

# Defining Marriage according to the scriptures (Full Version)

AA March 2021

The nature and definition of marriage as given by God, revealed in scripture

## CONTENTS

### Introduction

1. Video link
2. Why do we as a local church need to formally address the question of marriage?
3. In what ways do churches subtly drift away from the authority of the scriptures over this matter?
4. THEOLOGY - Understanding the big picture: Marriage as a primary biblical theme and sacred portrait of God, and protecting prohibitions.
5. THEOLOGY - Jesus Christs' view on marriage
6. What does the rest of the bible actually say about homosexual practice? And are these texts genuinely clear? Can they be interpreted in other, more accommodating ways?
7. Additional, often raised questions
8. Where does LLF fit in?
9. Conclusion - Arriving at theological clarity
10. If we decide to remain orthodox on our doctrinal beliefs about marriage, then how might we properly express our biblically grounded pastoral care for those who may well be same-sex attracted?

Dear members of St. John's Church,  
This document will help you examine scripture on the subject of marriage.

To help you fully consider this extremely important and currently contentious matter, I will lay out a range of key points which address the issue with different questions and answers.

**As this document is LONG, I recommend you read each section in isolation, not all at once, and take your time. Don't hurry.**

**1. First watch this video from CEEC: <https://youtu.be/VI8bb65vOiE>, to get a flavour of the subject from the Church of England Evangelical Council (32 minutes long).**

**2. Why do we as a local church need to address the question of marriage?**

- The topic of marriage, or more specifically same-sex marriage, has been a hotly debated key theme for several years within the Church of England. Since UK society and Government made changes in its position on this matter, this has inevitably raised questions and created a growing pressure in the State church. Society in general (according to the media) presently seems to regard the matter as a settled human right. Other denominations (like the Methodist Church) have already moved towards the blessing of same-sex unions. Yet in the wake of this specific issue, other fundamental belief issues have also been affected. As a result, the church is profoundly divided over this subject. The recent 'Living in love and faith' CofE publication is another example of the church wrestling with this subject.
- To discuss and decide on such a matter, some Christian people and groups have begun to even change their views on the authority of scripture or other core beliefs. There are some (who wish to endorse same-sex unions) who have attempted to hold to a belief in the bible as the authoritative word of God, arguing that it is indeed possible to legitimately interpret scriptures in favour of this new position on sexuality and marriage. Others have more straightforwardly said that scripture is no longer the final authority on such matters, regarding other sources as equal to or higher than scripture.

- So we find that the issue of defining marriage has become not only important in its own right, but also now functions as a touch-paper for extremely fundamental matters of Christian belief. How we regard marriage may lead individuals and churches in important directions that were not originally anticipated. Though we may wish that it were possible to rope off the subject as something separate, our views on marriage, sexuality and sex profoundly affect the very heart of what we believe as Christians, including core beliefs about the gospel and God himself.
- If it could be persuasively shown that same-sex marriage is simply a legitimate matter of differing interpretation, then we would all be able to hold true to core beliefs without fear of significant change. However, if it can't be done, without violating our core understandings of scripture and the gospel itself, then having a position on marriage is a vital expression of what we as a local church believe to be primary and true. Hence the need for clarifying our beliefs.
- Of course there are other important matters which may merit attention, but nothing matches the significance of sex and sexuality at this time, in terms of its threat to church teaching. When threats arise, statements and creeds are written. Without a doubt we are living in a sexually broken era of human history. It requires no detailed explanation to show how far our surrounding culture has fallen in terms of sexual liberty. But the responsibility of the church is not to wag a finger at society, we are to first teach and establish godly behaviours within the people of God. Sadly, there has been a tangible theological drift in many denominations, expressing views about sex and marriage which bear little resemblance to what scripture describes. It is clear that societal pressures have begun to shape the ways of the church, leading to many vulnerable members being influenced more by media and non-Christians than by the bible. There are examples of younger Christians, or immature Christians sleeping with people outside of marriage. The church has been counter-cultural since the beginning, resisting external philosophies even when it was costly to do so. Yet parts of the wider church today are being persuaded to go along with secular views of sexual behaviour, distancing themselves from the very teachings and gospel which save us. This must be addressed.
- At such a time as this we need to be much clearer on what the bible actually teaches on marriage and sex, so that the saving power of God's word can guard us and keep us true. And so that we can be a light to those who genuinely seek the truth. This is also a vital moment to contribute to the current discussion on sexuality within our own denomination. Very important matters are being explored, which could lead to dramatic changes. Most Christians and churches tend towards silence out of fear of conflict. This is not a good reason to be quiet about such an important matter.

So this document will attempt to lay out **my** position on marriage, giving biblical reasons for such a view. It will also point to how we can properly interpret texts, especially texts which refer to sex outside of biblical marriage.

### **3. In what ways do churches subtly drift away from the authority of the scriptures over this matter? (drawn from Don Carson and Mike Ovey)**

Ahead of looking at the theology around the subject of marriage, we first need to be aware of the ways in which contentious subjects are sometimes avoided or deflected. This list can help us to honestly review our own approach and attitude to this subject.

- **Selective silence:** Some Christians might be tempted to avoid disputed topics because we fear they will divide our churches. Some of us de-emphasise parts of the bible that we don't want to talk about. We fear ramifications from friends, family and wider society. Consequently, Christians in our churches can be gradually led by the wider culture's values, because the fearful church is silent and isn't transparently addressing these matters.
- **Heart-embarrassment before the text:** Sometimes Christians apologise for parts of the bible they personally don't like, distancing themselves from what God has said, and implicitly undermining the authority of what the bible teaches. This inevitably colours how our hearers regard the bible.
- **Legitimising alternative positions that the bible condemns:** In an attempt to diffuse the topic in hand, some Christians develop a pattern of comparing 'multiple views' - regardless of

the strength or weakness of the different views. This can create the impression that all views are equal, when in fact they often aren't. Integrity and honesty is much needed when reviewing newly proposed views.

- **'The art of imperious ignorance'**: After listening to two sides of a debate, some may publicly conclude that we simply can't know what God has to say on a given subject. This imposed pronouncement attempts to silence the possibility of any conclusion, when in fact more rigorous study is needed - to work towards a true and clear answer. We must resist such pronouncements.
- **Not enough reading to properly understand the matter**: Some may balk at the work involved in properly researching subjects from multiple sources. If the matter is important (and this subject is very important), it requires of us to not over-simplify for convenience. If God's word is at stake, hard and honest work must be done, regardless of consequence.
- **Giving too much weight to contemporary philosophies**: Sometimes, out of a desire to be 'relevant', we unthinkingly lean too much into the existing mindset of society, without properly critiquing it against scripture. We can end up 'using' the bible to help us engage with the present views of society, instead of revering scripture as Almighty God's self-disclosure to the world. We give current perspectives too high a status, compared to holy scripture.
- **Forgetting humility before God's Word**: Isaiah 66:2b says, "These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word." - In our dealings with surrounding views and opinions, we can forget how much higher the word of God is. Those who are humble (and tremble) before God and his word will be the ones who can discern correctly, without being confused or deceived.

It is worth honestly thinking and praying about this list, to see if you are prone to any of the above.

#### 4. THEOLOGY - Understanding the big picture: Marriage as a primary biblical theme and sacred portrait of God, and protecting prohibitions.

##### IN THE BEGINNING

The bible begins and ends with marriage as a major theme. Genesis 1 describes the creation of the Universe, and explicitly uses repeating *complementary pairings* to illustrate the process. Light and darkness, sky and earth, seas and dry land, vegetation on the earth, night and day, sea creatures and seas, land animals on land. Finally, as an obvious poetic crescendo, God makes two human beings. The bible explicitly describes humans as his image-bearers: Male and Female. These two complementary creatures are the pinnacle of God's creation- specifically designed to represent God as a pair. As with the whole 'complementary' creation narrative, the male and female are designed with each other in mind. By the time the humans are made, creation is now, not merely 'good', it is 'very good'.

The Genesis account also says, 'Let US make mankind in OUR image" (Gen.1:26). The plurality of the Godhead naturally makes a plural representation of themselves. There is clearly self-portraiture intended, thus making the union of a man and a woman an especially sacred arrangement. Male and female are similar (both image bearers), but different to each other. Marriage is a beautiful picture of God.

The text notes God's care for Adam in Gen.2:18 - where he looks to find a *suitable* helper for him. The term 'kenegdo' is unusual - Ian Paul defines it as meaning 'equal but opposite' - like the far bank of a river. In Genesis 2 the man rejoices over the gift of his wife (and this scene is like a marriage ceremony). "The 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.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (v 23-24). This inauguration of two (man and woman) becoming one is built into the created order, for all time. In the same way that the complementary pairings of the whole Universe continue to the end of the Age, (sea creatures in the sea, night and day etc.), so a man and woman are a complementary pairing, equal but opposite, similar yet different, designed to always be a living icon of God, the most clear imaging of God in the world. Icons of God are holy.

## AT THE END

Revelation completes the scriptural story, and towards the end of the book (19-21) the author introduces the Church to the reader as a bride, made ready for the Lamb; Jesus Christ. A wedding is announced (Rev.19:7) after Babylon's final destruction, and the wedding dress is 'the fine linen' - an equivalent to the good deeds of the church. An angel speaks: 'Blessed are those who are invited to this wedding supper of the Lamb'. The wedding feast happens when the New Heavens and New Earth are prepared - as a dwelling place for this 'couple'. The bride is beautifully dressed for her husband (Rev. 21:2). In fact the bride is called 'The Holy City', radiant and pure for her spouse. This celebration when God's people are finally and fully united with their Saviour is explicitly described using marriage language.

Of course, this theme has already been running from beginning to end throughout the whole of the scriptures. God was portrayed throughout the OT as a husband to Israel (Ezek.16:8-21, Jer. 2:2, Jer.3:1-14, Hos.1:2, Hos.2:2-7, Is.54:5) and in the NT, Jesus is described as the Bridegroom (John 3:29, Matt.9:15, Luke 5:35). In Ephesians 5, Paul redefines human marriages in the new light of Jesus being the ultimate husband:

*'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.*"

Paul describes this as a 'profound mystery'. Not a hidden mystery, but a revealed truth so important that (to our surprise and delight) all marriages have implicitly been pointing to it since the dawn of time. We need to see that God has **always** wanted to be 'married' to humanity. The entire story of God's saving grace was powered by this desire in the Almighty; to be fully united with human beings. Only the metaphor of marriage captures the strength, beauty and importance of this determination in God. Marriage, as originally designed between a man and a woman, is a wonderfully vivid self-portrait of God's love for us. All Christian marriages portray Christ's covenant with the church.

Consequently, marriage is a **primary ordinance**: given by God, not constructed by mankind. As night compliments day continuously, as land is paired with the sea continuously, marriage is made and designed precisely by God. Marriage as a key metaphor features heavily throughout the whole bible. It is not merely a formal, social human arrangement. It is also 'holy', because it actually represents God in himself (plural persons in one) and because it defines God's committed, covenant relationship with his believing followers. It is always and only described in scripture as a complimentary pairing between man and a woman, equal but opposite, similar but different, according to God's creation.

Glynn Harrison (Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, University of Bristol UK) has written a well-regarded article, celebrating the biblical vision of marriage: [http://www.eggsofe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/a\\_better\\_story\\_-\\_gh.pdf](http://www.eggsofe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/a_better_story_-_gh.pdf)

## PROTECTING MARRIAGE (OT)

Throughout the OT there are many clear commands regarding relationships. Beginning with The Decalogue, (Ex.20:14), adultery is expressly forbidden within God's people.

Along with this primary Mosaic command came a slew of detailed prohibitions about forbidden sexual relationships: Leviticus 18 lists a number of couplings which are outlawed: (1) parent and child, (2) stepparent and stepchild, (3) full siblings, (4) half-siblings, (5) grandparent and grandchild, (6) uncle and niece, or aunt and nephew, (7) father-in-law and daughter-in-law, and (8) brother-in-law and sister-in-law. Also, a man was forbidden to marry a woman as well as her daughter or granddaughter. God also now prohibited a man from taking his wife's sister as a second wife while his wife was alive; such a marriage would likely ruin the relationship between the sisters and produce endless rivalry and strife within the family. In addition to these, bestiality is

banned, along with homosexual acts. In Leviticus 20, punishments for all such actions were listed, to deter the people from such activity, and also to keep the nation pure. Why give such detailed lists with sanctions? Quite straightforwardly to guard and protect marriage. Marriage was so important to God that these additional commands were to act as a wall of protection around the sacred purpose and image of marriage as described in the beginning.

Additionally, the later prophets were also blistering in their critique of Israel's rebellions against God, often calling the nation 'adulterous'. They called Israel back to being faithful to Almighty God, warning of trouble and suffering if they continued to be unfaithful to his covenant and commands. The 'troubled marriage' metaphor was repeatedly used as a primary picture of Israel and their God.

## MULTIPLE SEXUAL IMMORALITY REFERENCES IN THE NT

When we ask the question about the relevance and importance of marriage (compared to other worthy matters) it is interesting to note that sexual immorality is mentioned in 11 separate NT books. 1 Corinthians has six references alone. Jesus is quoted four times referring to sexual immorality. The term is a catch-all phrase which Jewish authors used as short-hand to mean any sexual activity outside of marriage. 'Porneia' is the Greek term used, occurring 25 times in the NT. For the authors to return again and again to this topic naturally shows this issue to be a significant problem that needed to be addressed by both Jews and Gentiles. It is often found in 'vice lists' alongside other sinful behaviours like greed or idolatry. Like soldiers on duty, protecting the church from what would harm the whole body, these authors lifted up the significance of marriage by condemning and speaking against sexual impurity.

So, in line with scripture, today we must also address marriage and threats to marriage, as a normal, repeating, teaching responsibility, whether we are living in a context where marriage and sex is properly honoured within our culture or not.

## 5. THEOLOGY - Jesus Christs' view on marriage

There is a common misconception regarding what Jesus believed about matters of sexuality. The presumption is that, because Jesus didn't explicitly name homosexuality in his teaching, we can possibly presume that he was either ambivalent about such things or even pro same-sex relationships. This view of course has a flawed logic. Jesus never explicitly mentioned incest either - and I know of no Christian who thinks that Jesus was neutral or pro regarding incest.

What we can definitely be sure of is Christ's views on marriage and his attitude to adultery. (I need to note the work of Robert Gagnon regarding this whole area of study: ( see his excellent video here: [vimeo.com/71773619](https://www.vimeo.com/71773619)). Jesus speaks about marriage in various places; Matt.5:31-32, Luke 16:18, and Mark 10:1-11. Jesus was actually more strict than the Pharisees and even the ascetic Essenes in regard to his view on marriage. His teaching closed existing loopholes requiring lifelong commitment, except for specific clauses. What is important to note is that Jesus answered marriage questions posed by the religious leaders, by referring back to the Creation narrative - clearly using Genesis 1 & 2 as his basis for the institution of marriage. In other words he appealed to how God originally made things as the measure of what is right and good. Jesus explicitly described marriage as God's plan for a man and a woman. Likewise in the sermon on the mount, in Matt.5:27-28, he went even further by identifying adultery of the heart: raising the requirements of faithfulness beyond outward words and actions. From these examples it becomes obvious that Jesus had the highest possible standards when it comes to marriage, and we know from Matt. 5:29-30, that this territory was so serious in his thinking that, to get it wrong risked hell.

Jesus referred to sexual immorality in Matt.15:19 and Mark 7:21 (and twice when teaching about marriage). It says, "He went on: 'What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.'" Jesus regarded sexual immorality as a clear evil. But what would Jesus mean by the term? We must always remember his heritage: he was a Jew totally committed to the inherited written word of God, and therefore we can confidently say that Jesus the Jew would define sexual immorality in the same way as all teachers within Israel. The most obvious

reference point for him would be the Levitical prohibitions (cited earlier). Matt.5:17-18 agrees with this - “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. “ It is clear that Jesus fulfilled the sacrificial laws, but he never cancelled any moral laws. So Jesus condemned sex outside marriage in accordance with every Levitical prohibition.

When Jesus was quizzed on divorce in Matt. 19:1-12, Jesus offered two options for people; lifelong marriage between a male and a female (v4), or singleness for the sake of the Kingdom (v11), both of which are challenging. No other options were named by him. The disciples had declared that lifelong marriage sounded hard, perhaps (as single men?) thinking that singleness sounded easier - but Jesus says that not everyone can bear the idea of singleness, and so some should marry. Jesus himself as a single man exemplified the status of an abundantly full single life, committed to God’s Kingdom.

We may say that he welcomed sinners. Without a doubt he did, but he never condoned sin. In fact, his standards were higher than any peer of his day. It is clear that Jesus’ trajectory on sexual morality was towards greater strictness, and certainly not towards more sexual liberty.

Therefore it is absurd to think that Jesus would ever be pro same-sex marriage. All the existing evidence points away from this.

**These theological matters; the big picture of marriage in the bible, prohibitions, and Jesus’ view of marriage, show that the matter is much deeper than differing interpretations of a few tricky verses. There is a big biblical narrative with rich meaning which must be constantly referred back to - otherwise we may end up focusing on details only, instead of harmonising individual texts with the bible’s view as a whole.**

**6. What does the rest of the bible actually say about homosexual practice? And are these texts genuinely clear? Can they be interpreted in other, more accommodating ways?**

## **SPECIFIC BIBLE TEXTS**

Can I refer you to Ian Paul’s Grove booklet, “Same Sex Unions” (<https://grovebooks.co.uk/products/b-71-same-sex-unions-the-key-biblical-texts>)

- this booklet gives a clear treatment of the specific texts commonly referred to when learning about this subject:

Gen 19:1-11  
Judg 19:22-29  
Lev 18:22 and 20:13  
Rom 1:18-32  
1 Cor 6:9  
1 Tim.1: 9-10

Ian Paul also gives attention to the ‘Revisionist’ interpretations (those who wish to legitimise same sex unions). This will help you see how the dialogue between Revisionists and traditional evangelicals is being framed. The booklet will give you a way into the questions around interpretation.

**For those who wish to go deeper** - 1 Cor. 9:9 Word study: **arsenokoitai** - see these studies. [https://www.academia.edu/4984160/Who\\_are\\_the\\_Arsenokoitai\\_in\\_1\\_Co\\_6\\_9](https://www.academia.edu/4984160/Who_are_the_Arsenokoitai_in_1_Co_6_9), <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-arsenokoitai-mean/>, <https://www.equip.org/article/is-arsenokoitai-really-that-mysterious/>, <https://tms.edu/m/tmsj3h.pdf>

COMMENTS ON PASSAGES THAT REFER TO HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY

- The most obvious reason why there are so few explicit references to homosexual activity in scripture is that the subject was widely regarded as a settled matter. Writers would write/say much more about disputed issues (as Jesus did regarding 'easy divorce'), but this particular behaviour was straightforwardly regarded by all bible authors as sinful, so therefore less was needed to be said.
- It is also worth underlining that every reference speaks with the same view. The perspective of holy scripture on homosexual acts is univocal. Unlike matters around women's ministry; where some texts may suggest different possible perspectives, this activity (according to every relevant text) sits squarely in the category of sexual immorality. This common view makes it much harder to dispute the reasoning or the meaning of each passage, as one text reinforces the other.
- Paul's referencing of homosexual and lesbian behaviour in Romans 1:18-32 is clearly a description of consensual sex, which undermines any suggestion that he was talking about culturally specific forms of same-sex behaviour. Richard Hays says, "*The aim of Romans 1 is not to teach a code of sexual ethics; nor is the passage a warning of God's judgement against those who are guilty of particular sins. Rather, Paul is offering a diagnosis of the disordered human condition: he adduces the fact of the widespread homosexual behaviour as evidence that human beings are indeed in rebellion against their creator...Homosexual activity, then, is not a provocation of 'the wrath of God' (Rom. 1:18); rather it is a consequence of God's decision to 'give up' rebellious creatures to follow their own futile thinking and desires.*" There is no way of interpreting Romans 1:18-32 to show that homosexual behaviour is good. It is a sign of human rebellion. As marriage is so sacred; the icon of a man and woman, united as image-bearers of God himself, homosexual sex is plainly a contrasting sign of idolatry, distorting the original image.
- So it is straightforward to conclude that the bible is clear and plain in its condemnation of homosexual acts. (Some theologians who take a more liberal view on homosexuality freely acknowledge this fact: e.g. "*Where the bible mentions homosexual behaviour at all, it clearly condemns it. I freely grant that. The issue is precisely whether that biblical judgement is correct.*" - Walter Wink 1996.) Though a few have attempted to interpret these passages with alternative explanations (see below for **book reviews**), the vast majority of well-respected scholars agree that the passages are unequivocal.
- To clarify, scripture does not speak about 'orientation', it only talks about sexual behaviour and practice. The orientation issue can be taken up in the later section on pastoral questions.
- So we can confidently conclude that scripture speaks clearly and with one voice about homosexual activity. It is not what God intended.

## 7. Additional, often raised questions

Over the last eight years or so (including five on General Synod), I have come across a range of repeating questions around the subject of marriage and homosexuality. Here I will refer you to articles found on the EGGs website (Evangelical Group at General Synod) - I'm pleased to be part of this honest and faithful group, which carefully wrestles with and addresses the key aspects associated with this topic. There are also additional articles included from elsewhere.

Q: Is human sexuality really a 'first order issue'? Can't we just agree to disagree?

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[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/34.\\_should\\_we\\_agree\\_to\\_disagree\\_on\\_sexuality.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/34._should_we_agree_to_disagree_on_sexuality.pdf)

Q: I don't understand the difference between 'Revisionist' views and more orthodox views.

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Q: Why are Christians so negative about sex and sexuality?

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Q: Do we know more about sexuality now than in bible times? To what extent does recent science speak more clearly about sexuality?

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[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/21\\_are\\_people\\_born\\_gay.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/21_are_people_born_gay.pdf)

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/22\\_can\\_sexuality\\_change.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/22_can_sexuality_change.pdf)

<https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/what-does-science-say-about-sexuality/>

<https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/preface-sexuality-and-gender>

Q: Did the bible authors simply not understand or have no experience of what we might call same-sex relationships?

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[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/19\\_did\\_the\\_new\\_testament\\_including\\_pul\\_know\\_of\\_loving\\_stable\\_faithful\\_same\\_sex.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/19_did_the_new_testament_including_pul_know_of_loving_stable_faithful_same_sex.pdf)

Q: If the church has changed its mind about slavery and women's ministry, then are homosexual relationships in the same category?

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Q: Are we being too firm on certain texts, but being lax on others to suit ourselves?

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[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/12\\_are\\_evangelicals\\_unreasonably\\_subjective\\_in\\_their\\_selection\\_of\\_the\\_scriptures\\_they\\_keep\\_and\\_those\\_they\\_reject.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/12_are_evangelicals_unreasonably_subjective_in_their_selection_of_the_scriptures_they_keep_and_those_they_reject.pdf)

Q: Aren't we building this case about homosexuality on a tiny number of bible references?

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/10\\_is\\_the\\_traditional\\_position\\_built\\_on\\_a\\_small\\_number\\_of\\_bible\\_verses.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/10_is_the_traditional_position_built_on_a_small_number_of_bible_verses.pdf)

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/10\\_is\\_the\\_traditional\\_position\\_built\\_on\\_a\\_small\\_number\\_of\\_bible\\_verses.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/10_is_the_traditional_position_built_on_a_small_number_of_bible_verses.pdf)

Q: Doesn't our sexuality define who we are (and therefore we are wrongly excluding gay people)?

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/4\\_accepting\\_our\\_sexual\\_orientation\\_without\\_letting\\_it\\_define\\_us.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/4_accepting_our_sexual_orientation_without_letting_it_define_us.pdf)

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/4\\_accepting\\_our\\_sexual\\_orientation\\_without\\_letting\\_it\\_define\\_us.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/4_accepting_our_sexual_orientation_without_letting_it_define_us.pdf)

Q: Might there be a reason why we need to be counter-cultural on this matter?

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/9\\_counter-cultural\\_sexual\\_ethics.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/9_counter-cultural_sexual_ethics.pdf)

Q: What might be the consequences of redefining marriage?

<https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/redefining-marriage-2ndEd.pdf>

Q: But won't such a view undermine our missional effectiveness?

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/33\\_is\\_traditional\\_christian\\_teaching\\_about\\_sex\\_a\\_problem\\_for\\_mission.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/33_is_traditional_christian_teaching_about_sex_a_problem_for_mission.pdf)

[http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/33\\_is\\_traditional\\_christian\\_teaching\\_about\\_sex\\_a\\_problem\\_for\\_mission.pdf](http://www.eggscfe.org.uk/uploads/5/5/6/3/5563632/33_is_traditional_christian_teaching_about_sex_a_problem_for_mission.pdf)

Q: What about theologians who favour a more liberal interpretation?

**James Brownson** on Romans 1:24-27

Part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKOTNneoOpU> (34 mins)

Part 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kONByDAXko&t=1839s> (35 mins)



### **Andrew Goddard's response**

SHORT VERSION <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0953946814555320a>  
(FULL VERSION <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c9e3e63e8ba4496c1df9458/t/5da98570753bfd2b267df152/1571390840507/KLICE+Paper+-+AGoddard+review+of+Brownson+-+Bible%2C+Gender%2C+Sexuality.pdf>)

Brownson is a key source for the more popular books of Matthew Vine: "God and the Gay Christian" [2014]. Matthew Vine (US) and Steve Chalke (UK) have been prominent voices in a more popular sense than Brownson himself.

Here is a debate between **Steve Chalke** and Andrew Wilson on the question "Does scripture forbid gay relationships?"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc5NWoyhn1M> (28 mins)

**Some book reviews:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0953946814555320a>, <https://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/articles/review-of-more-perfect-union-understanding-same-sex-marriage-by-bishop-alan-wilson/>

## **7. So where does LLF fit in? (Living in Love and Faith)**

As most will know, the House of Bishops commissioned a teaching document (and other resources) - recently published (Nov 2020). It is too early for me to comment in detail, as there has not been enough time. But I can give you two points of view here (from people I respect), to give you at least an overview.

Ian Paul: <https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/how-should-we-engage-with-living-in-love-and-faith/>

Andrew Goddard: <https://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/articles/llf-for-dummies-10-faqs-about-the-church-of-englands-new-teaching-and-learning-resources-on-identity-sexuality-relationships-and-marriage/>

Our church may well explore LLF materials at some point. Engagement includes good pastoral principles and this is a must for all of us. It is always good to learn to relate well with people of differing views.

An obvious problem of LLF is its multiple views - which can naturally make everything seem fuzzy, and not ever clear. A good place to start may be pages 294-302 in the pdf (<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/LLF%20Web%20Version%20Full%20Final.pdf>): about how we see the bible.

I believe that the bible is in fact genuinely much clearer than the Revisionists and Liberals suggest - and as shown in the CEEC video, many other evangelicals think the same. The differences are not mostly a matter of interpretation. Many (if not all) who want to change the definition of marriage simply disagree with what scripture teaches.

## **8. CONCLUSION: ARRIVING AT THEOLOGICAL CLARITY**

After long study and sincere engagement with people of various views over the last 8 years, I am already very persuaded of what I believe theologically. The LLF document may be helpfully comprehensive, but it won't provide any new theological perspectives. After many years of looking I haven't found anything that persuades me away from the existing, orthodox, Church of England position on marriage. The existing view (which is 2000 years old) is more than compelling; in fact it is plain and clear. Though I freely acknowledge that our pastoral responsibility to ALL people of differing sexualities is not so plain and clear, and requires care, new approaches and measured thought, the theology itself is not complex.

In the light of the big picture describing the sacred and primary ordinance of marriage, (with marriage shown as a self-portrait of God and Christ's particular relationship with the church), in the light of the detailed texts which condemn sex of all kinds outside marriage between a man

and woman (to protect this sacred living picture), and the answers to various arising questions, I affirm my belief in the word of God, and stand against the idea of widening marriage to include homosexual relationships. Such a proposed move would violate primary scriptural teachings and would dishonour God.

**Even more importantly**, unpicking or disbelieving a core, primary doctrine would inevitably lead to the undermining of our belief in the authority of scripture. If we begin with marriage, we may end up disbelieving other key teachings: like Christ's death for our sins, or the resurrection, or the divinity of Christ. Thus, we must recognise the consequences of such a preliminary erosion, and firmly guard against it.

**9. If we decide to remain orthodox on our doctrinal beliefs about marriage, then how might we properly express our biblically grounded pastoral care for those who may well be same-sex attracted?**

Can I refer you in the first instance to the various 'Pastoral' articles found here on the EGGS website:

<http://www.eggscofe.org.uk/articles-and-books.html>

As a church, once we are clear on our theological beliefs, we will need to do some significant work in this area.