

WD January 2, 2023

“Making a Response to Biblical Claims”

Happy New Year. I pray that 2023 is a year that favors a closer walk with the Lord and is filled with opportunities to grow in our faith. As I begin this new year with you all I begin with a response to an article that was handed to me right before Christmas. It was written by a local Lutheran pastor in defense of Homosexuality. It was titled “Bible Verses Don’t Justify Hatred.” Since this author wears the title of “pastor” and is of a Lutheran denomination and because she attempts to wield the Word of God to defend her position on homosexuality, I feel compelled to respond. I believe her use of the Word is a creative Biblical contortionism that tries to make God’s Word say something it doesn’t. And so, I cannot leave it unchallenged. So, as a way of response I hope to react to her article. I will attempt to be fair and take each of her points one at a time.

First, let me begin by saying I do not pretend to be anything more than a pastor myself. I am always a student to God’s Word and grateful to those who can open up its verses in a meaningful way. I study it often and gladly listen to arguments regarding its teachings. I also find that disagreement often breeds an opportunity to learn something. However, if I believe something isn’t right, I can’t just leave it unchallenged. I don’t expect everyone to agree with me but I am one who tries to present another thought like a UPS driver delivering a package. I deliver what I can for people to chew on and then let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

Secondly, perhaps like many who listen here today I too have friends and family whom I love dearly who are same sex attracted. I am always grateful for them, look forward to being with them each time we get the chance, have greatly enjoyed their company, and have never treated them as subhuman and they have never called me a hater. We have worked together, cried together, prayed together, joked together...It is a mutual joy. Scripture is very clear about treating people with gentleness and respect and I cannot conceive of doing anything less with any person I love and care about.

So, let me begin with what is likely to take me a couple of sessions with you to unpack and even then, it will be too little time for such an important topic. To be fair to the pastor who wrote the article, a few paragraphs in a newspaper are also not sufficient to flush out in total the passages she presents to make her case. I will also link her article if you would like to read it as well.

I will now start where she began. Her stated goal is an effort “to further this community’s Biblical literacy and reduce hate in people’s hearts.” I obviously can’t disagree with Biblical literacy or with a community that emphasizes more love in our hearts. However, where there is disagreement, I do not agree that it is the same thing as hatred. Being emotional or passionate about a belief is also different than hatred. I also do not assume hatred of anyone simply because they disagree with me.

In Genesis 1-2 the pastor who wrote the article recognizes the verses that speak of God creating people as male and female but then goes on to compare sexuality to the creation of Night and day. She also says, “The creation of night and day are not merely two things; it’s actually a spectrum that includes things like dawn midday, dusk, and twilight. Similarly, gender is a spectrum.”

This is an interesting interpretation that I haven’t heard before. Yet the creation of Day and Night and male and female couldn’t be more different. Day and night are an indication of time. When Genesis 1 speaks of “evening and morning” the emphasis is not on spectrum but on “first day, second day,” etc. Each day’s distinction plays out by what is created on that day. But Night and Day are not made in the image of God, neither are plants, animals, nor “the stars also” of which God has provided great variety. The image of God has to do with personhood. Human beings, as male and female, were made “to rule over the earth and subdue it, over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, all the living creatures” distinct from the rest of creation. This puts human beings in a special place in God’s heart distinct from all other forms of creation.

In Genesis 1 and 2 God also does not define humanity in terms of sexuality nor of people being on a spectrum that is never mentioned in scripture. Sex is separate from personhood and is something done rather than something that is. God created sex and designed it to flourish in the context of marriage. Sex is designed to bring about a physical union specifically for the marriage covenant. It is designed to reflect the spiritual union. It is deliberately created by God to be a reflection of Jesus and the Church (His bride) (Ephesians 5:20-31). This spectrum presented here is a modern creation rather than a biblical one. Personhood is to be an image bearer. Sexuality is action taken within the marriage context. And yet we also know from Genesis 3 that our

fallen nature does something very destructive to the human nature. All human beings are literally born... “this way”—fallen, skewed, and literally hell bent by sin. In this we are all equally ruined and equally in need of our Savior. We are always more than one thing at the same time—saint and sinner (Romans 7:19-25). In this understanding of scripture, we are all created to be image bearers and all equally ruined by sin.

The author of the article also strongly implies that God blesses all forms of sexual relationships simply because there are mentioned in the Bible. She writes of “diverse examples of marriage that are found in the Bible. The bible endorses monogamous marriages between one male and one female in addition to polygamy, sexual slavery, incest, and forced marriages to virgins and blesses all the varieties of marriage.” First, the logic here is severely permissive in its implications. For example, the Bible certainly acknowledges that David had eight wives, and Solomon had 1000 wives, which by the way did not work out very well for either of them. Their polygamy had more to do with their sinful ambitions and lusts than what God wanted. Here the key is simple, the mere mention of a thing is not the same as an endorsement of a thing. It is merely description and in no way negates the standards set by Genesis 1 and 2 or Matthew 19. If the mere mention of something is the same as an endorsement, then mentioning hatred, adultery, or theft could be justifiable. Yet, this logic is usually only applied to sexuality and marriage. I’ll take the time to dive into this point more next week.

However, to round things out for today I ask you to consider an example in Matthew 19:3-6 when Jesus is asked about whether it is lawful for a husband to divorce his wife. It was a trap question for starters. To answer unfavorably about divorce would have put him in an unfavorable light with many Israelite men who had become frivolous in their view of divorce. On the other hand, any defense of divorce would have put Jesus in a difficult position with the Law of God. Instead, Jesus responds by saying, “Have you not read,” he said, ‘That at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’? So, they are no longer two, but one flesh.” Jesus deliberately takes his challengers back to the beginning when God created marriage implying an intention and a purposeful design. These religious leaders, know this scripture and have probably read it many times. The conversation should be about marriage keeping rather than about how to read something into it that isn’t there. Jesus’ challengers believed that because they were more permissive toward divorce and divorce had become so widely exercised that somehow everything was different now. Taking the text strictly on its face any argument that suggests Homosexuality was part of the plan from the beginning is just not supported any more than divorce. To assume that it is one has to read into God’s Word things that are not there using our current context.

Alright. That’s a far as we go today. Lest I become like Luther and become too windy, for the sake of time I will stop here and call this part one. I appreciate the article in terms of the opportunity it brings to talk about it. Thanks for that. At any rate may the Lord bless us all to know His Word truthfully and fully and thereby, Believe in the Lord Jesus with all of our hearts. God bless you. I hope that this is a blessing to you. We’ll see you next week.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30

Link to Article:

https://www.newsandtribune.com/opinion/guest-column-bible-shouldnt-be-weaponized-against-lgbtqia-community/article_eb56c5fa-7b01-11ed-bab0-7753a122dae3.html

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