

This Tuesday, 12th September, the Marriage Survey Voting packs, are getting posted out, to all Australians registered as voters with the Australian Electoral Commission. So, over the next week, depending on what day your mail arrives, the voters among us will receive our voting packs.

It's not very often the Government asks us for our opinion, but this week, they'll be doing just that – not that the mind of the Australian Voting Public is valued by everybody – The Labor Party and the Greens have already promised, that (regardless of any outcome of the marriage survey), they're going to bring in Same-sex Marriage, at their earliest opportunity.

The issue at hand, of course, is “Same-sex Marriage”, and whether it's a good idea or not, for Australia to allow men to marry men, and women to marry women.

- For some, it's a matter of opinion
- For some, it's a matter of conviction
- For some, it's something which is very personal, and they feel that it cuts to the very core of what it means for them to be human;
- For some, it's a matter of ideology
- For some, it's a matter of **theology**;
- And some people just don't care.

1. So, let's begin today, with **What the Bible Says about Marriage.**

Right back in Genesis 2, we see the first marriage. It's not called a wedding; there's no signing of registers – there's no

celebrants; or photographers; or white dresses,, but it **is** a wedding, just the same.

Genesis 2:18–25 (ESV)

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

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

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

So, right at the very point of creation, this thing that we call “marriage”, began. And it continues today. A parent, has responsibility for their children, until they become adults. But there comes a point, when they’re all grown up – they’re no longer a child, and they leave their parents, and a man and a woman, are joined to one-another, and they become “one flesh”.

This is the theology of marriage. A worldly view, is that “you just get together and have sex, and if you like each other enough, you move in together, and have a marriage-like relationship, without the binding commitment of marriage.”, but the Biblical view, is that something profound happens, when a man and a woman are joined together. – They become one flesh. When it comes to marriage, the mathematics is $1+1=1$.

And if we understood this – if we understood (men) that when we hurt our wife, we’re hurting ourselves – or wife, when you hurt your husband, you’re hurting yourself – if we understood this, we’d have a much better idea of what it means for us to submit to one-another in marriage. I’m not going to delve into that whole topic now (we just don’t have time), but if you want to hear more about it, get onto the BushDisciples sermons webpage, and go back to the Ephesians messages of 2014, you’ll find a whole bunch of messages on Ephesians chapters 5 and 6, which talk about “sacrificial living”, and how we submit to one another, and honour one another.

When a man and a woman are joined together in marriage, they are one unit – not to be pulled apart. That’s why divorce is such a serious matter – God hates divorce, and according to

the Bible, there's only a couple of circumstances where divorce is allowable:

- Where there's been adultery in the marriage (because that's already broken the one-flesh relationship)ⁱ.
- Or when one party becomes a Christian, and their spouse leaves them because they don't want to be part of a Christian householdⁱⁱ.

That's the only two circumstances that we're given, where a divorce is permitted.

So, what about sex outside of marriage? Well, it's just not on. If two unmarried people have sex, the term for that is "fornication", and yes, "fornication" is a sin. And one who does it, is a "fornicator", and "a sinner".

If one or both of them are married to somebody else, well that's called "adultery", and that also is a sin...

And so sex outside of marriage is just not on. – this is the moral side of marriage.

But there's something much deeper than the **morality** of sex and marriage... , and that is the **spiritual** side of marriage, and what it signifies. In our Bible reading this morning (Ephesians 5), it's hard to tell whether it's teaching us about "marriage and Family", or if it's teaching us about "Christ and His church". Is it using the simile of husbands and wives, to help us to understand Christ and the church, or is it using the simile of Christ and the church to help us to understand the marriage relationship????

And I think it's actually both. We will never fully understand Christ's relationship with the church, unless we can also understand how husbands and wives should be relating to one another, and we can never fully understand the marriage relationship, until we understand how Christ loves His church.

We're currently in the middle of our series on the Book of Revelation (we're just having 'time-out' today, because the Postal Ballot comes out this week, and I thought it important that we talk about it), but it's only a couple of weeks ago, that we saw the image of the church, as the bride of Christ...

Christ, gave Himself for the church, and on the day of the resurrection, the church (Christians) are united together with Christ,, – just as on the day of a wedding, man and woman, are joined together in the union of one flesh.

....

OK, so that was a very cursory glance at what the Bible has to say about marriage – of course there's **lots** of teaching on marriage, and I'd really have to spend weeks on it, to give it justice.

2. So, what does the Bible say about “Gender in Marriage”?

Well, the Bible is very inclusive – it includes **both** genders in marriage. One man, and one woman – that's it.

What's the reason for this? Is it because the Bible is a product of its time? And as some claim, “It needs to catch up with our

new scientific understanding, which is now, much better informed.”???? No, definitely not.

3. Let's have a look at what the Bible says about homosexual relationships.

In the Old Testament, it's most certainly prohibited.

Leviticus 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

In Leviticus 20:13, we can see just how **serious** the sin is, because the death penaltyⁱⁱⁱ is prescribed^{iv} for it.

But of course, some people will validly point out that there's a whole heap of Old Testament laws that we don't keep any more. And that's true. When Jesus came, he set aside a lot of the religious and cleanliness laws. So:

- we **don't** put to death people who work on the Sabbath;
- we **do** wear clothes that are woven out of two different types of cloth
- we **do** eat pork
- some people even go the extremes of eating prawns – I'm not sure why they would do that – they taste awful...

And they are quite right – there **are** laws that we don't keep any more. Is that because we now understand things better? Or is there another reason? Well we have to understand the difference between the religious laws (some of which have been set aside), and the moral code, which is timeless.

Whenever anyone **seriously** studies the Bible, it's **patently obvious** which of the laws are religious laws and therefore relate to the religious practice of the nation of Israel,,,, and which are **moral** laws, which help us to understand from God's perspective, how we should behave – how we should relate to God, and how we should relate to one another. It's obvious. And anybody who argues that it's **not** obvious, either:

- haven't studied it; or
- have a very simple comprehension; or
- they're being mischievous and wanting to **misrepresent**, what God is very clearly saying, about how we should relate to each other, and how we should relate to Him.

It's not rocket science – the **religious** laws have been largely set aside, but I cannot find a single instance, of a **moral** law being set aside...

Of course, Jesus taught us how to offer grace instead of penalty, when he said to the adulterous woman (who was about to be stoned) “Neither do I condemn you”, **But** even though He didn't condemn her, He didn't condone her adultery, either. – He also said “Go, and sin no more.” And so Jesus taught us to offer grace instead of penalty, without affirming the sin.

So, what does the **New Testament** have to say about the homosexual lifestyle?

Some people don't believe the whole Bible – they only give some measure of authority to the words of Jesus... And these

people are very quick to point out that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality... Once again, they have no idea.

Matthew 15:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

Mark 7:18-23 (ESV)

¹⁸ And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Did Jesus say anything about homosexual relationships there???? Of course He did... "Sexual immorality", comes from the heart, and it defiles.

It's only a construct of a hardened heart, that would attempt, **at any level**, to suggest, homosexual relationships wouldn't be included under the heading of "sexual immorality".

In the Bible (even in the New Testament) **LGBTQI** spells “sexual immorality”... Any honest interpretation of Scripture, has to accept this...

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says that the Greek word “porneia”, which we translate as “sexual immorality”:

“can describe various extra-marital sexual modes of behaviour insofar as they deviate from accepted social and religious norms (e.g. Homosexuality, promiscuity, paedophilia, and especially prostitution.)”^v

Jesus had a lot to say – He said that it comes out of the heart, and He said that it defiles the person.

But the New Testament has a lot more to say yet. It’s not so long ago we studied Paul’s letter to the Romans. And in the early chapters of Romans, it spells out the broken nature of humanity and the world... - there’s this downwards spiral... Godlessness leads to sin, which leads to **more** godlessness, which leads to more sin...

Romans 1:18-32 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against **all** ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the

creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For **this** reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what

ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

....

When most 'Bible-believing' Christians read this, they say "There you go – homosexuals will be judged for their sin" – well, yes, they will, but it's saying more than that...

What it's saying is this: When a society rejects God, God's **punishment** on that society – God's **wrath**, is that He gives them over, to these unnatural sexual relationships...

What's being punished, is the Godlessness of society, and what it's saying, is homosexuality, getting a go-on in society – **is** the wrath of God. And not only homosexuality – there's a whole heap of other sins listed there – it's the whole degrading of society...

And so, the New Testament, is also clear – homosexual relationships are a sin, but more than that – the existence of homosexuality – the craving to be sexually active with

someone of the same sex, is an expression of the wrath of God on that community...

But let me be very clear – **it's not the only** expression of the wrath of God on a godless society – the list is a lot broader than homosexuality. It includes:

- envy
- murder
- strife
- deceit
- maliciousness
- gossips
- slanderers
- haters of God
- insolent
- haughty
- boastful
- inventors of evil
- disobedient to parents
- foolish
- faithless
- heartless
- ruthless

It's a whole catalogue of sins, and sin is something we need to repent of... And you may find on that list, sins of which you need to repent.

4.

So, I've been asked (several times), "Why do Christians make this **big issue** out of homosexuality?" **Why, when there's so**

many other sins there, is homosexuality the one that Christians speak against???

And my answer to that, is “Nobody is saying that those other sins are ‘good’, or ‘something to be celebrated’, or ‘something to be embraced’”

Nobody’s saying “Gossip is good” “God has made you a gossip, and you should celebrate the gossip that you are.”

Nobody’s saying “You should get together with another gossip, and share your gossip together, and together you can express your true nature as gossips.”

Nobody’s saying “Stealing is good” “God has made you a thief, and you should celebrate the thief that you are.”

Nobody’s saying “You should get together with another thief, and you can start stealing together, and you can be a little crime syndicate – that would be wonderful, and together, you can express your true nature as thieves.”

Nobody’s saying “Adultery is good”. “God has made you an adulterer – those cravings you have for other women who are not your wife – you should celebrate those feelings – embrace who you are...” Nobody’s saying “You should get together with another adulterer, and we’ll have a ceremony, to formalise your adultery, and to hear you promise that you’re going to continue to commit adultery”....

It’s not the Christians who have made it the issue...

Godless society have made it the issue, and they want the whole of society, including Christians, to agree that homosexuality, is a good thing.... They want us to give our approval, to those who practice it.

But we cannot celebrate what God has condemned...

5.

So, **how should Christians relate to our neighbours, who are embracing a homosexual lifestyle?**

And my answer is, “We should respond to them, the same as we would anyone else.”

The Scriptures tell us, that **all have sinned**. **All** have fallen short of the glory of God. And because of our sin, **we all deserve to die**.

On **my** merits – on **my** behaviour – **I deserve to die**. If all the good things **I** did, were weighed up against all the bad things **I** did, God would pronounce all my good deeds as “worthless” and all my sins as “abominable”, and the judgment would be, “Michael, you deserve to die...”

On my own merits, I am no better, and no worse, than someone in a homosexual relationship...

The only thing that gives me hope, is the grace of God:

- To be forgiven, takes repentance and faith.
- I won't be forgiven, unless I repent of my sin.
- I have to agree with God, that the way (at times) I have chosen to live my life, is utterly sinful – it's rotten – it's an abomination...
- And so I repent of my sin – I say, “God, I agree. That's wrong.”
- And I turn my back on that sin – I turn my back on that old, sinful lifestyle.

- I repent. And God forgives me.
- In His grace, and mercy, He washes my sin away, and
- He makes me pure and holy, to begin a life of righteousness, as I submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, and follow Him.

And this goes for everybody. I have particular sins, that are a temptation for me. I'm preaching to myself here, as much as I'm preaching to anyone... But the moment that (in my pride), I begin to convince myself, that certain sins "aren't really sins", that's when I embrace spiritual death, rather than spiritual life.

And so if my temptation is gossip or slander, and I convince myself that "I'm not really sinning by gossiping or slandering." , then I'm embracing spiritual death.

And if my temptation is the homosexual lifestyle, and I convince myself that "There's really nothing wrong with it." , then I'm embracing spiritual death...

How should we relate to our neighbours, who are embracing a homosexual lifestyle? **We should love them.** Yes, we should try to help them to understand that it is a sin that needs to be repented of. Yes, they need to hear the Good News, and the invitation to come to Jesus Christ as Lord, for the forgiveness of sins – just as we should do this for everyone we love...

And how they respond, is between them and God. I don't think arguing with them, is going to help any. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin – **you** can't convict anyone – that's the work of God.

But something we **cannot** do, is condone their sin. And we certainly cannot celebrate their sin.

A few years ago, a friend of mine, shared with me, that a very good friend of hers was (I think) going to New Zealand, to marry her lesbian lover. And my friend (a Christian) had been invited to the wedding, and she didn't know whether she should go or not. She didn't want to 'cut her friend off', but she didn't feel it was right for her to go to this same-sex-wedding. What should she do????

And I said to her, "Well, the homosexual lifestyle is a sin the same as any sin. So, if your friend was a thief, and she asked you to come and celebrate her latest bank heist, what would you do?" And I think she had her answer.

No, of course we cannot celebrate same-sex relationships, but that doesn't mean we stop loving them....

6.

Which brings us to **the current debate**.

"Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?"

And as a Christian who values what true marriage means, I have to vote "No". But why are we having this debate?

The Same-Sex Activists, would have us believe that this is a debate over who can love each other. It's nothing of the sort. This, is an ideological agenda, of a godless nation.

Only a few weeks ago, as we were studying the book of Revelation, we were learning about “Babylon, and what Babylon represents”. And in the Bible, Babylon represents arrogant, Godless civilisation – against God, against God’s law, and against God’s people... And as we considered what Babylon represents, I think most of us probably realised, “Hey, **we’re** living in Babylon”...

We live in a Godless civilisation. Australia, is increasingly **becoming**, a godless civilisation. And our society is increasingly turning against God, against God’s law, and against God’s people.

In the book of Daniel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were literally living in the city of Babylon. And in the book of Daniel, there’s a couple of very good examples, where the residents of Babylon, who hated God’s people, got their king to change various laws, with the express purpose of putting God’s people in a position, where they would have to choose between honouring God, or obeying the law.

And the express intent of the activists today, is to put God’s people in a position, where they have to choose between honouring God, or obeying the law.

And we’ve already seen this happening in other countries, where gay activists have targeted Christians – You’ve probably heard the stories of Christian bakers who have been targeted by anti-discrimination laws, because they declined to bake a cake for a same-sex-wedding...

And we’re already seeing it in Australia now:

- “If you’re not for SSM, you’re a bigot.”

- “And if you dare to speak out to maintain the traditional and biblical view of marriage, you’re accused of “hate speech””.

E.g.

- The Tasmania Anti-Discrimination Commission found that a Bishop in the Roman Catholic Church had “a case to answer”, when the church distributed a booklet, supporting traditional marriage.
- This week, same-sex-marriage advocates, instigated a petition to have a GP, Dr Pansy Lai, deregistered as a medical practitioner, because she spoke out in favour of traditional marriage.

And the bias in the media has been extraordinary^{vi}
(particularly if you watch the ABC).

The homosexual lobby and the leftist media would have us believe that the homosexual community are all light and love and equality and against discrimination and for rights and justice... and anyone who’s against them, are presented as vile, hateful bigots....

But what I’ve been seeing so far, couldn’t be further from the truth...

7.

But I want to finish by saying this:

Not everybody who's tempted by homosexuality, has bought in to the whole ideological war against Christians... And we shouldn't see all homosexuals as being at war against Christianity. Most of them are exactly the same as us – broken people, struggling with real temptations, and real sins, that cut them off from God...

But even those activists who **are** waring against the church, and against Christians, how would Christ have us to relate to them??? If this is a concerted attack against Christians, you may probably consider them an enemy....

How did Jesus teach us to treat our enemies???

Matthew 5:43-48 (ESV)

Love Your Enemies

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Love. No matter how appalled you may feel, about somebody's lifestyle – Love them. No matter how anybody wrongs you, or targets you with claims of “discrimination”... – love them. And pray for them. That's the Godly response.

- Vote “No” (by all means).
- But also accept, that persecution will come.
- Love those who are against you, and against your obedience to God.
- And pray for them...
- Don't just pray that the marriage act will stay the same – pray for those who want to change it.

And love them.

Remember, for those who are tempted by homosexuality, this is a deeply personal issue. Temptation and sin, always is. Temptation and sin, is deeply personal for you, and it's deeply personal for me.

We are to love the sinner, but hate the sin.

Righto. Questions.

And then we will pray.

*Heavenly Father,
we come before you today,
in the attitude that no one is righteous (least of all us),
And yet You, in Your great love and mercy,
sent Your Son, Jesus Christ,
as a Saviour **for** the unrighteous (a saviour for us).*

*And Lord, on this marriage Sunday,
we thank you for the **gift** of marriage.
We thank you that You created us (male and female).
We thank you for Your wonderful design,
Where 2 become one.*

*And Lord, we thank you for Your marvellous design,
That this 'one flesh' relationship, would be the family unit,
in which children would be born and raised.
Lord, we thank you for our own families,
And for the children of this church.*

*And Lord, we pray also for those who you have called to
'singleness'.
We thank you that you call some to be married,
And some to be single.
And we pray, Lord, that we would be able to honour You,
In whichever station You have called us.*

*And Lord, we pray for our nation at this time.
Father, it seems that we live in Babylon,
And that our nation is poised to reject You (yet again).
Lord, we pray for this postal survey.
Lord, we ask that Your Spirit would move in this land –
That You would touch the consciences of the people of this
land,
And that they would value the true definition of marriage.*

*Lord, we pray for our political leaders.
That You would reveal to them, Your wisdom,
And that they would be determined, to retain the marriage act
as it is.*

Lord, we pray for those who are tempted toward the homosexual lifestyle.

*Lord, give us grace and Love toward them,
And we pray that You would reveal to them,
The hope that we can all have,
In the Love of Christ.*

*And we pray for those activists,
who seem to be so against You;
against Your word;
and against Your children.*

*We pray for those who would attack; accuse; and condemn.
Lord, help us to Love them.
And please touch their hearts,
That faithlessness would be replaced with faith;
That hatred would be replaced with love;
And that Godlessness would be replaced by the Holy Spirit.*

*We pray this in Jesus' name,
Amen.*

i Matthew 5:31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

ii 1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.¹³ If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy

because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

iii Examples of Death Penalty application:

Murder (Ex21:12)

Physical assault of your parents (Ex21:15)

Cursing your parents (Ex21:17)

Kidnap to slavery (Ex21:16)

Not taking reasonable precautions to safeguard others' lives (duty of care) (Ex21:29)

Bestiality (Ex22.19)

Working on the Sabbath (Ex35:2)

Child sacrifice (Lev 20:2)

Adultery (Lev 20:10)

Incest (Lev 20:11-12)

Homosexuality (Lev 20:13)

Contacting the dead (Lev 20:27)

Blaspheming the name of YHWH (Lev 24:16)

False Prophet (Deut 13:5)

iv **Leviticus 20:13** If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

^v Reisser, H., 1986. πορνείω L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, & H. Bietenhard, eds. *New international dictionary of New Testament theology*.

^{vi} <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/top-cop-denies-van-bomb-at-christian-lobby-hq-was-political/news-story/859b523c0d22625fab71d741f6c36aaa>
<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/blogs/andrew-bolt/the-latest-samesex-marriage-bullies-and-the-carbomb/news-story/48a26418f8d5eca44e8e2e16b74a5221>
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/broadcast/christian-lobby-complains-over-abc-thorpe-question/news-story/4968aafc590a50bad7bf078d52023f69>
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-23/same-sex-marriage-what-bible-has-to-say-robyn-whitaker/8831826>