

WE'LL HAVE A GAY OLD TIME!

(Greg Deuble ... greg.thebiblejesus@gmail.com)

Remember Fred Flintstone saying, "Good night Wilma" and then putting the milk bottles out? Then Fred would carry the sabre tooth tiger out. But before Fred could get back inside to close the door for the night, the 'cat' had jumped back inside through the window slamming the door on Fred. In typical loud-mouth Fred style, he banged on the door, yelling at the top of his voice, "Wilma! Wilma, open the door! Wilma, Wilma!" All the neighbours' lights began to turn on with the commotion, until the whole town of Bedrock was awake. All the time, the Flintstone theme-song was playing in the background, "We'll have a gay old time!"

If you are old enough to remember this scene and song, then like me, you have seen some big changes to what having "a gay old time" means now, compared to those few decades ago. Gay used to be a girl's name. Gay used to mean wearing bright, bold colours. Gay used to mean having a fun time, being happy. But these days, the word has been hijacked by the gay and lesbian community to mean something entirely different ... one's sexual orientation and preference.

In this brief article I want to take the plunge and share a few thoughts on the "gay" question. It's very topical of course, not just here in Australia, but around the entire Western world. Ireland not long ago voted to accept "equal rights" for homosexual marriage. The US Supreme Court not long ago in a split decision, voted to make homosexual marriage legal. President Obama celebrated by having the colours of the rainbow shining over the White House. In Australia the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull went to the federal election promising that if re-elected he would give Australians a plebiscite to determine the matter. If the media is to be believed, 70% of Australians are in favour of changing the definition of marriage. The opposition leader Bill Shorten went to the election promising that if elected, in his first 100 days in office, he would introduce a bill to the Parliament to pass same-sex marriage legislation.

Nor is this an issue just for the law courts and politics. It affects us all on various levels, at home and work and play. Some families have been severely divided over the "gay" question. What would your response be to this scenario: You are having a pleasant reunion dinner with the extended family. Just as glasses are being raised and tapped, one of the members who has 'married' a same-sex partner says, "Everybody, we have an announcement to make. We are having a baby!" Typical responses from the family guests would cover quite a range. Some might clap and cheer, applauding the news. Some might be polite and respectful, but in spite of reservations, congratulate the couple. Some might sit there in stunned silence. Some might be very uncomfortable, inwardly fighting with conflicting principles of how to balance non-judgmental love with what they understand are clear Biblical teachings. Suddenly having a "gay old time" might not seem to be so gay for some.

So here's my two cents' worth. I am a Christian who takes following Jesus seriously. I believe the Scriptures are our sole authority and that God Himself created us to enjoy to the full being human and caring for His world. I am a minority, I know. But even the church denominations who say they follow "Christian" principles are not united on the "gay" question. Indeed, some church leaders argue the traditional way the church has read the Scriptural prohibitions against homosexuality need to be revised. We need to move with the changing times.

Ask any Christian, "Do you think that if Jesus himself was invited to a "gay" wedding, that he would attend?" Some will answer, of course Jesus would attend. Is he not "the friend of sinners"? Were not prostitutes, adulterers, and all kinds of socially 'unclean' people attracted to him for the very reason that he loved them unconditionally? Others will answer, "No, of course Jesus would not attend. He would not endorse the legalisation of same-sex marriage. He would say to the same-sex couple, I will forgive you provided you go and sin no more."

WHERE JESUS STARTED

True, Jesus never specifically addressed the question of same-sex marriage. Indeed, he does not seem to have directly spoken of homosexuality even when naming the litany of sins that "defile" and that "proceed from within, from the heart", unless we include it in his general category of "fornications" (*porneiai*), a plural word

meaning acts of sexual immorality (see Mark 7:20-23). By the same token, Jesus never specifically said anything about incest either, but does anybody seriously think Jesus' silence meant he condoned such, especially in light of his searing condemnation of anybody who causes "one of these little ones to stumble" (Mark 9:42)?

It is absolutely certain that the Jewish people universally rejected the homosexual lifestyle, which of course was based on their Hebrew Scriptures. From the very beginning of that people, and right on through Second Temple Judaism (516 BC to 70 AD), homosexuality was considered "abominable". Sodom and Gomorrah are appealed to in *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Naphtali* as examples of detestable sexual sin and a severe "departure from the order of nature".

So, where would Jesus start to unravel the conundrum of today's opinions to bring objectivity with sensitivity to the "gay" question? Fortunately, we don't have to guess. Jesus starts at the very beginning, "a very good place to start" (as Maria sang in the Sound of Music). Jesus appealed to what God did "in the beginning" as the normative pattern for sex in society. Jesus appealed to the original design of marriage as being between one man and one woman for life as our template (Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:2-8).

I recognise that Jesus was directly speaking to the hot button issue of his day, namely the legality of divorce for any cause. However, sufficient for the moment is to say, Jesus started by an appeal to the Scriptures,

"Have you not read, that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19: 4-6).

There can be no doubt that in order to answer the divorce question Jesus says we first need to have a right understanding of God's definition of marriage as found in the Bible. Jesus argues that in the sight of the Creator, from the beginning, marriage is defined as being between a male and a female. Anybody claiming to speak for Jesus, will have to follow his example if there is to be any redefinition of marriage. That is to say, we must ask the question he asked, "Have you not read?" For Jesus --- if not for the majority in our society --- the final authority was always the Scriptures. (But of course, this raises for many the question as to whether the Bible is itself captive to the culture it came from ... hasn't society move on ... aren't we more enlightened ...? More on that soon.)

Stating this negatively, it will not do to claim authority for marriage redefinition(s) simply because a family member has 'come out of the closet' and I don't want to offend him or her. Popular opinion, pressure from society, never did guide Jesus. Once we go down the path of relativity, why not logically accept that marriage should not also include polygamy, for instance? Why can't the Mormon or the Moslem then turn around and say, "Well, why won't you accept our definitions of marriage?" Or why can't the sixty year old tribesman from New Guinea turn around and say, "What's wrong with taking under-age girls as my wives just like all my ancestors did?" Another puts the danger of relativity this way,

"It is mere sentiment and lingering tradition which leads many progressives to insist that same-sex unions ought to involve the commitment of two persons and only two persons. If marriage is simply the formation of a kinship bond between those who are committed wholly to one another, there is no reason why multiple persons or groups of people cannot commit themselves wholly to one another." ¹

WHERE GOD STARTED

So, Jesus started with an appeal to God's original design. But where did God Himself start? According to the Bible, God performed some kind of operation upon the man. I do not necessarily accept that God took a "rib" from the man. After waking up from his deep sleep and seeing his drop-dead gorgeous woman, Adam spontaneously exclaims, "Wow! She is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen.2:23). Evidently, more than a mere bone was taken, so "rib" is probably not the best way to translate that Hebrew word (*se'la*).

¹ Kevin Deyoung, *What Does The Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., 2015. p 31

Outside of Genesis 2 the word is not used in an anatomical way, but refers primarily to one side or the other side in an architectural sense. For instance, where it appears in passages where the tabernacle or temple are discussed, *se/la* refers to one side or the other, such as two 'sides' of the ark, or rooms on two 'sides' of the temple, i.e. north and south sides, etc. (eg Exodus chapters 25 -38; 1 Kings 6 and 7; Ezekiel 47). It is better therefore, to think that God somehow divided Adam in half, and constructed the woman to be his "other half". Indeed, we often hear in common speech today, "Is this your other half?" ²

This is simply to say that God evidently designed the woman to be the man's corresponding "half", his equal and complementary side. Half of the man, (which some humorously say is still missing!) was taken with the express purpose of designing a partner differentiated from the man, but similar. Adam was thrilled that Eve was not an animal and not another man! She is just what he needs, the perfect companion and compliment.

This suitable pairing of the male and his female definitely included sexual intimacy as well as psychological and emotional aspects, for in the context this is forthrightly stated,

"They shall become one flesh. And the man and the woman were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen.2:24-25).

Sexual intimacy for the purpose of procreation and normal family environment for children is God's original design (Gen. 1:28). In some mystical way, the sexual intimacy of a woman who was taken from the man and given for the man **reunites** two different individuals into "one flesh". Somehow the sexual union of a man and his woman puts the two halves back together again! Proof of this is when their genetic contributions produce children who perfectly reflect their "one flesh" reunion. Thus, sexual differentiability that compliments the other "half" of the male and his female is part of God's design and original purpose.

THE NATURAL ORDER EXCHANGED

The Bible says that abandoning this "natural order" and replacing it with our own schemes leads mankind down into a vortex that spirals first from foolishness, then to idolatry, which then can lead to homosexuality, and finally to inevitable destruction;

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them ... they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honour Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **exchanged** the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four footed animals and crawling creatures" (Romans 1:18-23).

Observe that the first step in the downward spiral is when men refuse to acknowledge their Creator and His in-built order: "They suppress the truth in unrighteousness". The inner voice of reason is deliberately smothered. The result is a dishonest heart that becomes darkened. But proud man thinks he is wise when all it proves is that he is a fool, because he has "exchanged" the glory of the Eternal God for dumb substitutes. But that's not the end of the bad bargain.

Next, God abandons mankind to the "natural" consequences of this wilful exchange,

"Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they **exchanged** the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 1:24-25).

So God says, "if that's what you want, that's what you get!" God gives them over, abandons them, to their desires. As "*The Message*" colloquially puts it, "It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out." Pretty strong words. Many would say these words promote homophobia. For the

² For a fuller discussion of this see John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate*. IVP Academic, 2015 pp 77

moment, we faithfully note what the Scripture is saying. Abandoning God and His “natural order” in creation inevitably leads to “impurity” (*akatharsian*) which is a word generally indicating sexual uncleanness. Such lewdness inevitably leads to “the degrading of their bodies”. Specifically, he mentions the degradation of same-sex unions,

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women **exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural**, and in the same way also the men **abandoned the natural function of the woman** and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (Romans 1:26-27).³

Pay attention to the apostle’s words in verse 27 where he says those who commit same-sex acts have “abandoned the natural function for that which is unnatural”. Men with men and women with women is described as “contrary to nature” (*para physin*), a term also used by secular writers of the times such as Plato, Plutarch, Philo, Josephus and the Stoic philosophers in referring to homosexual acts,

“In Paul’s mind, same-sex intimacy is an especially clear illustration of the idolatrous human impulse to turn away from God’s order and design. Those who suppress the truth about God as revealed in nature suppress the truth about themselves written in nature. Homosexual practice is an example on a horizontal plane of our vertical rebellion against God ... Homosexual behaviour is a sin, not according to who practises it or by what motivation they seek it, but because that act itself, as a truth-suppressing exchange is contrary to God’s good design.”⁴

REVISIONIST OBJECTIONS

Now of course, there is a growing chorus of apologists for same-sex practices who wish to revise this very inconvenient talk. Leaving aside those who make a full-on frontal attack by dismissing Paul’s apostolic credentials, the revisionists use much more subtle forms of dismissal. They argue that Paul is not here talking about those same-sex relationships which are committed and loving. They argue that Paul is talking about pederasty (sexual relations between an adult male and a boy common in the Graeco-Roman society) or about sexual relations between a master and his male slave. In other words, they argue Paul is talking about domination and exploitation in uncommitted same-sex relations. As if to say that world knew nothing about same-sex commitment and love!⁵

The revisionists likewise dismiss the classic OT example of the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah for their notoriety in this regard. “Oh, the sin of Sodom & Gomorrah that God hated was not homosexual practice *per se*”, they assure, “because their sin was that it was perpetrated through violence. They were banging on the door of Lot’s house itching for gang rape. They were breaking the rules of Middle Eastern hospitality. Those gay men were not interested in loving and committed unions. This is not what we are on about. We just want to be recognized by the laws of the land so we can be in committed and caring relationships.”

However, a little careful attention to detail reveals such revision is not faithful to the text. After all, Paul is speaking about men with men and women with women being “consumed with passions” for each other, and “burning in their desire for one another.” Paul is describing women equally *lusting* for each other, and men reciprocally burning with equal inflamed *desire* for each other.

³ The Greek word translated “exchange” (*metallasseo*) is a strong word indicating willful, deliberate transmutation. I have no doubt that some humans are born with homosexual tendencies and attractions. However, here the apostle is speaking about those who go the next step and choose the “gay” lifestyle, wilfully exchanging it for God’s revealed will. The “gay” lifestyle is not determined by genetics, but by choice, according to the Scriptures.

⁴ Kevin Deyoung, *Op Cit* pp 52-53

⁵ We know that 14 of the first 15 Roman Emperors practised homosexuality. For instance, Nero took a young man named Sporus in a full marriage ceremony, then paraded him home in procession to his palace and lived with him as his ‘wife’. After Nero was eliminated, the first thing the next emperor did was to take possession of Sporus for himself. And Emperor Hadrian’s name is forever associated with a Bithynian youth called Antinous, living with him inseparably. After Antinous died Hadrian deified his lover and covered the world with his statues and even named a star after him.

This is not domination or exploitation. The point is solely about gender identity. The point is *consensual same-sex relations*. Paul is speaking about the *mutual* “exchange” between consulting partners of the same sex. Only a fanciful “exchanging” of clear context and language can get around this. Paul states such unnatural affections are “degrading passions” (NASB), “shameful lusts” (NIV) (*eis pathee atimas*, “to passions of dishonour”).

I am sure Paul is working from his Hebrew Bible here. He knows the texts where it is written,

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

“If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination ... (Lev. 20:13).

Paul upholds these Scriptures as having enduring relevance: The gender of those engaged in the sexual activity is important to the “natural order” God has made. The in-built “natural design” of the Creator cannot be flaunted without the perpetrators suffering in their own persons seriously damaging penalties. We read they will “receive in their own persons the due penalty of their error (Rom. 1:27).

Hence, both parties in same-sex activity are equally condemned for flouting the appropriate gender differences God fitted into them by His design. Now of course, the OT recognized that sometimes a woman was forced against her will to “lie with a man”. But in this case the victim of exploitation was treated with understanding and mercy (Deut.22:25-26). The OT does not condone exploitation. (The same goes for slavery, but that’s another story.)

Nor will it do to say, “But didn’t the OT also forbid a husband to lie with his wife when she was menstruating? This proves the OT law should be consigned to irrelevance from a bygone era.” Now, let’s be discerning here. Let’s not confuse things that differ. If a man had sexual relations with his menstruating wife it was a matter of ritual cleanliness. It was not a capital offence. On the other hand, homosexuality in that nation under God was not considered a matter of mere ritual uncleanness. It was called “abominable”, i.e. detestable, wicked and sinful.

“MEN IN MEN”

In describing how exchanging “the natural function” leads men and women into acts that are “unnatural” (*para phusin*, literally “against nature”), Paul uses what some will consider a rather crass expression. Speaking about how men (*arsenes* is the word for males) burned in their passions for other men, Paul describes this state of affairs as literally, “men in men” (*arsenes en arsesin*)!

Let’s not beat around the bush here. This graphically portrays the action of men penetrating men in sexual acts. And it’s in the Bible. Elsewhere in the New Testament Paul uses two different Greek words that further describe his thinking here. He writes to young Timothy about those who are “lawless” and “rebellious” and “ungodly” and “sinners” and “unholy” and “profane”. In his litany of sinful acts condemned by the Law including those who kill their parents, kidnappers and liars, he includes a group he terms as *arsenkoitai*, which many modern translations render as “men who practice homosexuality” (First Timothy 1: 9-10; ESV, NAB, NIV, NLT).

Greek-English Lexicons define *arsenkoitees* (the singular) as “a male engaging in same-gender sexual activity, a sodomite, a male who lies with another male.” Many sources include under the definition a “pederast”, which is a man who assumes the dominant role in the homosexual activity.⁶ Of course, our revisionist friends argue that Paul is not here forbidding committed consensual same-sex relationships. They argue it may just be talking about the so-called “one night stand” or a form of violent exploitation.

Whilst we don’t have any surviving examples of this uniquely Pauline description from that world, we do know the word itself is a compound of two words, *arseen* (man) and *koitee* (bed, sexual intercourse; the word from which our old fashioned English word “coitus” is derived). Literally the word translates as “bedders of men”. It is

⁶ *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, under *arseen* and *arsenkoitees*.

definitely referring to men who go to bed with other men. It is a word that summarises perfectly the verses from Leviticus about “a man lying with a male as with a woman” (Lev. 20:13). Deyoung expresses it perfectly,

“You can see ... how Paul’s use of *arsenokoitai* is almost certainly taken from the Holiness Code of Leviticus. It’s clear from 1 Timothy 1:9-10 that Paul, in speaking of *arsenokoitai*, was thinking broadly about the sins forbidden by the Decalogue: “those who strike their fathers and mothers” (fifth commandment), “murderers” (sixth commandment), “the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality” (seventh commandment), “enslavers” (eighth commandment), “liars, perjurers” (ninth commandment). No Jew thought the Ten Commandments allowed for same-sex sexual intimacy, so no one would have been surprised to see homosexual behaviour --- or adultery or fornication or prostitution or incest or bestiality or any other sexual activity outside of marriage --- thrown into a vice list by the Apostle Paul.”⁷

No, our revisionist friends cannot say Paul was only forbidding exploitative forms of homosexual practice. I have yet to hear them argue that when Paul forbade adultery or incest or fornication he was only forbidding exploitative adultery, abusive incest or violent immorality! Jesus, Paul, and the entire NT uphold the moral principles established by God in the beginning and recorded in the Torah.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul uses two words when referring to same-sex sins that disqualify one from entering the Kingdom of God,

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (*malakoi*), nor homosexuals (*arsenokoitai*) ... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6: 9-10).

The adjective *malakos* is defined as meaning “soft” or “gentle”. It’s used of Jesus’ question concerning John the Baptist, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? ... A man dressed in fine clothes (literally, “in soft things”? No, those who wear fine clothes (literally, “soft things”) are in kings’ palaces” (Matt. 11:7b-8; Luke 7:25 has literally “in soft garments” and “in splendid clothing”). The Greek Lexicons define *malakos* (the singular of *malakoi*) as, “yielding to touch” and “being passive in a same-sex relationship.” The word can mean soft or effeminate, as in men who are penetrated (as a female would be) by another man.⁸

When it comes to Paul’s use of this word here in I Corinthians 6: 10 in conjunction with the word *arsenokoitai* the standard dictionaries and lexicons explain, “that the words refer respectively ‘to the passive and active participants in homosexual acts.’”^{9 10}

We may be quite certain then, that Paul is warning that both the effeminate (passive) partner and the active partner in same-sex relationships will not enter the Kingdom of God. Definitely not designed to make one popular in today’s climate! But I am sure that if Paul were here today he would repeat his warning, “Don’t be deceived about this!” Thankfully Paul does not leave it there. He rejoices in the power of the gospel of Christ to redeem and to rescue those who want to escape this lifestyle and go “straight”,

“And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11).

Paul has stated the fundamental problem with mankind is that he has “exchanged” the truth and the glory of God’s intended order in creation for that which degrades humanity. We must include his message of hope in the

⁷ Op Cit p 64

⁸ See possibly the most thorough discussion of this subject in Robert A.J. Gagnon’s, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, 2001, pp 322

⁹ *The New Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* under *malakos*. This source also notes that the NIV 2011 renders both words together with the phrase “men who have sex with men,” with a note explaining that the words refer respectively “to the passive and active participants in homosexual acts.”

¹⁰ Winter, Bruce W., *After Paul Left Corinth*, Eerdmans, pp 118-119 also confirms this understanding.

gospel where repentance means the sinner may “exchange” his or her rebellion for a new and washed-clean life in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has the power to make the crooked straight!

HOW MY GAY FRIEND WAS CONVERTED

As I said earlier, this is not just an academic exercise for me. This question of homosexuality and same-sex marriage has deeply affected me and personally exercised my mind greatly. I wish to be both faithful to God’s word and also thoughtful and compassionate towards my gay friends and acquaintances. So I close with a very touching and personal story. I could give a number of stories from my gay and lesbian friends. But this one is powerfully pertinent to this article.

To protect my friend’s anonymity, I will call him Barry. I shall never forget the deep emotion and even hesitation that Barry displayed as he told me he was “coming out of the closet”. He was about to tell the world he was gay. It was particularly a hard-fought decision for him because Barry had grown up in a very loving Christian home. He knew this announcement would devastate his parents, not to mention his wider circle of church friends and work mates.

But Barry could deny his inner feelings for other men no more. He had to be true to his inner self. To cut this part of the story short, over the next few years Barry committed himself to a “loving same-sex partner”. When he and his partner visited his parents’ home to stay for a weekend, his mum and dad prepared two separate beds in two separate rooms. This was their way, they thought, of accepting both men into their home, but at the same time also silently protesting. This arrangement culminated in a very unpleasant confrontation when Barry told his folks that he would never come back to their house because in rejecting his lover they were rejecting him. You can imagine how this was like a dagger to his parents’ hearts.

After some time, Barry received a phone call from his dad inviting him to please come home anytime and that he was welcome to bring his partner and that they wanted to start afresh. Barry eventually agreed. When he and his same-sex partner turned up, the parents hugged Barry and his partner and invited them into the house. Dad & mum took their bags and ushered them into one bedroom where one queen size bed had been made. “This is your bedroom” they said to both men.

Barry wept. His partner wept. Dad wept. Mum wept. Barry knew this was unconditional love his parents were expressing. He knew they did not endorse or like this arrangement. But he knew they were saying, we love you and accept you for who you are. It’s not our place to judge you. God can help us work it out. He is the Judge, not us.

To cut a long story short again, after more years, Barry could no longer fight the conviction that he was living in sin. Everytime he and his lover visited his mum and dad inwardly he felt their pain, even though they showed nothing but unconditional acceptance. Barry became very unhappy, inwardly torn. He recognized the voice of God in his conscience. Finally, and although it broke his heart, he broke up with his long-term boyfriend and sexual lover.

I shall never forget the day Barry confided in me that he was still a gay man, still attracted to men, but had put that lifestyle choice behind him in order to please God. He was denying himself and taking up the cross. He was now again filled with the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit knowing God had forgiven him and was giving him the strength to deny his own will and be true to God’s word.

Barry is a wonderful story of God’s redeeming love, especially as it was revealed through his parents who never gave up on him, loved him no holds barred, and let God be God. One of the things Barry knew was that during those years of estrangement his dad and mum prayed for him and his partner every single day.

Barry now agrees that homosexual behaviour is sinful. He is still attracted to men. But his eyes are on Jesus. With Paul he would say that homosexuality violates the Divine design for men and women in creation. He agrees that even if homosexuals believe they are being true to their own inner feelings and identity, they have suppressed God’s truth, they have “exchanged” the proper fittedness and suitability of male-female relationships for those that are contrary to the natural order. Barry testifies that all forms of homoeroticism are the unnatural

acts of people who have turned away from God. Barry agrees that homosexual practice is a lifestyle choice, not one his genes decide.

SUGGESTION

The best form of love we can give to our gay and lesbian friends is not to acquiesce to their demands for 'marriage equality'. We must still love and respect them as beautiful people in the image of God. All of us, marred as we are by our own sinful choices, need a lot of TLC. But above all, we need to turn to God, turn from our sinful choices, and go "straight" for God who created us in His likeness. May we each one wash ourselves, follow Jesus, and be clean because God's righteous Kingdom is coming.

As it currently stands, the State does not control whether a person can live a gay life. The State does not any longer criminalise same-sex behaviours. The State allows for freedom of sexual orientation. The State does not currently prohibit those who "love each other" from making binding commitments to each other. But the question is whether we are going to allow the State to re-define what "marriage" is.

By definition, "marriage" will exclude certain types of relationships and legal unions anyway. The Government denies legal status to "threesomes". The State denies marriage licences to seven year olds. The Law does not tell us we cannot live with our mum or our dad, our brother or our sister, or our cousin or our uncle and aunty or a dozen of our university friends. We can even live with our budgie if we wish! But no matter how you may love these and feel about them all, the State defines none of these relationships as "marriage". Thankfully in the West, you are still free to enjoy all of them or none of them.

MARRIAGE BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN THE MODEL FOR GOD'S REDEMPTIVE FUTURE

The Bible says marriage between a man and a woman is not only reflective of God's original "natural order" for our blessing in society. The Bible also says this pairing is prophetic, for God's redemptive future in the coming Kingdom Age will be based on His original complementary pattern of the two 'halves'. Deyoung explains this,

"Think about the complementary nature of creation itself. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). And not only that, but within this cosmic pairing, we find other 'couples': the sun and the moon, morning and evening, day and night, the sea and the dry land, plants and animals, and finally, at the apex of the creation, the man and his wife. In every pairing, each part belongs with the other but neither is interchangeable."¹¹

Deyoung is saying that just as heaven and earth were created to be together, so too marriage between a man and a woman is the fitting symbol of two differentiated entities uniquely fitted for one another. In the end, heaven and earth are going to be joined in one mighty new society of harmony and fellowship with God and each other (Rev. 21-22). The climaxing hope we look forward to is to be together at "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19).

"Marriage was created as a picture of the fittedness of heaven and earth, or as Ephesians 5 puts it, of Christ and the church (vv.31-31) ... Marriage, by its very nature, requires complementarity. The mystical union of Christ and the church --- each 'part' belonging to the other but neither interchangeable --- cannot be pictured in marital union without the differentiation of male and female. If God wanted us to conclude that men and women were interchangeable in the marriage relationship, he not only gave us the wrong creation narrative; he gave us the wrong *metanarrative*."¹²

This is simply to say that homosexuality does not fit the natural created order from the beginning, nor does it fit the end purpose of where God's redemptive story is heading. Only traditional marriage fits both realities. Indeed, homosexual acts and lifestyle are expressions of idolatry which excludes one from the Kingdom!

CONCLUSION

¹¹ Deyoung, Op. Cit, p32

¹² Ibid, p32, (*italics original*).

Yes, our societies are busily redefining marriage. My appeal is, please, let us not sin against God by redefining His definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman for life. If secular society insists on legal recognition for "same-sex couples", then why not agree to "civil unions" for gay couples? That way we can give legal security to those committed to long-term same-sex relationships but still honour the sanctity of traditional marriage.

We are losing sight of, or have already lost sight of, how the Creator made us in the beginning. Worse, we are in danger of losing sight of where God wants to lead us into His New Age. Like anything, when the Maker's instructions are discarded, the machine eventually breaks down and grinds to a halt. Thankfully, the good news is that Jesus Christ is still God's power to make new and straight again. "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

I will make a simple prediction based on what I know of the God of the Bible: Once society abandons God's way, and celebrates redefining "marriage", all of Fred Flintstone's community in Bedrock will be disturbed. Letting the sabre tooth tiger back in the house is not a good idea! Legalising same-sex marriage will mean anything but a gay old time.