

Scripture and Same-Gender Marriage
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At great risk of oversimplification, here are some of the biblical passages and themes that convince many that the *sex or gender* of the partners in committed, loving relationships between two persons is not a consideration to God:

Marriage

The assertion that God established marriage solely as the lifelong union of one man and one woman is not supported by Scripture; in fact, the examples of biblical families following that pattern are few. The cultural contexts in which the books of the Bible were written are quite different from our own, and the biblical descriptions of marriage reflect the mores of their times, with the assumption that women were under the control of their fathers or husbands. Most of the patriarchs and kings practiced polygamy and/or kept concubines. Scripture, often to soften the effects of patriarchy on women – who would be left destitute if used sexually and then abandoned – commands practices such as requirements that a rapist marry his victim (Deuteronomy 22:28-29) and a widow marry her deceased husband's brother (Deuteronomy 5:5-10). Women captured in war could be forced to marry the victors (Deuteronomy 21:10-14). Today, following more fundamental biblical principles, we believe in the equality of men and women – making strict gender roles irrelevant.

Genesis 1 – The first creation account emphasizes that everything God made is good. Both male and female are created in the image of God, without hierarchy; clearly it cannot be true that every male needs a female sexual partner (or vice versa) in order to image God.

Genesis 2 – The problem that God seeks to solve in the second creation account – first, and unsatisfactorily, by creating animals – is that the human creature is *alone*. The emphasis is not on gender *difference* or “complementarity,” but on *commonality*: Adam recognizes in Eve “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” Elsewhere in the Scripture – see e.g. Genesis 29:14, Laban speaking to Jacob – the “bone and flesh” phrase refers not to an exclusive male-female union, but to *kinship*.

Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12 – When Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 – not in reference to homosexuality, but to prohibit divorce – his concern was with the break-up of a *family* and the plight of divorced women, who would have no support or security.

Marriage as a metaphor for the relationship of God and Israel (see for example Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 31:32, Hosea 2:19) and Christ and the Church (for example 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:32, Revelation 19:7) demonstrates that the emphasis is on the quality of relationship, rather than gender.

1 Corinthians 7 – Paul elevates singleness over marriage but counsels that “it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion,” recognizing that the gift of celibacy is not given to all.

Sexual Minorities

Isaiah 56:3-5 – Eunuchs have a valued place in the community.

Matthew 19: 12 – Jesus says eunuchs “have been so from birth” or “been made ... by others” or “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Some persons, but not all, are called to a single life.

Acts 8:26-40 – Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch, finding no hindrance to his inclusion despite Torah that would prohibit it (for example, Leviticus 21:20, Deuteronomy 23:1).

God’s Embrace of All People ~ The Law and the Rule of Love

Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-37 – Jesus’ teaching about the Great Commandments to love God and neighbor calls us to evaluate all other laws in the light of their effect on human well-being. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” See also Matthew 7:12, John 13:34-35.

Matthew 7:15-20 – “You will know them by their fruits.” It’s evident that the teaching that LGBT people must change or suppress their given sexual orientation is damaging to them, and that loving, committed same-sex relationships can be life-giving to the couple and to their families and communities.

Galatians 3:23-28 – We are no longer subject to the law as disciplinarian; racial/ethnic, economic, and sex/gender hierarchies are abolished, for all are one in Christ.

Romans 13:8-10, James 2:8-9, 1 John 4:7-21 – These passages – along with many others – emphasize love, rather than a law-based definition of purity, as the highest ethical value.

Read More:

Companion document: “What Does the Bible Tell Us?” by Tricia Dykers Koenig.

<http://covnetpres.org/resources/what-does-the-bible-tell-us/>

Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture: A Position Statement adopted by the 123rd General Assembly (1983) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; and *Biblical Authority and Interpretation*: A Resource Document Received by the 194th General Assembly (1982) of the United States of America.

<https://oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/scripture-use.pdf>