adjusted children cared for by same-sex couples?^{xii}
 - SSM and parenting is reinforced by our surrounding culture as normal – see ‘Modern Family’ if you want real evidence of what is normal

Please note that major legal and ethical issues regarding *surrogacy* exist with regard to children and Same-Sex couples

Recent example of these first three arguments¹ – 29 July 2015; public debate at ‘The Press Club’ between Senator Cory Bernardi and Senator Penny Wong –

Cory Bernardi – ‘*Redefining marriage opens the gates for redefining other relationships such as polyamory or bestiality. Although there are good examples of homosexual parents raising children, it doesn’t change the general ‘principle’ that the ideal is still a child being raised by their married mother and father.*

Penny Wong – ‘*It is a basic ‘right’ for same-sex couples to be treated equally by the law. [It is like the way that] women’s rights were denied them in the past, or Aboriginal children were taken away from their parents. But today such misogyny and discrimination are no longer entrenched in law ... and the institution of marriage has ‘evolved’ too. This is a debate about rights, a debate about intimate and personal relationships, a debate about the people we love.*

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- **It will change the basic fabric of our society**
 - The traditional family is the basic building block of our society
 - It is the basic relational unit
 - Into which children are born and raised
 - Property is pooled
 - Through which inheritance matters are dealt with
 - If we change the fundamental building block, we change our society
 - From Mum and Da with 2.5 kids to ...
 - Mum + Mum + 5 kids from different sperm donors
 - SSM advocates response
 - What's wrong with that?
 - It's just that you're not used to it (yet)
 - After all, it's not that our society is that great anyway with high levels of divorce, abuse, drunkenness, depression, etc
 - For every dysfunctional gay couple, we can show you a dysfunctional straight couple
 - In other societies that have been doing this, children are raised and seem to be doing well
- **Most gay relationships are not Monogamous**
 - Especially for male same-sex couples, it is highly unusual for monogamous, faithful, long-term relationships^{xiii} (Note: Male monogamous homosexual relationships have only a 4.5% 'fidelity rating')
 - SSM advocates response
 - That's besides the point because it's not about whether people want a monogamous relationship, it's about having the right to have a monogamous (homosexual) relationship
 - Anyway, most straight couples are just as bad
 - And there will always be some same-sex couples who are and remain monogamous (various examples of this are given such as Senator Penny Wong and her partner Sophie Allouache)

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- **It's (just) wrong to be in a Same-Sex Relationship**
 - Arguments for this perspective are based on natural law, biological complementarianism (need a male and female to procreate / have children) and religion
 - Bible passages that are used [by both sides of the argument] to demonstrate that homosexuality is not God's intended design for people – Leviticus 18:19-23 [*22], 20:10-16 [*13]; Romans 1:18-32 [*27]; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 [*9]; 1 Timothy 1:8-11 [*10]; Jude 7. Also see Genesis 19:4-11; Judges 19:22-25; Ezekiel 16:50; 2 Peter 2:6-8.
 - Please refer to Kevin Deyoung's book *'What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality'* for a full and more complete treatment of this subject.
 - SSM advocates response
 - It's only a small handful of Bible passages (not true)
 - That are open to interpretation (Biblical Revisionism)
 - Anyway, these passages no longer apply today because they have been trumped by science and cultural (Societal Progression)
 - We know things today that the Bible writers didn't know about science and biology
 - Bible writers back then were limited by their cultural perspectives
 - The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is not God's design and is inconsistent with Christian discipleship

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SO WHERE IS THE DISAGREEMENT?

None of the arguments on either side of the debate are particularly persuasive or conclusive, because each of them assumes their version of 'truth' as the ultimate conclusion before the debate even begins.

Arguments go around in circles without gaining real traction because they are dealing with different versions of [ultimate] 'truth'.

To better deal with the debate **we need to understand the underlying *presuppositions*** (beliefs) that each side carries into the debate.

As Christians we believe that the Bible is God's words and is sufficient for all of life ... so let's begin by understanding more about what the Bible teaches us about marriage ... let's understand our underlying presuppositions about marriage.

What does the Bible say about this?

- Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule ... "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."
Genesis 1:26-28
- The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
Genesis 2:18
- Then man said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man". For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" **Genesis 2:23-24**
- "Haven't you read," [Jesus] replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate." **Matthew 19:4-6**
- Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy ... 'for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. **Ephesians 5:25-32**
- I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **Revelation 21:2**

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○ Analysis of what the Bible teaches about Marriage

- Marriage is a union between a man and a woman
 - “one flesh” → sex, intimacy, unity, exclusion of others
 - “man ... woman” → heterosexual
 - leave father and mother → new social-relational unit
- It will have its cultural ways of being formalised, ratified and legalised but it is grounded in:
 - God’s creation → God made (Genesis 1; 2; Matthew 19) → Intrinsic Design, Reality
 - God’s word → God said (Genesis 1; 2; Matthew 19) → Prescriptive
 - Transcendent reality → Christ and the Church → Transcendent, Universal
- It is a creation blessing (like rain, sunshine, sex *and* marriage)
 - For all peoples, all times, all places
 - Not a religious belief
 - Not a church institution
 - **This is pre-Church, pre-religion, pre-politics and is a natural creational truth**

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TEN SUMMARY STATEMENTS ABOUT MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE

1. God created humanity male and female so that we have both a unity (we are equally human) and a diversity (male and female are distinct sexes). See Genesis 1:27.
2. This unity-in-diversity is actually grounded in the way God is in the Trinity. We are made in the image of the God who has unity-in diversity. See Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, ‘Let us make ...’”.
3. God designed men and women to correspond to each other as counterparts, and in marriage to form a matching pair (Genesis 2:18-19) who become one flesh (Genesis 2:24), i.e. a new family unit. The complementarity of man and woman is what makes it possible for the two to become one. Sex is a gift from God for expressing and deepening this unity between man and woman in marriage.
4. The diversity in sexes is indispensable to the birth and raising of children, which is indispensable to the mission God gave to Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28).
5. It follows that male and female are not merely two versions of humanity (like milk chocolate and dark chocolate) but distinct sexes for whom marriage is a fitting union that can produce and raise children.
6. Marriage between a man and woman expresses an order that is for God’s purpose and glory and for human well-being. This is the basis on which God opposes homosexual practice in the Bible (i.e. on the basis of his purposes which are embedded in creation).
7. The impact of sin on humanity is to undo (to varying extents) God’s order and to distort our sexuality, both among people with a heterosexual orientation (Romans 1:20-25) and people with a homosexual orientation (Romans 1:26-27).
8. Jesus affirms God’s original purpose at creation as ongoing (Matthew 19:4-6) and He came to redeem humans and restore God’s good order, including our sexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
9. Marriage between a man and a woman is not ultimate in God’s purposes (Matthew 22:30), but it does act as a pointer to God’s ultimate purpose, which is the marriage union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32).
10. Christians can argue for and uphold God’s definition of marriage in our society as a way of seeking the public good, especially the good of children and their wellbeing in being raised by their biological mother and father wherever possible.

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UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING PRESUPPOSITIONS

Presuppositional Apologetics is an approach to respond to questions that assumes the existence of God and the ultimate truth of His revelation [of 'all truth'] that is found in the Bible. It is also a technique of argumentation that seeks to identify or expose the underlying beliefs of opposing arguments and to place them in light of what the Bible teaches. It attempts to defend Biblical truth in order to persuade and commend God to people without faith.

• Where is our Moral Authority?

- Secular Author and (popular TEDTalks) Speaker Jonathan Haidt (Social Psychologist at NY Stern School of Business) wrote the book *'The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion'* and argues that the SSM debate isn't about marriage, but about which ethical system (beliefs / presuppositions) we are using. Based on his PhD research he says that here are 3 main ethical systems in the world –
 - Ethics of the **Individual** – something is considered 'right' if we care for someone, we don't hurt someone and if we are fair
 - Ethics of the **Collective** – we are 'right' when we are loyal, when we play our role assigned by our tribe / society / family; we are 'wrong' when we are disloyal and bring shame to our Collective
 - Ethics of the **Sacred** – we are 'right' when we honour our God and wrong when we don't. There is more to the world than what we see and touch, there exists a sacred that is transcendent and we are more than the sum of our parts
- Haidt travelled to USA, South America and India to play out provocative ethical case scenarios to understand ethical models - e.g. a woman cleaning runs out of rags, remembers she has a USA flag in the closet, so rips it up to use as rags. Is this right or wrong? Most people said it is wrong - but why?
 - *Individual* Ethics = no-one gets hurt, so it's okay
 - *Collective* Ethics = wrong because it brings shame on her tribe / society / country
 - *Sacred* Ethics = wrong because the flag is a sacred symbol
- Another scenario – a hungry man goes to the market, buys a dead chicken, takes it home, plucks it before having sex with the chicken, then cooks it and eats it; Is this right or wrong?
- The respondents predominantly said that they considered his actions wrong – but the question is why? The chicken wasn't hurt?
 - *Individual* - it's not what I would do, but I guess it's okay because no-one is getting hurt in the privacy of his own home; who am I to tell him what to do?
 - *Collective* = it's wrong because it brings shame on his family; it's not what he's meant to do.
 - *Sacred* = his body is more than the sum of his parts, it's the temple of God, he has desecrated his body which is wrong

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- Final scenario – a 21-year-old virgin sister and brother want to try sex, so have sex with each other being careful about using contraception. No-one gets pregnant and although they liked it they decide to meet others and each eventually gets married to other people and have a fully functional, happy married life. Is this right or wrong?
 - The respondents predominantly said this was wrong because they could have had babies with genetic disorders (but remember that they used contraception and no-one got pregnant), such a sexual relationship would have wrecked their lives (but this didn't happen because they got married to other people and lived happy lives)
 - *Individual* - no-one was hurt, privacy of own home, who am I to tell them what's right or wrong, it's okay.
 - *Collective* = it's wrong because it brings shame on their family / society
 - *Sacred* = our bodies are the temple of God which they desecrated, so it is wrong
- Haidt points out that *Individual ethics* is an outlier of community that reflects Western society; which is actually a fringe part of the whole [majority] world (e.g. there are more Indians and Asians than Westerners)
 - As an example, the USA utilises the Individual ethic as the 'normal' ethical system
 - But the vast majority of the world (~80%) uses ethics of the Collective and the Sacred
- Haidt's conclusion is that the SSM debate is about which ethical system we're deploying
 - If we use *Individual* ethics, then it's easy to see why SSM can't be considered wrong
 - But the majority world uses *Collective* and *Sacred* ethics. Even if we find this weird in the West, it is the majority system in the world. So why should we in the West have the right to tell the majority world what to do, think or believe?
 - Our difference about SSM is about which ethical system we are employing; therefore, we should be asking if we only employ individual ethics or should we consider the majority world ethical systems?
- The underlying assumption behind arguments for SSM is that it's okay to be gay, otherwise the whole argument doesn't make sense
 - Please note that the counter argument against SSM has to be that it's not ok to be gay, otherwise their argument doesn't stack up either
- So how do we know if it's okay to be gay or not?
 - The 'How do we know what's wrong or is right' question is at the heart of the debate
 - Example – you drive up to a red light and stop – why?
 - The Law
 - There are consequences for not stopping
 - Social convention
 - It's the design (except when the light is broken and we go anyway)
- **The debate about SSM is actually about MORAL AUTHORITY**
 - How do we know if it's ok or not to be in a same-sex relationship?
 - Law
 - Consequences
 - Social convention
 - Design

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- Supporters of SSM → social convention says it's okay
- Opponents of SSM → God has designed us in a way so that same-sex relationships are not okay. As Christians we believe that
 - God has **designed** us in a certain way (gender identity / plasticity / dysphoria is a contemporary / current reaction against this design argument)
 - God reveals this way of living in His **Law**
 - If we live this the **consequences** will be blessing
- **What is the Essence of Marriage? Is there something intrinsic to marriage that makes it 'Marriage'?**
 - The underlying assumption behind arguments *for* SSM is that marriage is a social convention
 - It's descriptive not prescriptive
 - It's subjective
 - It's temporary
 - It changes with each society, across cultures and across time
 - It's a social construct (philosophically described as Ontological Idealism)
 - The underlying assumptions behind arguments *against* SSM is that marriage is much more than a social convention but is something created by God
 - It is Prescriptive, as well as Descriptive
 - It is Absolute and Transcendent to society and the individual
 - It is Permanent
 - It is for all cultures, all peoples, all ages
 - It has an intrinsic, inherent, natural, essential property (Ontological Realism)
 - *Illustration*
 - What makes red the colour for "stop"? Is it a social convention or is there something intrinsic, inherent, natural, essential to "red"?
 - It is → a Social Convention (in Italy it means speed up!)
 - What makes a square a "square" and not a "triangle"? Is it a social convention or is it an intrinsic property?
 - It is → an Intrinsic property of being a square
 - What about marriage? is it a social convention (like using "red" for stop) or does it have an Intrinsic design (like a square)?

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• What then is the Essence of Marriage?

- If the essence of a “square” is that it has 4 equal sides, so that whenever you have 4 equal sides, you have a square! What then is the essence of marriage? What is it, that if you have it, then you have marriage?
- The underlying assumptions behind arguments for SSM is that the essence of marriage is love
 - If two mature, consenting, committed adults are in love, why can’t they get married?
 - They’ve ticked the greatest of all boxes → love!
 - Isn’t that what all the commands of the Bible are summed up as “love”?
 - Love trumps every other command in the Bible doesn’t it?
- The underlying assumption behind arguments against SSM is that the essence of marriage is that a man and a woman relationship, designed for:
 - (a) Lifelong, Relational **Intimacy** – call it “love” (*Genesis 2:23-24*)
 - (b) The expression of **Sexual Desire** (*Genesis 2:23-24; Song of Solomon*)
 - “A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife?” (*Proverbs 5:19-20*)
 - “if [the unmarried and the widows] cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (*1 Corinthians 7:9*)
 - (c) **Procreation** – to have children (*Genesis 1; Genesis 2*)

○ ***Analysis about the Essence of Marriage***

- Each purpose [(a), (b), (c)] feeds off each other
 - At a formal level, marriage exists *at least* to have children (this is its design = nature and purpose)
 - Though each and every sex act doesn’t have to result in children (whew!!)
 - And each and every marriage doesn’t have to result in children, intimacy, etc
- There is a confusion between *Design* and *Outcome*
 - Example – a pen is *designed* to write
 - But it’s still a pen even if it doesn’t write
 - Conversely, not all things that write should be called a pen (e.g. chalk)
 - In the same way – marriage is designed to produce intimacy, erotic pleasures and children
 - But it’s still a marriage, even if the intimacy is gone and the children are gone
 - Conversely, not all relationships that have intimacy and produce children are ‘marriage’
- When marriages don’t fulfil their design, the outcome(s) may be
 - No Life-Long Union
 - Inability to have sex
 - Inability to have children

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- But this is the Outcome and not the Design; it is the end-point rather than the starting point (which is man and woman)
- We don't make divorce and not having children the essence of marriage; similarly, just because same-sex relationships share some of the features of marriage, doesn't mean that it is marriage – which is to confuse outcome with design (is vs. ought argument)
- Having biological children has gradually been removed from marriage
 - Contraception
 - Delaying having children (through economic necessity, choice, etc)
 - Divorce
 - Infertility (1 in 6 couples; and increasing due to marrying later)
 - Easier access to Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART)
- Such that having children is no longer the social norm it has been in Western society
 - Examples:
 - Try going out with three children
 - Try booking a hotel with three children
 - Try travelling or buying a car with room for 3 child-seats
- The consequences of having marriages that don't fulfil their design in which biological children are being gradually removed from marriage in a 'progressive' society that no longer embraces children as it used to – within Western culture the intended design of marriage has not been readily observable

• *Summary of the Essence of Marriage*

God	→	Marriage	→ Design	→ Outcome
<i>made</i>		<i>Man and</i>	1. <i>Lifelong Intimacy</i>	<i>Children</i>
<i>said</i>		<i>woman</i>	2. <i>Sex</i>	
			3. <i>To Have Children</i>	

- But if you remove God, Gender and Children
 - You are left with two people in an intimate sexual relationship that becomes the new definition of the essence of marriage

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- **Sex and Gender**

- The underlying assumption behind arguments for SSM is that
 - Sex differences are biological (anatomical, chromosomal, physiological)
 - Gender differences are social constructs that are elastic and changeable
 - So Gender is very 'fluid', meaning that there is no real difference between M+M / F+F to M+F
- The underlying assumption behind arguments against SSM is that
 - There are social / nurture components to gender but that there ...
 - Is also something Intrinsic and Innate to being 'Male' or 'Female'^{xiv}
- *Analysis of what the Bible teaches about Gender*
 - Genesis 1; 2 shows God created 'male' and 'female'
 - They are intrinsically different
 - They are complementary in design
 - Intrinsically, by nature – marriage needs to be male and female
 - M+F can never be M+M / F+F

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HOW TO EXPLAIN OURSELVES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE AND TO OUR FRIENDS?

Facts and data can be helpful (if used reliably) for informing people

- *Marriage by definition is between a man and a woman*
- *Marriage is the basic fundamental building block of our society*
- *Children need to be raised by, or know, who their biological parents are, in order to flourish*
- *Most same-sex relationships are not monogamous*
- *Many, if not all, of the rights that exist in marriage also exist for civil unions*
- *Bible passages that speak of homosexuality being wrong / opposing God's design*

But data alone (which can and will be vigorously disputed and dismissed as skewed) are not enough, because we primarily need to tackle presuppositions / prior beliefs that lie behind the questions that we are asked about SSM.

Before embarking on any responses to questions from friends, family, colleagues or other relationships and associations it is useful to remember seven useful tips.

SEVEN HELPFUL TIPS FOR TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

1. Get clear on the Bible's teaching about marriage and why it is that the distinction between genders matters
2. Understand and appreciate the viewpoint and motivations of the people you will engage with. Note that this is (a) an emotional issue (b) a personal issue – especially concerning family, friends and people close to them (c) a symbolic issue about social recognition, status in society and personal identity / significance / moral authority
3. Consider how your words “will be heard” by your hearers (which may be quite a different thing from what you meant to say). Be careful how you say, what you say.
4. Work out what you are NOT saying and explain what you are NOT saying (otherwise it will be assumed that you ARE saying such things)
 - We are **NOT** saying:
 - a. Homosexual people are ‘bad’ and heterosexual people are ‘good’
 - b. Homosexual people lack the capacity to have a loving relationship
 - c. Homosexual people lack the capacity to love and care for children and raise them well
 - d. It's ok for society to make life hard for minority groups such as homosexual people
 - We **ARE** saying
 - There is something creational, natural and intrinsic about two people of the opposite sex making marriage what it is
 - There is something natural about children having a biological mother and father (where possible)

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- There is something vital about having parents of opposite sex involved the formation of children and their identity
5. Be gracious and gentle and winsome in the way you present your view. The *medium* in which we speak is just as important as the *message* we say and will be heard just as clearly.
 6. Our hope is to point people to the grace of God found in Jesus. We will need to make our Gospel clear, otherwise we will automatically be perceived as ‘moralists’ who are simply trying to impose our morality on others.
 7. In any discussion, and in the overall debate in society, it is better to lose well (staying faithful and gracious) than to win badly (misusing power). We can trust God completely and have hope that He will redeem the whole of [His] creation.

It is also vital to pray and ask our Father to give us insight, understanding, wisdom, clarity and grace when talking with people about this challenging topic.

This doesn’t mean that we get a ‘free pass’ to only rely on divine inspiration ‘in the moment’, but rather that we also bear the responsibility to do the hard work to understand what the Bible teaches, what the society / culture around us is saying and how we can respond persuasively so as to ‘save others by snatching them from the fire’ (Jude 1:23).

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POSSIBLE [*PASTORAL*] WAYS TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT SSM

1. Responding to Christian people who experience Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) or identify as gay?

- *Thank you* for your courage and grace to listen to what I have to say, especially when it is difficult for you to hear
- *I'm sorry* for the way that the Church has failed you in the past.
- *God loves you* as He loves all of us who struggle with sin. Your SSA doesn't preclude you from God's love and grace. All of us struggle with sin and homosexual sin is one sin among many. So I encourage you to pray and talk with God. Pour out your heart to Him and ask Him to lead you through this.
- *Please tell a trusted friend or your Pastor.* You don't have to be alone in dealing with this. We are the family of God living in community to encourage and build each other up in the Lord.
- *There is a good, fulfilling and hope-filled future for you in Jesus Christ.* Your true identity is found in Jesus Christ if you are someone who believes in Him. Your sins are forgiven, you are washed clean, you are sanctified and justified in the name of the one who saved you – Jesus Christ.

2. Responding to friends, family or colleagues who experience Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) or identify as gay?

- *There is no place for homophobia;* or any reactions or actions that are motivated by fear or hate.
- *Keep loving them.* Love doesn't mean agreeing with them or supporting their views and condoning homosexuality, but it does mean continuing to value them and treat them with respect and care.
- *Pray for them.* Pray that they would come to see God's goodness, mercy and grace. Pray also that your friendship with them can be a faithful expression of that grace.
- *Share the Gospel with them.* If they don't know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, then look for the opportunity to introduce them to Him and His work to save us back to God.
- *Trust in God's goodness and holiness.* It is so very tempting in the current climate in Australia to stop trusting that God's words on homosexuality and marriage are good and loving words – but they are. Gently and lovingly share God's command of faithfulness in marriage and sexual chastity outside of it.
- *Be willing to suffer for your godly love for them.* Not everyone will accept God's position on this, so we need to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christian love.

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POSSIBLE [APOLOGETIC] WAYS TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT SSM (PAGE 31)

EXPLAIN APOLOGETIC = GIVE A REASONED ANSWER

As a general guideline for answering questions that are more specifically targeted, it is really important to consider how to give a reasoned response to what is being asked.

- 1) **Understand** and **Empathise** with the question being asked
- 2) **Address the presupposition** behind the question
- 3) Somehow **show how a loving God who saves us is the answer**

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3. Why are Christians against SSM?

Example #1ß

- 1) Yes, I know. Many of my friends at Uni / Work are gay. And they seemed so functional and normal. Who am I to tell them what they can or cannot do?
- 2) Do you think it really all comes down to who can / cannot tell someone what to do?
 - Individual Ethic – I don't have the right but they don't have the right either
 - Collective / Society Ethic – But every society gets it wrong, just like we can't assume our accent is the best in the world, we also can't assume our morals are the best
- 3) God – Do you think that there could be a God who loves us enough to tell us what to do?

Example #2

- 1) Yes, I know! Many of my friends at Uni / Work are gay. And they seemed so functional and normal. And who am I to tell them what they can or cannot do?
- 2) But do you know who is really against SSM? It's the Dalai Lama. Now, I'm not saying he's right. But the Dalai Lama is pro-human rights. The Dalai Lama is all about love, equality and happiness. So this can't be a human rights issue. Something more must be going on. What if this were a Western thing? Where we think we're always right? And we're imposing our views on the rest of the world?
- 3) If that's true, then it means we need an external reference point for this. Something non-West, non-East; a loving Creator God who made all of us ...

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Example #3

- 1) Yes, I know! Many of my friends at Uni / Work are gay. And they seemed so functional and normal. And who am I to tell them what they can or cannot do?
- 2) But that's very different from saying that they can get married. It all comes down to whether we think marriage is something designed by nature, or designed by us. It's like a square; By nature it has 4 sides. We can't just call everything a square, otherwise squares become meaningless! But that's what we're trying to do with marriage. By nature, marriage is between a man and a woman. We can't call everything a marriage. Same-sex is not opposite-sex marriage; otherwise marriage becomes meaningless.
- 3) Do you think there could be a loving God who loves us enough to design marriage according to His way?

4. All we need is “love” for marriage, and everyone should have the right to this?

- 1) I know. Every human being has basic intrinsic rights (French Revolution, US Declaration of Independence). And we all have rights not just to love, but freedom, pursuit of happiness, etc.
- 2) But where do we get this notion of “love” and “rights” from?
 - It can't be from observation
 - And it's not intuitive and self-evident because not all countries agree with us
 - So it's not fair to say that “marriage” is culturally determined, but “love” and “rights” are universals
- 3) “Love” and “rights” come from the Bible. So it's not fair that we pick and choose the bits we like from the Bible ... If we like the bit about “love” and “rights”, we also need to listen to the other stuff in the Bible.

5. If God is loving, how can he make me gay, and then call me an abomination?

Example #1

- 1) I know. If I am born a certain way, that is who I am! God should accept me for who I am, especially if this is how he made me.
- 2) So either God is cruel to make us a certain way, and then call it wrong; or he is loving ...
- 3) But if he is loving, that means he knows us better than we know ourselves; and maybe that's not how he wants us to live. But if he's loving, that means we're just going to have to trust him on this one.

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Example #2

- 1) I know. If I am born a certain way, that is who I am! God should accept me for who I am, especially if this is how he made me.
- 2) But we're assuming that God is loving. But how do we know he's loving?
 - It actually comes from the Bible
- 3) But that means
 - We need to listen to all of the Bible, not just the bits we like ...

Example #3

- 1) I know. If I am born a certain way, that is who I am! God should accept me for who I am, especially if this is how he made me.
- 2) But we're assuming that God is loving. But how do we know he's loving?
 - We know it because Jesus loved us so much that He died for us
- 3) But that's only a loving act, if he's saving us from something
 - So there must be something wrong that we've done
 - Otherwise His death on the cross makes no sense

6. People are born gay!

- 1) It's absolutely true that we are all born with certain traits
- 2) But it's overly simplistic to link behaviour with genetics
 - Is there a "love" gene?
 - Is there a "generosity" gene?
 - This is something that is scientifically & empirically impossible to prove
 - Besides just because something 'is', it doesn't imply it 'ought' to be that way
- 3) It all comes down to whether or not there's a God who loves us so much, that we trust him to know us best. Because if there is, if we live according to how he designed us, then we'd really be happy.

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7. But what's at stake in the SSM debate is really important.

- 1) I know. Why should Christians deny the right of people to get married? Because in the end, shouldn't we want them to be happy?
- 2) But that's exactly it! How do we know what "happiness" is? It's so culturally determined. And whatever society thought would lead to happiness often hasn't in the past.
- 3) So it all comes down to whether or not there's a God who loves us and has designed us in a certain way. Because if he has, then if we live according to how he designed us, then we would maximise happiness; not only for the individual, but the whole of society.

8. Your absolute truth / religious faith claims are just another power game to oppress gay people.

Background Underlying a Possible Response

The reason the SSM issue exists as an issue at all is because in the 21st Century Postmodern Western world society has –

- Sought to deconstruct the edifices of the past in order to construct a new, better future (utopia)
- There is a complete mistrust in our leaders and the story they give (the *meta-narrative*) for how society is today and what it will become
- Any claims to absolute truth are viewed as an offensive power game exerted by corrupt authorities for control of the masses

So marriage has become the symbol of what is most distasteful to the Postmodern West because it

- Gives the Church and the State the power to tell you what to do with your personal, private sex life
- It imposes the Church's view of morality upon your free, mature, individual choice and identity

So whether they are consciously or sub-consciously doing it, people cheer on SSM because it:

- Deconstructs traditional, conservative, religious views of marriage
- And might end up getting rid of it all together
- And therefore 'free us' up from other people telling us what to do.

Because if we can make the definition of marriage so general that it includes anybody and anything, then marriage ends up meaning nothing at all – which is why Christians say that SSM will mean:

- The end of marriage; and that
- Children won't be raised in a traditional nuclear family

But for advocates of SSM in the Western world, they have no problem with these things as they look forward to liberation, freedom and increased personal autonomy through casting off the restrictions and constraints of authority.

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Possible Response

1. Yes, I know, traditional marriage could be a meta-narrative
 - imposed upon us by big bad religion
 - imposing their truth upon us
 - playing their power games ...
 - “you can’t be happy unless you’re married to the opposite sex, for life, raising 2.5 children ...”
 - Yet we can see how this imposes loneliness and pain on so many people ...
 - Marriage was imposed on us by grumpy, old, white males ...
2. But aren’t we just adopting a new meta-narrative, a new power game?
 - “you can’t be happy unless you’re not married
 - free
 - independent ...”
 - But what if this also leads to loneliness and pain for people? All we’ve done is swap:
 - One version of truth for another
 - One version of happiness for another
 - One meta-narrative for another
 - Radical Deconstruction is also imposed on us by grumpy, old, white males ...
3. What if someone died for their version of the truth?
 - It was no longer a power game
 - But an act of love and sacrifice ...?

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CONCLUSION

The issue of SSM shows us that we have returned back to the world of the 1st Century:

- Multiple versions of religion, truth, morality
- Christianity was one of many voices
- Its version of marriage and sex was abnormal rather than the norm

On the one hand, it's sad

- Because if we live God's way → it allows society and the individual to flourish

But on the other hand, this is exciting!

- Because we return to the world of the NT → where Christians were *abnormal*, but they flourished!!!!

The way we change people's minds on this is the same way we get people to become Christians

- Pray (and keep praying)
- Present evidence, facts, data
- Take on their prior underlying *presuppositions* (understand them, research them, identify how to answer them)
- Win over their *imagination* as well as their *argument* (arts, movies, etc)

The way we live is the most powerful apologetic

- We have to show that we flourish with our different views on marriage!
- Best intimacy, sex and best context for children

The grounds of our belief is the Bible; but our common ground with non-believing friends is "love"

- But where do we get notions of love from?
 - They come from the Bible
- But how do we know God is loving?
 - His death on the cross is only loving because there is such a thing as right/wrong, and no other way

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CLOSING PRAYER

We are to minister with winsomeness, love, patience and Christian grace as we walk besides people struggling in their confusion about homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage; willing to answer courageously from the Bible with the love and hope found only in the Gospel. But if we are to be faithful to Scripture, we must also be careful not to provide assurance of salvation to people who are *habitually, freely and unremorsefully* engaged in sinful behaviour. The Bible's teaching on homosexuality and marriage is as clear as it is unpopular: persistent, unrepentant sexual sin leads people to eternal destruction. But God loves His creation and wants *every* person to enjoy right relationship with Him. Easter reminds us about the price Jesus paid to bring people back into a right relationship with God. About God's costly grace extended for our benefit.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and Pastor during the Second World War, wrote the book *'The Cost of Discipleship'* because he recognised in the Christian church that the *'... essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing'*. Bonhoeffer believed this treated God's grace as nothing more than an intellectual assent to the 'concept' of God that turned church into a religious system of doctrine and principles and taught the forgiveness of sin as a general truth. It reduced Christian grace to a commodity; it cheapened God's costly grace and denied any need for Jesus as the Son of God, except to attain the benefits of His death and resurrection; *'Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate'*.

Grace may be free, Bonhoeffer said, but it's not cheap. God's grace was costly for both the Father and the Son; it is *'... costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "you were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us'*.

Instead of cheap grace, the Bible tells us that we are called to seek Jesus with all our hearts. Costly grace is *'... the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him'*. In other words, God's grace is costly for us too. Following Jesus is more than nodding a head, raising a hand or repeating a prayer. Following Jesus is not returning to life as usual, the only difference being that we're now going to Heaven. Following Jesus is abandoning trust in ourselves, surrendering all we are and have to Him. This, and nothing less, is Christian discipleship.

So it is very strange that some Christians want to treat homosexual activity and promote Same-Sex Marriage as an imperfect but allowable choice, or simply less than God's best, when what is taught in Scripture is very clear. Unrepentant sexual sin is inconsistent with Christian discipleship and cheapens the costly grace of God.

Believing the Bible does not make us bigots, anymore than reflecting the culture around us makes us relevant. The Christian (Sacred) Ethical Model sits in conflict with the Individual Ethic that pervades much of Western society, so we should expect disagreement and persecution. But the Bible also teaches that people are justified by faith alone through (God's) grace alone; and it is this grace that gives us this faith, that causes us to change to reflect the image (original design) of God. It is this faith that brings hope founded on true, sacrificial love.

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

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The following books have been very useful in better understanding the history of the Gay Rights Movement, as well as the terrible way that the Christian Church has mistreated gay people (and other minority groups). It is not meant to be an exhaustive list (there are lots of other great books) and most of these books cost under \$20AUD to buy (in hardcopy; cheaper as an eBook).

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ENDNOTES

The following Endnotes reference the data and online articles and journals that have been used in this seminar.

ⁱ <http://www.australianmarriageequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/REPORT-Religion-And-Same-Sex-Marriage-Feb-2012.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.australianmarriageequality.org/who-supports-equality/a-majority-of-australians-support-marriage-equality/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.smh.com.au/national/new-poll-backs-samesex-marriage-20120213-1t1h4.html>

^{iv} <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/>

^v The CIA World Fact Book has summary and country level data at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>. The US Census Department maintains a country ranking by population size at <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/countryrank/rank.php>

^{vi} <http://www.claremont.org/article/gay-rites/#.Vbl3Nnmngg>

^{vii} For a more thorough historical account about the development of the Gay Rights movement please refer to the book '*Human Sexuality and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate*' edited by Mark D Thompson

^{viii} Numbers of significant studies have been conducted in the USA, UK and Australia to identify how much of the population are gay, bisexual or transsexual. In the USA only 1.7% identify as exclusively lesbian or gay (1.8% identify as bisexual). See the UCLA Williams Institute demographic analysis of seven recent major population and sexual health surveys at <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/how-many-people-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender/>. In the UK the Office for National Statistics 2012 population survey identified 1.1% identified as exclusively lesbian or gay; see <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/integrated-household-survey/integrated-household-survey/january-to-december-2012/info-sexual-identity.html>. In Australia the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society 2003 survey results demonstrated 1.2% identify as homosexual or lesbian; see <http://saltshakers.org.au/issues/homosexuality/199-statistics-homosexuality>. See also the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry summary of current surveys and results at <https://carm.org/percent-population-homosexual>.

^{ix} Peter Sanlon, '*Plastic People: How Queer Theory Is Changing Us*', 38

^x See http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1937762 for an abstract of the research article

^{xi} See the American Family Research Council webpage for information and further links to the source research paper at <http://www.frc.org/issuebrief/homosexual-parent-study-summary-of-findings>

^{xii} SSM advocates point to news articles like this one to support their response – <http://www.npr.org/2013/03/22/175014380/children-of-gay-parents-support-same-sex-marriage>

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^{xiii} See the American Family Research Council website at <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=IS04C02> in which several studies and reports about male homosexual lifestyle are provided. On average *‘research indicates that the average male homosexual has hundreds of sex partners in his lifetime’* and various American and European (including pro-Gay lobby group sponsored) data seems to indicate a ‘Fidelity Level’ of only 4.5% in male gay (monogamous) relationships. It is clear that *‘Even in those homosexual relationships in which the partners consider themselves to be in a committed relationship, the meaning of “committed” or “monogamous” typically means something radically different than in heterosexual marriage’*.

^{xiv} For Same-Sex attracted individuals, their identity is often bound up with self-defining as ‘gay’. Some helpful articles to further investigate the area of identity as it relates to homosexuality are – <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sam-allberry-on-ministering-to-same-sex-attracted-friends>, <http://www.livingout.org/what-we-re-about>. See also <http://www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk/> that has articles and related materials regarding identity and identity dysphoria.

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