

# Same-Sex Mirage

## Why Christians Cannot Affirm Homosexuality

### Selected Scriptures

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#### **Introduction**

Well, over the past two months, I've been preaching a series of sermons on the doctrine of the atonement. But also over those past two months, especially with Canada's passing of Bill C-4, which criminalizes any attempt to help someone mortify the sin of homosexual desires and behaviors, I've had an earnest desire to speak to you concerning Scripture's teaching on homosexuality. And so I've decided to take a one-week break from the series on the atonement and do that this morning.

Now, both Pastor John and Pastor Phil have done an exceptional job addressing this, but I want to approach it from a slightly different angle. I'm fairly confident that those of you sitting here don't need to be convinced that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sinful. But I also know—even from conversations with many of you over the past two months since the passage of this bill in Canada—that this issue still hits close to home. Many of you have close friends, even family members, even children and grandchildren, who are being swept away in the sea of sexual perversion that our society is drowning in. And they have objections, and retorts, and rebuttals to the clear condemnations of homosexuality that you read to them from the Scriptures. The culture catechizes its disciples very effectively.

And that means that you need to be equipped to respond to those arguments. Pastor John has aptly said that if our society is experiencing the *judgment* of Romans 1—being given over to unrestrained fornication, rampant homosexuality, and a reprobate mind—then we must follow the *prescription* found in Romans 1: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” We must preach the Gospel of rescue from destruction through repentance from sin and faith in Christ alone.

As faithful ambassadors of our King, we must not retreat from this hostile and depraved society, but march right into this hostile and depraved society, and unapologetically declare that (a) the wrath of God is kindled against His enemies who do not keep His law, that (b) that each of us has sinned and falls short of His glorious standard of righteousness, and yet that (c) there is mercy and forgiveness to be found through repentance and faith in the righteous, crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

But when we take that Gospel to our friends and family and neighbors, and when we identify sin and testify that their deeds are evil, we must be prepared for the arguments that reject that homosexuality is even a sin to repent of. “It’s not our business to tell people who they can love!” “Jesus never condemned homosexuality!” “We just need to love and affirm all people!” We must be equipped to engage unbelievers with the truth. And that means we must be equipped to answer the arguments of those who contend that homosexuality is not mutually exclusive with Scripture.

And so this morning I’m going to work through **five popular arguments** that the world gives for why homosexuality is reconcilable with Biblical Christianity, and then respond to those **five arguments** biblically. And my goal is that you would be equipped to have these discussions with your friends and family, so that you can bring the law of God and the Gospel of Christ to bear on their conscience, and, by God’s grace, see them repent and believe in Jesus.

## **I. Why Should You Even Care?**

And the **first argument** I want to address is usually advanced in the form of a question: “Why do Christians even care about what two consenting adults do in their bedroom?” And the quick answer to that question is: Because the Triune God is the Lord of all. This is His universe, we are accountable to Him, and so His law is to be the rule of our lives. And He tells us that the only context in which sexual intimacy is to be expressed is in the covenant of marriage. But then the objection comes back, “Ok, fine! Plenty of homosexuals want to be married! But you’re against that too! Why should you care about who marries whom? If two people want to make a commitment to each other for life, why shouldn’t they have the right to do that?”

Now, there are several answers to that question. The first, of course, is that the Bible unambiguously declares that homosexuality is sinful. Leviticus 18:22 says, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” First Corinthians 6:9–10 says that fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, and homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God. Romans 1:25–27 describes homosexuality as a degrading passion, unnatural, and indecent. And so like all other sins, its wages is death (Rom 6:23)—eternal separation from God. And since the purpose of the civil government is to restrain evil and promote the well-being of society, the government should not sanction and incentivize what the Lord of the Universe expressly forbids, and what will lead to people’s eternal punishment and destruction.

Another answer for why we object to so-called homosexual “marriage” is that God Himself is the Creator of marriage. He is, according to Genesis 2:18, the One who performed the first marriage. And the Designer of marriage defines it as being between only one man and one woman. And as God is the Lord of the Universe, we must accept His Word. Here’s what He says, Genesis 2:18: “Then Yahweh God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make

him a helper suitable for him.” Verse 24: “So Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.” When it became apparent that there was no fitting match among the creatures of the earth, God purposed to make a companion suitable—complementary to Adam. And so he put him to sleep, took one of Adam’s ribs, and fashioned it into a *woman*. Then He presented the man with his bride. God did not make another man from Adam’s rib; He made a *woman*. In God’s mind, only a *woman* was “a helper suitable for him.” So in Matthew 19 when a Pharisee asks Jesus about marriage and divorce, it’s not an accident that the Son of God prefaces His response by underscoring that God made humanity as “male and female.” God did not make us only male, or only female. He intentionally designed that a *man* shall leave his family and be joined to his *wife*, and that these two—this man and wife—should become one flesh. Jesus doesn’t speak of a man leaving his parents to be joined to his husband, but his wife. And so the very definition of marriage from the Creator of marriage—and thus, the sole infallible authority on marriage—is that it is between one man and one woman.

But why has God defined marriage as being between one man and one woman? It’s the answer to this question that really gets to the heart of why we care. Marriage is a glorious institution. But the truth is that marriage is not glorious in and of itself. God has designed marriage to be a symbol, or a picture, or a parable that points to something greater than itself. And it is only so glorious because of what it points to: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Marriage is an institution set up by God with a specific purpose: to glorify Him—to display and make much of Him—by magnifying the relationship of covenant-keeping grace that exists between Christ and *His* Bride, the Church.

The Apostle Paul teaches this in Ephesians 5, with the most breathtaking instruction on marriage in all of Scripture. He quotes Genesis 2:24, just like Jesus did in Matthew 19. And the very next thing he says is: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” Let that sink in. He is speaking about marriage with reference to Christ and the church. Keep that in mind as we consider the rest of Ephesians 5:22–33. In that passage, Paul gives instruction on marriage, and lays out God’s master plan of loving headship on the husband’s part (vv. 25–30) and respectful submission on the wife’s part (vv. 22–24). And what’s absolutely astounding are the reasons he gives for why a husband must lovingly serve his wife and why a wife must respectfully submit to her husband. In verses 22 and 23, he says, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. *For* the husband is the head of the wife, *as Christ also is the head of the church*, He Himself being the Savior of the body.” Verse 24: “*But as the church is subject to Christ*, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.” Verse 25: “Husbands, love your wives, *just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*”

The basis for every one of Paul’s commands concerning marriage is the work of Christ in His relationship with the Church. This is because: marriage is a parable of the Gospel. Marriage exists to illustrate the way that Christ keeps the covenant commitment that *He* made to *His* Bride. And what is that commitment? “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” The Good News is that Jesus has saved His people from sin, from God’s wrath, from just punishment, from fruitlessness, and from a wasted .life. He has taken our sin out of the way so that we can enjoy fellowship with our Creator and Redeemer forever. And marriage is purposely designed to display the glory of that Good News. But it only works insofar as the husband pictures Christ, and as the wife pictures the Church.

This is why Bible-believing Christians are opposed to homosexual relationships: because it mars the picture of that precious Gospel that marriage is designed to be. If marriage is given to us in order to point us to the truth concerning Christ’s covenant-keeping grace with His people, and if the husband pictures Christ and the wife pictures the Church, then any tampering with those participants hopelessly confuses and fatally obfuscates the Gospel.

Christ is “the head of the church” and “the Savior of the body. A “marriage” between two men would communicate about the Gospel that Christ lovingly leads, serves, and saves only Himself. And yet that is not Good News, because in that case the Church would be left to herself to deal with her sin. And a “marriage” between two women would communicate about the Gospel that the Church should follow, and respect, and submit to only herself. But there’s no Gospel there either, because that’s a picture of trusting in oneself for salvation. The Church submitting to no one but herself doesn’t illustrate loving dependence upon a sufficient Savior, but only self-righteousness and self-effort.

You see, friends, marriage, as a parable of the Gospel, only makes sense when the husband’s servant leadership pictures Christ’s loving headship over His people, and when the wife’s respectful submission pictures the Church’s joyful submission to her Lord. (Which, by the way, is also why we’re complementarians—why we insist on the Bible’s teaching of distinct roles for men and women in marriage and in the church.) But it’s the principal reason Bible-believing Christians oppose homosexual “marriage.” Not tax breaks. Not nomenclature. Not social agendas. The Gospel. Make sure the people you’re speaking with leave knowing the difference. And if they don’t know why the Gospel is so precious to us, why it’s such a treasure, why it’s to be so rigorously defended and protected—tell them.

## **II. Picking and Choosing**

A **second argument** employed by those aiming to reconcile homosexuality with Christianity is what I call the **Picking and Choosing** argument. And it basically boils down to this: “Listen, you homophobic fundamentalist: there are plenty other commands in the Bible that Christians don’t

follow today, like the prohibition against mixing fabrics in Leviticus 19, or eating shellfish and pork in Leviticus 11. So why are you insisting upon obedience to the prohibitions against homosexuality? You're just picking and choosing the sins you don't like."

Now first, I just want to observe that this kind of reasoning is patently unbiblical. This argument concedes that the Bible does indeed condemn homosexuality. They're just giving a reason for why we should ignore more of what the Bible clearly says. They're basically saying, "We disobey God's Word all over the place. Why should disobeying His commands against homosexuality be any different?" But a Christian simply does not think this way about God's Word. Someone who loves God does not look for ways to legitimize their disobedience to Him. The one who loves God loves His Word. The Word of God is the delight of the child of God (Jer 15:16). If God's Word is something you feel you have to get around or escape, it's likely that you remain His enemy.

Secondly, this objection fails to understand the purposes of the Mosaic Law, and how the Christian under the New Covenant is to relate to the Law that was given under the Old Covenant. For one thing, the ceremonial regulations of the Mosaic Law functioned **to set Israel apart** from all the other nations. No other nation cared about eating animals that didn't chew cud or wearing clothes woven with two different fabrics. No other nation let a perfectly good day of work (and profits) slip through their fingers by resting on Saturday. In all these restrictions, God's design was for His people to be different than all the nations, because He was different than the gods of the nations.

But in the present age, God's people are no longer confined to a particular nation. Ephesians 2 teaches that they are no longer bound by physical, national, or even cultural boundaries. The Church is not a civil government or a theocracy, but a spiritual building. Because of that, we're not set apart by obeying laws about fabrics, foods, lengths of beards, and days of rest; we're set apart by our moral purity and holiness of life. We are to come out from all moral impurity and be separate, 2 Corinthians 6, for the Holy God of heaven dwells in us and walks among us.

So, one function of the Mosaic Law was to set apart God's people—the nation of Israel—in tangible, physical ways in order to show His own uniqueness. But the Law was also given to Israel for another purpose: (a) to illustrate God's standard of righteousness, (b) to show how far short of that standard His people fall, and (c) ultimately **to point them to a Savior** who would accomplish that righteousness on their behalf. Under the Mosaic Covenant, a right relationship with God depended on obedience to all He had spoken (Exod 24:7). If someone broke God's Law, their sin demanded a punishment. God graciously instituted the sacrificial system, where His people's sin was punished in a substitute. The consistent bloody exercise of animal sacrifice made it clear that God was infinitely holy and that sin was dead serious. Day after day, year after year, all of Israel would offer sacrifices for their sins. And one thing they were supposed to come

away with after doing that was that they could not live the way God required. God was holy. And they were hopelessly unholy.

Because of this, in Galatians 3 Paul calls the Law a tutor or a schoolmaster: “But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Gal 3:22–24). So, the Law was designed to teach Israel that they could never meet God’s standard of holiness themselves, and that they needed to look outside of themselves—to Him—for the gracious gift of that righteousness. And God provided that righteousness in the person of Christ. The Law was designed to point to Him.

That’s why when Jesus shows up, He can declare that all foods are clean (Mark 7:19) and can work on the Sabbath (Luke 6:2). It’s why God’s people no longer have to offer sacrifices in a temple—why when Jesus was crucified the veil of the temple was torn in two (Matt 27:51): because in Jesus, something greater than the temple is here (Matt 12:8). Access to God would no longer be mediated by the ceremonial regulations of the Mosaic Covenant, but by those of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Luke 22:20), whose mediator was not a temple or a priest, but the Son of God Himself (Heb 9:15).

That’s also why the Book of Hebrews declares that the Mosaic Covenant has been made “obsolete” (Heb 8:13): because the purpose for which that Covenant was given—namely, to set Israel apart and to point them their needed Savior—is fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the point of the dietary laws! God’s people are no longer set apart by not mixing fabrics. They’re set apart by being united to Jesus by faith and following after Him in holiness.

So, the reason that Christians don’t have a problem mixing fabrics or eating pork is not because we’re picking and choosing which biblical commands we follow. Nor should we say that the Levitical commands were just cultural, and since our culture is different the commands can change. No, the issue isn’t cultural; it’s covenantal. Those ceremonial commands of the Mosaic Covenant have been fulfilled in the person of Christ, the Mediator of a new and better covenant. That’s why Paul says in that same passage in Galatians 3: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (vv. 24–25). We are no longer under the tutor of the Mosaic Law. So to attempt to keep the dietary laws and other aspects of ceremonial worship would actually be to deny that Jesus’ righteous life and substitutionary death was sufficient to achieve righteousness on behalf of sinners. So when Christians exercise their freedom to mix fabrics or to eat shellfish and pork, we’re not breaking the Mosaic Law. We are actually living obediently in light of its fulfillment in Christ.

But the commandments against homosexuality do not belong to the ceremonial or civil stipulations of an obsolete covenant from a bygone era. { Yes, a prohibition of homosexuality is given in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. But that prohibition is repeated in the New Testament—God’s revelation for those living under the New Covenant. Romans 1:26–27 speaks of both male and female homosexuality as “degrading passions,” “unnatural,” “indecent,” and “error” worthy of a “penalty.” First Corinthians 6:9–10 says plainly that unrepentant effeminate persons and homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God. First Timothy 1:9–10 includes “homosexuals” among “those who are lawless and rebellious,” “ungodly and sinners,” “unholy and profane,” and “contrary to sound teaching.”

While the New Testament declares the fulfillment (and therefore the end) of the civil and ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Covenant, these New Covenant Scriptures only reaffirm the Old Testament prohibition against homosexuality, showing that it wasn’t binding only upon national Israel, but also upon the New Covenant people of God. The commands against homosexuality weren’t designed to teach a temporary lesson, like the food laws were. No, in all ages, homosexuality tragically distorts the picture of the Gospel that marriage is designed to be. On the authority of God’s own Word to His people, you cannot be in a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ while living an unrepentant homosexual lifestyle.

But you certainly can be restored to a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ by repenting from the sin of homosexuality and trusting in Christ. First Corinthians 6:11 says that some in the Corinthian church were homosexuals. He says, “Such were some of you.” “But,” he goes on, “you were *washed*.” They had been cleansed! Their sins were forgiven! Not by pretending it wasn’t sin, but by owning it and confessing it as sin, and by turning from it—forsaking it as something that dishonors God, and by trusting in Christ’s righteousness alone for acceptance with God. That is what we must preach to our friends and neighbors and family members: that homosexuality is a sin, but that homosexuals along with the rest of us sinners can be washed by the blood of the Lamb shed for the forgiveness of sins.

### **III. *Arsenokoites* is Mistranslated**

Well, we just saw the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality as clear as day, from passages like Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. However, there are people who argue that these clear passages have been **mistranslated**. And this is the **third argument** that we’ll address this morning. These people say that the word translated “homosexuals” in these New Testament texts—namely the Greek word *arsenokoitēs*—doesn’t refer to so-called “healthy,” “monogamous,” “committed same-sex relationships,” but “abusive male-male” relationships, like pederasty—sexual activity between a man and a boy—as well as prostitution, especially cult-temple prostitution which was very common in the first-century Greco-Roman world. So

when the New Testament condemns *arsenokoitēs*, it's not condemning homosexuality in general as sin, but only certain forms of homosexual behavior that are especially perverse.

Now, the reality is: this argument that *arsenokoitēs* is mistranslated is simply false, and it's important to state that at the outset. Looking at the word itself, *arsenokoitēs* is a compound word formed from the term *arsēn*—the word for “male”—and *koitē*—which means “bed.” *Koitē* is the noun form of the verb *keimai*, which means “to lie with,” in the sense of sexual intimacy. And in fact, the Greek word *koitē* is borrowed in Latin to make the term *coitus*, which we borrow in English as a technical biological term to describe sexual intercourse. So even from the basic etymology, *arsenokoitēs* speaks of “male-bedding”—that is, a man going to bed with a man. There's nothing in the word itself that suggests its meaning ought to be restricted to a particular kind of going to bed with a man; it speaks of homosexual behavior in general.

Now, what's interesting about this word *arsenokoitēs* is that it doesn't exist in Greek literature prior to the New Testament, at all. You find it in secular Greek writing after the New Testament, but before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, it is nowhere to be found. Paul coined the term himself. So where'd he come up with it? Well, the answer is: he got it from his Bible—the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. If you look at the Greek translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13—the two passages in the Levitical Law that deal with homosexuality—you find the constituent parts of the term *arsenokoitēs*. Leviticus 18:22 says, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” Here's the way that sounds in Greek, as Paul read it: “*kai meta arsenos ou koimēthēsē koitēn gunaikos.*” Did you hear it? You have both *arsenos* and *koitēn*. Leviticus 20:13 says, “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death.” Here that is in Greek: “*kai hos an koimēthē meta arsenos koitēn gunaikos...*” It's really clear there; the two terms appear one right after another. So when Paul coined the term *arsenokoitēs* and used it in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1, it is absolutely unmistakable that he meant to connect it—both etymologically and conceptually—with the Levitical prohibition against homosexuality. Whatever Moses meant when he wrote those commandments in the Torah, Paul meant that same thing in the New Testament epistles.

And there is simply no question that the Jews understood Moses' prohibition to refer to homosexuality in its totality. For one thing, the rabbis used the original Hebrew expression found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13—*mishkav zākūr*, “lying with a male”—to speak of male-male intercourse in the broadest sense. For example, commenting on these passages, the Talmud explicitly says that the male with whom a man lays may be “an adult or minor” (b. Sanh. 54a). That rules out the notion that *arsenokoitēs* refers only to pederasty. Besides this, first-century Greek-speakers understood the Mosaic prohibition in the same way. For example, the historian Josephus explained to Gentiles that “the law [of Moses] recognizes only sexual intercourse that is according to nature, that which is with a woman. . . . But it abhors the intercourse of males



with males” (*Against Apion*, 2.199). New Testament scholar Robert Gagnon comments, “There are no limitations placed on the prohibition as regards age, slave status, idolatrous context, or exchange of money. The only limitation is the sex of the participants.”

And we could go on. Not only is it clear, (a), that Paul intended to reproduce the prohibition exactly as it was intended in the Old Testament, and (b), that the Old Testament intent was to speak of homosexuality indiscriminately, but further, if Paul wanted to communicate a more restricted kind of homosexuality, he wouldn’t have had to coin a new term. If he intended to prohibit pederasty, there were Greek words for that, such as *paiderastai*, *paidomanai*, or *paidophthoroi*. But rather than employ those terms, he coined his own compound word from the Old Testament’s prohibition of homosexuality in general. And still further, the historical sources tell us that Paul’s coined-word caught on, and the term *arsenokoitēs* and its cognates in post-New Testament writings—in several selections of Eusebius for example—are applied exclusively to male-male intercourse, not limited to pederasty or cult prostitution (Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 317–23). And still further than that, when the New Testament was translated into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic, those translators all rendered *arsenokoitēs* in ways which are unambiguously translated to “men lying with men.”

And besides all of that, it would be ridiculous to interpret Paul’s intent in using *arsenokoitēs* without taking into account his explicit indictment of both male and female homosexual behavior in Romans 1:26–27. We read it before so I won’t repeat it, but Paul speaks in the broadest possible terms. He doesn’t limit himself to non-abusive, unloving homosexual unions. He simply speaks of women burning in their desire for women and men committing indecent acts with men. To think he would condemn homosexuality in general in Romans 1, only to coin a technical term from the text of Leviticus to refer to a more specific subset of homosexual behavior in 1 Corinthians 6, violates just about every principle of grammatical-historical exegesis that there is. And it *clearly* reveals an *agenda*—an interpretation in search of justification, rather than an honest, unprejudiced, objective search for the author’s intent.

#### **IV. Jesus Never Said Anything about Homosexuality**

A **fourth argument** goes like this. “You know, Mike, you’re talking an awful lot about the Apostle Paul, and Romans, and 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians, and the Old Testament, and Leviticus, and the Mosaic Law. But I’m a Christian. I follow Jesus. And Jesus, in His entire three years on earth, said absolutely nothing about homosexuality! I’m going to stick with Jesus.”

Those who make this argument seem willing to grant that the Old Testament and even Paul in the New Testament condemned homosexuality as sinful. But the sentiment behind this objection is that the Old Testament is outdated, and that Paul had corrupted the way of life and the

ideology that Jesus came to propagate. “Jesus would have been ‘loving’ and ‘affirming’ of homosexuals, not bigoted and intolerant like that homophobe Paul.”

But is it true that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality? There are at least four reasons why this argument simply does not hold up to scrutiny. In the first place, this is an argument from silence, which is a logical fallacy, and therefore by definition it rests on an unstable rational foundation. Jesus also didn’t say a word about pedophilia, bestiality, or rape. But it would be beyond absurd to seek to garner support for any of those abominable acts on the basis of such silence. Jesus’ silence on the matter of homosexuality is no more an endorsement of *it* than his silence on pedophilia, bestiality, incest, rape, child molestation, and any number of heinous sexual sins is an endorsement of *them*.

Secondly, a great portion of Jesus’ ministry related to Israel and those familiar with the Law of Moses. They were living in an age under the Mosaic Covenant, which, as we’ve seen, explicitly condemned homosexuality. Jesus taught that the Old Testament was breathed out by the Holy Spirit (as in Matthew 22:43); that it was infallible and inerrant, when He said in John 10:35, “The Scripture cannot be broken;” and that it was so abidingly authoritative that not the smallest stroke would pass away, Matthew 5:18. Unless there was some precipitating issue that would force Jesus to comment on homosexuality, the only reasonable conclusion is that His view of homosexuality *was* the Old Testament’s view of homosexuality.

Third, when Jesus did speak about marriage, He affirmed it as an institution between a male and a female. In Matthew 19, the Pharisees asked Him what He thought about divorce, hoping to trap Him into disagreeing with Moses and thereby find a reason to condemn Him. In response, Jesus says, “Have you not read that He who created them from 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 they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Now, if Jesus wanted to simply and efficiently answer the Pharisees’ question about divorce, He could have done it by skipping immediately to verse 5: “Have you not read that the two become one flesh?” That’s really the answer to the question about divorce. God joins spouses together as one flesh, and man shouldn’t separate what God has joined together. So why does He start, in verse 4, by reminding the Pharisees that God made human beings male and female—a point that seems superfluous? The answer is: He’s going out of His way to make it clear that the divinely-ordained institution of marriage exists only between one man and one woman. That God created man as male and female is inextricably linked to the institution of marriage, when God brought the man and the woman together to become one flesh as husband and wife.

But all of those responses are really supplementary to this final one. It concerns the inspiration of the New Testament. While it's true that we have no record of Jesus speaking about homosexuality during His earthly sojourn, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus said He would send to speak His words (John 16:12–14), superintended what Paul wrote, so that he wrote exactly what God desired to be written. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is *breathed out* by God” (ESV). And 2 Peter 1:21 says, “No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were *carried along* by the Holy Spirit” (ESV).

See, strictly speaking, Jesus did not stop speaking when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John finished their Gospel accounts! While Jesus was still on earth, He told the disciples in John 16:12–14, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” But, verse 13, He promises that the Holy Spirit would come to the disciples and would guide them into all truth. This is a promise from Jesus Himself that the Word that the Holy Spirit would speak through the disciples would be Christ's own words. In this way, verse 14, the Spirit would glorify Jesus, He says, “for He will take *of Mine* and will disclose it to you.” And the Holy Spirit did just that. As the Church was being built, the Spirit spoke Jesus' words to the writers of the New Testament. *All* Scripture—which, according to 2 Peter 3:16, included Paul's writings—is God-breathed. It is the very Word of God Himself!

You say, “But, didn't men write Scripture?” Yes they did. But these passages teach that the Holy Spirit so superintended the minds and wills of the writers of Scripture that the words they wrote under their own recognizance were precisely what God wanted to say to His people! That's what Peter means when he says they were “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts, all the way through to the Book of Revelation, are all the very words of God Himself. And, since God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit, and since Jesus Himself is God the Son, *all* Scripture is the Word of Christ. Even the words not appearing in red type are nevertheless the Lord of the Church speaking to His Church by means of the Holy Spirit through the agency of human writers.

So did Jesus address homosexuality? Yes, He did. He did so by sending His Spirit to superintend the writing of Paul such that what Paul wrote was precisely what Jesus intended, so much so that it could be said to be “God-breathed.” Jesus condemned homosexuality by means of Paul's condemnation of homosexuality. And therefore, to deny that homosexuality is sinful is to deny Jesus Himself, and is irreconcilable with true, biblical Christianity.

## **V. Love Demands that We Affirm Homosexuals**

Finally, I want to address what I think is the most widespread **argument** in the entire discussion. And it goes something like this: “Mike, in the midst of all of your attention to the details of various Bible verses, you've lost the big picture. The cardinal virtue that Jesus taught His

followers was love. If you value love, what's the problem with two consenting adults making a commitment to each other out of love? Love is love is love. To insist that homosexuality is sinful is simply not loving, and therefore not Christian."

So you see how the collective reasoning of the culture paints the Christian into a corner here. Any response that doesn't fully affirm homosexuality—no matter what the Bible explicitly says about the matter—is hatred, pure and simple. "Jesus calls us to love. And you claim to follow Jesus. So you're an un-Christian, bigoted hypocrite."

But the argument simply doesn't hold water. And this is the reason: the wisdom of secular society has failed to define love biblically. To our self-indulgent, narcissistic, perennially adolescent, self-willed culture, "love" means nothing more than psychologist Carl Rogers' notion of unconditional positive regard. To "love" someone, according to our society, is to affirm every decision they make and to applaud them *just* for being them.

And that kind of thing feels good, doesn't it? It feels really good to be affirmed without qualification—to be told that "you're amazing, just the way you are." And because of that, people have confused the idea of being affirmed, accepted, flattered, and made much of with true love. Loving me means making me feel good by making much of me. And this ideology of love as unconditional acceptance is woven into the fabric of our cultural consciousness. To believe anything else is just un-American!

And then, those who have imbibed that definition of love turn to the Bible. And all of a sudden they start reading and hearing about love. God is *love*, 1 John 4:8. For God so *loved* the world, John 3:16. The greatest commandment in the Law is that you *love* God and *love* others, Matthew 22:37–40. Love your neighbor as yourself, Galatians 5:14. By this everyone will know you're My disciples: if you love one another, John 13:35. All of these wonderfully biblical concepts come flooding into their minds! But then something tragic happens. Rather than surrendering their own preconceptions to the authority of God's Word and seeking to understand how God defines love, they use their own distorted definition of love that they've imbibed from our society, and they foist that definition of love onto the Scriptures and onto their conception of God. So now, when they hear that "God is love," they think, "God doesn't demand that people change. God doesn't judge anyone. God accepts everyone just as they are. And so Christians must do the same."

But that's just not true, because that is emphatically not how God defines love. "In *this* is love," says 1 John 4:10, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Romans 5:8: "God demonstrates His own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8. All of these passages and dozens more teach us that love is acting to secure someone's greatest benefit.

These passages aren't teaching us that God just thought we were so wonderful, just the way we were, that He would deliver His Son to death just to show us how much He thought of us. No, they teach that God labors, at great cost to Himself, in order to secure the greatest benefit of His beloved. When we were dead in our sin, cut off from God, and without hope, what would have been our greatest benefit at that moment? Answer: a perfectly righteous, wrath-propitiating, sin-bearing Substitute. And that is exactly what God gives us. God demonstrates His own love by benefiting us with Himself in the person of His beloved Son. Biblically, then, love does not mean unconditional acceptance, unqualified affirmation, or never hurting someone's feelings. Biblical love labors to secure the beloved's greatest benefit.

And what is everyone's greatest benefit? It is not unconditional affirmation! "Why not?" Because God did not design human beings to thrive on, and be satisfied by, the glory of self! The vision of your own glory and self-exaltation might feel good for a little while, but it will not satisfy the longings of your soul for eternity. You just haven't been designed that way. And so the person who seeks to satisfy you by making much of you—by holding *you* up to yourself as an all-satisfying treasure—does not love you. They lie to you. They rob you of the true joy and the lasting satisfaction that come only from looking away from yourself and your own glory, to the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ.

Your Creator designed your heart, your soul, your affections, your will—all of you—so that you would be most satisfied by Him! By the sight of His glory, not yours! And He defines spiritual life as the ability to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. This means that love is helping someone to see and know and enjoy God in the person of His Son. That is the greatest benefit you can accomplish for anyone. Love is not unconditional affirmation. Love is laboring, and oftentimes even suffering—even being mocked, being called hateful and bigoted, losing your tax-exempt status, even straining relationships with your friends and family—so that those whom you do love might be led away from worshiping themselves to find joy in making much of Christ forever. That is where their greatest benefit—their true and lasting satisfaction—will be found.

Can you see why, then, acquiescing to the LGBTQ agenda of unconditional acceptance is the very opposite of love? why never warning someone that fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, and homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God is hatred? Because it is not in the best interest of sinners for Christians to affirm a lifestyle which, if unrepented of, will end in eternal destruction. It is not hate to warn people of danger. It is hate to *fail* to issue those warnings.

It's like watching a friend driving his car toward a cliff he has no idea is there. Even if he's having a great time in his car because, "Hey, driving is fun!" and he doesn't realize the danger

he's in, it is not loving to make him feel affirmed and encouraged as he speeds to his destruction. It is loving to do everything you can to open his eyes to the cliff he's speeding towards and to steer him into safety. The person who says, "Hey, who do you think you are to force your views on him? Can't you see how much he's enjoying himself? He's not hurting anybody. Just leave him alone and worry about yourself!" *does not love* that man in the car.

Dear friends, we do not love like Jesus loves if we unconditionally affirm someone in a choice that robs them of true, abiding satisfaction and leads them to ruin. We love like Jesus loves when we graciously and patiently proclaim a message that has the power to free people from the bondage of their suicidal love affair with themselves—the power to liberate them into the freedom and the joy of making much of the glory of God. We love like God loves when we point people away from worshiping themselves and their own desires, and when we steer them toward their greatest benefit: God Himself.

### **Conclusion**

So do that! Steer people away from sin. Proclaim the message of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. And answer these objections when they are raised in response to the Gospel. See, the point of going through all this is not just to demonstrate intellectual superiority, or to "own the libs." We don't care most about winning the argument; we care about winning the person.

And so as you faithfully bring the law of God and the Gospel of Christ to bear on the lives of your friends and family, and they aim to evade the piercing sword of the law—cutting themselves off from the healing balm of the Gospel—by offering these objections and arguments, equip yourselves with the Word of God to lovingly, patiently, but forthrightly answering those objections as we have here. Not because we believe we can argue someone out of the bondage of sin, but because we have been commissioned to destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:3–5). And perhaps the sound, reasoned, truthful answers to the objections advanced against Christ and Scripture, will tear down a superficial barrier in someone's mind, so that they might hear the Gospel afresh, and be brought to repentance and saving faith, and find freedom.