

440 *Gay marriage – a positive approach*

When writing about a contentious issue it's all too easy to focus on proving that the opposing view is wrong, thereby being negative, so here I'll try to write positively, and resist taking side-swipes at the traditional view.

Based on Jesus' summary of the law, '*The first and greatest commandment... the second is like it...*'^{Mt 22:37-39} what really, really matters is a good positive relationship with God and with one another, so let's apply this to human sexuality.

God's positive plan is one man and one woman forming a faithful, loving, lifelong bond, creating a stable family unit that can produce and nurture new life, children who can grow up within a loving environment. '*Be fruitful and multiply...*'^{Gen 1:28}

Why is this so important? Humans are sexual beings, and the sexual urge is powerful, for both good and evil, so it needs to be confined within loving life-bonds. Hence the biblical injunctions against divorce: marriage must be treated with the deepest respect.

But humans are also sinful and our lives are far from ideal; relationships get messed up, so we sometimes get into the issue of divorce and remarriage. Yes, the church needs rules, but leaders do need to apply them compassionately.

Now, accepting that God's plan is for one man and one woman, what can we say about same-sex attraction? First and foremost, it's a reality. But is it a life-choice, as some Christians believe? The weight of scientific evidence says not, so those Christians will have to argue with the scientists.¹

Even if people don't *choose* to be gay, they do still have to make life-choices, and many Christians, for understandable biblical reasons, say that any and all same-sex intimacy is sinful. But applying that rule has massive pastoral implications if people have already formed same-sex life-bonds.^[423] Again, church leaders need compassion.

Positively, one foundational Genesis passage is: '*It's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.*'^{2:18} How might this be applied to those who are same-sex attracted? Given our growing understanding of human sexuality, many of us now feel that gay Christians shouldn't be excluded from this blessing, so here are some of the positive effects of changing our minds on this issue. (I'll use 'gay marriage', only because it's shorter than 'loving same-sex life-bond'.)

¹ In response to a reader's request re the scientific evidence, the best summary I've seen is given in chapter two of Andrew Davison's *Amazing Love* (2016). To follow it up you can use references 20–36, at the back of the book.

Happy, healthy gay marriages

- ... offer the couples positive wellbeing
- ... provide a positive life model, affirming faithfulness
- ... can enhance the richness of church life
- ... can be a positive influence for good in our society

Individual gay Christians

- ... don't need to feel guilty when they experience same-sex attraction
- ... aren't forced into a life of celibacy
- ... know that they really *are* welcome in our churches

Outsiders can see that gay people are very much part of our church life

For these good positive reasons, I encourage Christians to rethink their long-held views, and thus avoid the potential damage of church splits.

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