

Respect for Marriage

Every year, we recognize the last Sunday in January as Sanctity of Life Sunday. Someone came up with the idea that churches should promote the sanctity of life on the Sunday closest to Jan 22, because it was on that day in 1973 that the Supreme Court delivered its *Roe vs. Wade* decision which legalized abortion.

Thank God, *Roe vs. Wade* has been overturned. Thousands of babies have been born instead of being killed because that decision was overturned.

Roe v. Wade is only one aspect of a moral revolution that has been ongoing since the 1960s. That moral revolution gained another significant victory on June 26, 2015, when the Supreme Court released its opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. That opinion reversed thousands of years of human tradition and law and made same-sex marriage legal in the US.

The *Obergefell* decision was not the end of the moral revolution; far from it. You might think that, since the moral revolutionaries had gained their desired goal, they would settle down and quit throwing the country into chaos. No, they got what they wanted and continued pushing for more.

Quote: Since *Obergefell*, the gay rights movement has morphed into a hostile movement that has moved beyond gay and lesbian issues to an alphabet soup of queer theory, commonly referred to as LGBTQ+, more fully known as LGBTQQP2SAA or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Pansexual, Two-Spirited, and Asexual. Where the gay rights movement argued homosexuality was a biological reality, queer theorists argue everything everywhere is socially constructed and children themselves should be converted.¹

Just as Christians have stood against abortion for the last 50 years, we now must stand against same-sex marriage and the accompanying moral chaos that has overtaken our nation. I doubt that there is any hope of ever overturning the *Obergefell* decision, but we need to be on record against it and in favor of traditional Christian marriage.

¹ Erick Erickson, "Another Designated Sunday, Please." *World Magazine*. <https://wng.org/opinions/another-designated-sunday-please-1685489761>

Christians need to stand against the immorality so common in our nation, and we need to provide an alternative vision for life. We need to have a very clear picture about what marriage and family ought to be. We need to know what the Bible teaches on these issues. We must know and put into practice the Christian worldview as it pertains to family life. We must respect Christian marriage. And it's proper for us to dedicate some time to reviewing what the Bible says about this critical issue.

Quote: As Christians, we need to do more than just reject their celebration of ... deviancy and dangerous ideas We must proclaim a better way forward by highlighting the beauty and goodness of God's design for marriage.²

As Christians, we must support and encourage what is good, what is beautiful, and what is true. God's good, beautiful, and true plan for most people is traditional marriage. The unsaved world might reject that plan, but Christians must accept it, support it, and teach it.

Just like we have a Sanctity of Life Sunday in January, so we can have a Respect for Marriage Sunday today. Why should we respect Christian marriage?

- I. We respect Christian marriage because we recognize God's authority.
 - A. The authority for marriage ultimately comes from God. He's the one who thought up the whole thing in the beginning.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The traditional marriage ceremony calls the relationship "holy matrimony; ... an honorable estate, instituted of God."

We enter into this relationship under God's authority and with his blessing.

² Erickson

- B. What is the authority for same-sex marriage? It's not the Bible. God is very clearly against the idea. There's no legitimate way to support or defend same-sex marriage from the Bible or from the Christian faith. Some confused, misguided people claim that the Bible allows for same-sex marriage, but they are twisting Scripture to make it support their views. Same-sex marriage is immoral and ungodly—Paul calls that kind of relationship unclean and vile (Rom 1:24, 26).
- C. The authority for same-sex marriage in America came from the SC on June 26, 2015. Before that, same-sex marriage was illegal and unconstitutional, although a few local jurisdictions allowed it.

Here's the language of the *Obergefell* decision:

The Fourteenth Amendment requires a State to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-State.³

- D. Why did the government use its authority to grant the right to same-sex marriage? Let's consider this

Quote from Justice Kennedy's opinion: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. ... The right to personal choice regarding marriage is inherent in the concept of individual autonomy."

I.e., individual autonomy is the final authority for human behavior. This is what freedom means according to Justice Kennedy—the right to follow your own heart no matter where it takes you, no matter what the consequences. Kennedy's entire argument in this decision is that people have the freedom to follow their hearts. Governments and societies must allow people the freedom to do whatever they want, whether it's good for them or not. Individuals must choose their own definition of what is good, and everyone else must recognize that choice.

³ From Justice Kennedy's majority opinion. At <http://sharperiron.org/article/analysis-of-supreme-courts-gay-marriage-decision-part-2>

He does not prove this statement by showing how the constitution or the laws of the US demand this. There is no basis for it in the laws of the US. It was purely made up in the minds of five SC justices. It's a supreme example of legislating—making laws—from the bench.

- E. In other words, the authority for overthrowing thousands of years of human tradition and biblical authority is personal autonomy.

Especially when it comes to the matter of human relationships, people today do not want any restrictions on their behavior. They want freedom without accountability or consequences.

- F. This is where the five justices on the SC found the authority for homosexual marriage—their own feelings and experiences. They *felt* that this was the best course of action. It's certainly not in the constitution, in our laws, or in our traditions. It comes out of their own feelings.

- G. This whole issue ultimately amounts to a question of authority. Who or what is the final authority, God or man? Do we love God first and foremost, or do we love ourselves? Do we recognize God's ways as the best for us, or do we reject God and his word? Are we seeking God's blessings on our nation, or are we changing our culture to suit a small minority of the population?

- H. This decision is just another example showing how the people of the US no longer have any concern for biblical morality. There is no consideration of whether same-sex relationships are simply evil and wrong. There is no question whether same-sex marriage is in the best interests of the country.

- I. If we turn away from divine authority, what do we have left? Only personal preference and opinion. The government now sees it's task as guaranteeing the personal preferences of a protected minority. So without God, personal preference wins the day. Individual autonomy is the new god, the highest value in our nation. The greatest value in America is individual autonomy.

- J. We strongly disagree with such an idea. When personal preference becomes the authority, and when government institutions start granting rights based on personal autonomy instead of on just law, our culture is in real danger.

Trans: On Respect for Marriage Sunday, we affirm and proclaim that God is the authority over marriage and over all human relationships. Our government has obviously rejected God’s authority, but Christians uphold and defend God’s authority to regulate marriage and all human relationships.

- II. We respect Christian marriage because we obey God’s commands.
- A. The Bible clearly teaches that God intended marriage to be a “one-woman man” and “one-man woman” bond (cf. Gen 2:24; 1 Tim 3:2, 12). This union was intended to last for a lifetime. One man with one woman for one life is the biblical expectation.
- B. We admit that many characters in the Bible did not follow this pattern. Several well-known biblical figures had multiple wives, and usually that caused multiple problems. The original and best pattern is heterosexual, monogamous, lifelong marriage. That ought to be the pattern we expect and follow.
- C. Jesus affirmed the original definition of marriage in Matthew 19:4–6
“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- D. Other authors of the NT also affirm traditional morality.
Hebrews 13:4 *Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*

E. Outside of marriage, intimate physical relations are forbidden. Fornication and adultery are serious, soul-damning sins. Intimate contact between members of the same sex is profoundly immoral and prohibited. These immoral behaviors are wrong according to God's standards of conduct. Both OT and NT consistently teach the same truth.

Trans: On Respect for Marriage Sunday, we affirm and proclaim that we do not recognize any rights for same-sex marriage. The laws of the land may recognize such a union, but we do not. Such a union violates God's commands, and thus we reject all claims to such a marriage.

BTW, to be consistent with that principle, I would suggest that you not attend same-sex weddings. When you attend a wedding, you are celebrating the union of the couple. If you don't want to celebrate that union—if you think that union is immoral in invalid, you should not attend the wedding.

III. We respect Christian marriage because we affirm God's purposes in marriage.

The Bible provides five purposes for marriage. Everyone contemplating marriage or already married should understand these five purposes. Same-sex marriage undermines and perverts God's purposes in marriage.

A. Covenant Commitment

Mal 2:14 ... *she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*

1. In marriage, two individuals make a binding oath to one another; they make a covenant to unite in marriage. The couple express oaths and vows to one another and exchange rings publicly to show that this relationship is unique and permanent.
2. Covenant commitment is what keeps marriages together. A covenant is a binding agreement or contract. When you get married, you are making a solemn promise or enacting a contract with various stipulations. You make vows before God and others to remain within the marriage "till death do us part." It's that binding covenant that establishes the marriage and keeps it together.

B. Companionship

Mal 2:14 ... *she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*

1. Although the original creation was very good, it was not good for the man to be alone (Gen 2:8). Adam quickly realized that Eve was exactly what he needed; she was suitable or comparable to him. She was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The companionship of marriage makes what is partial whole, what is incomplete complete, and what is unfinished finished.
2. Life is much more meaningful and enjoyable when you share it with a suitable companion. Humans are social creatures, and the most intimate social bond is marriage. One of the best parts of marriage is having a companion with whom to share life.

C. Chastity – Personal Purity

1Co 7:2 *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

1. Humans have a natural desire for intimate contact with the opposite sex. The only moral way to fulfill this appetite is through marriage. Any such behavior or contact outside of marriage is sinful.
2. While this appetite itself is God-given and good, our own sinful heart causes us to seek to fulfill that drive in sinful ways. The best way to manage and fulfill this natural human desire is through marriage.
3. In traditional marriage vows, the couple promises, “Forsaking all others, [I will] keep myself only unto you, for so long as we both shall live.” Any intimate contact outside of marriage is sinful and destructive. Both partners must intentionally avoid sinful relationships with other people.

1 Thess 4:3-4, 7-8 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.... For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.*

4. Our society is so pervasively immoral that remaining chaste and pure before and after marriage is difficult and quite uncommon. God's solution to the human appetite for immorality is marriage.

D. Children

Gen 5:3 *Adam ... begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*

Mal 2:15 ... [God] *seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.*

1. One of the main purposes of marriage is the creation and care of children. God's original purpose for creating mankind was that he would "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). The natural pattern revealed in the Bible is that men and women marry and produce children. This is a good thing.

Ps 127:5 *Happy is the man who has his quiver full of [children].*

...

2. A loving, stable, disciplined home where both father and mother are present is the best environment in which to raise children. One of the keys to raising healthy children is for their parents to have a good marriage. So keeping your marriage strong benefits your kids.

Disunity and divorce have terrible consequences for children. A couple should make every effort to stay together and work out their differences for the benefit of their children.

3. Further, the biblical expectation is that Christian parents pass on the Christian faith to the next generation. Christian parents are obligated to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Evangelism begins at home.

4. We know that some couples are unable to have children. In those cases, other options, like adoption, are available. Unless providentially prevented from having children, Christian couples should plan to have them and to raise them in the Christian faith.
5. Society today tells us that children are a burden and an expense, which is true. But children are a blessing from the Lord, and Christian parents must make every effort to raise their children for the glory of God.

E. Christ's Union with the Church

According to Ephesians 5:22–33, Christian marriage is designed to picture Christ's love for his church. What does this suggest?

1. Husbands ought to love their wives just as Christ loves his church. A husband must be willing to sacrifice his own desires for the benefit of his wife. Love must be self-sacrificial. Husbands must lead, but do so in a loving, sensitive, and gracious way.
2. Likewise, wives must submit to the loving leadership of their husbands as the church submits to Christ. The wife is to respect her husband and follow his leadership.
3. The woman needs love, and the man needs respect. When both the husband and wife fulfill their biblical obligations and roles, the marriage is an accurate reflection of Christ's relationship with his church.

Nearly all of these purposes go unfulfilled with same-sex marriage.

1. A covenant of marriage is impossible for two people of the same sex. They cannot "leave" and "cleave" because they are not a man and wife. They don't fit the pattern; they flagrantly violate the biblical norm.
2. Needless to say, two people of the same sex cannot have a morally chaste relationship if they are acting like they are married. There is no personal purity in a same-sex intimate relationship. This is gross immorality, not chaste.

3. Two people of the same sex cannot have children naturally. The same-sex relationship is infertile; it's incomplete and unfruitful. Even if they do arrange to get a child (IVF, surrogacy, adoption), that child will be raised in a home lacking one parental role.
4. Two people of the same sex cannot picture Christ's love for his church. A man cannot love his "husband" like Christ loves the church. A woman cannot submit to her "wife" like the church submits to Christ.
5. About the only thing that two people of the same sex can enjoy companionship. But they could do that without pretending that they are married. And the shameful truth is that a large percentage of homosexuals are very promiscuous and would not want to be restricted to any one person by getting married. Many are not even seeking companionship; all they want is another immoral physical experience.

Same-sex marriage directly contradicts God's will and purpose for humanity. Such behavior is perverse, dishonorable, and vile. It's a great shame that the SC forced our country to recognize this corrupt practice as legitimate. It's also a great shame that so many of our national leaders affirm and support same-sex marriage.

It's important for us to proclaim that we respect biblical, traditional marriage as the only form of marriage. It's the form of marriage that God originally instituted, and it's the only form of marriage that God authorizes. The biblical, traditional form of marriage is the picture that young people ought to have in their minds as they think ahead to their own futures.

The world in which we live is awash in moral chaos and insanity. LGBT madness has captivated our society, and we must boldly and vigorously stand against it. Many churches these days have capitulated to the moral revolution; many churches today, sadly, promote the LGBT agenda and same-sex marriage.

We must maintain our opposition to the LGBT agenda and same-sex marriage. One way to do that is to proclaim our respect for biblical marriage. God's intent is that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife. One man and one wife for one life is God's plan, and that should be our commitment and our plan as well. That ought to be the vision of the good life that we impress upon our children.

I think it's entirely appropriate to recognize Respect for Marriage Sunday. I hope many other churches will state their opposition to same-sex marriage and their commitment to biblical marriage only. We must be very clear on this important issue; we must not cave in to the pressure society puts on us to adopt the moral revolution. Instead, we must retain our commitment to biblical marriage and promote God's plan to the upcoming generations.