

ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

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Same-Sex Marriage and the Culture of Accommodation

What was once unthinkable becomes debatable and gradually becomes acceptable. That process is now active in America producing a culture of accommodation to ideas and practices hostile to the ethical absolutes rooted deeply in Scripture. There is no more perfect example of this culture of accommodation than same-sex marriage. Indeed, recently the President of the United States announced that he has changed his views on same-sex marriage. He now sees same-sex marriage as a right. According to him and the position he now endorses, which is so widely accepted by many in our culture, you have the right to marry anyone in the US, regardless of gender. Marriage equality is today's civil rights campaign—just as was the black civil rights movement, the voting rights movement and the women's rights movement earlier in our history. Further, to follow the logic of the president, if same-sex marriage is a right, then there is no justification for letting the states decide for themselves on this issue. There is, therefore, no possible basis for any state in this union to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation when it comes to marriage. This is powerful and the implications are only now beginning to be understood. Several key thoughts:

- First, consider what has occurred in one generation! Homosexuality has gone from being almost universally condemned to being almost fully normalized in the larger culture—not only in America but throughout Western Europe. Western civilization has totally embraced both the homosexual lifestyle and now same-sex marriage. It is quite staggering! Theologian Albert Mohler comments correctly that “Where homosexuality was even recently condemned by the society, now it is considered a sin to believe that homosexuality is wrong in any way. A new sexual morality has replaced the old, and those who hold to the old morality are considered morally deficient.” The cultural pressure is now relentless and formidable. This places the true church of Jesus Christ in a difficult position culturally. As Mohler so poignantly remind us: “We cannot join the larger culture in normalizing homosexuality and restructuring society to match this new morality.”
- Second, what then should the church do? **First**, this new culture of accommodation is foisting the gay lifestyle and same-sex marriage on America in the name of rights and liberties. However, from the perspective of God, “a right” does not equal righteousness. The Creation Ordinance of God (Genesis 1 and 2) stipulates that marriage is between a man and a woman. The rest of Scripture declares that any sexual practice that departs from this standard (e.g., adultery, extramarital sex, premarital sex, bestiality or homosexuality) is “unnatural.” We simply cannot give up this central point. **Second**, it is important to remember that marriage is fundamentally a public institution. Throughout all of human history, civilizations have always recognized the importance of marriage as a central organizing institution of the culture. Mohler argues that “Marriage regulates relationships, sexuality, human reproduction, lineage, kinship, and family structure. But marriage has also performed another crucial function—it has regulated morality.” As our culture is now

redefining marriage, it also leads to a redefinition of reproduction and parenthood, while also producing a legal revolution and a completely new social order with a radically new morality. Mohler: “Marriage teaches morality by its very centrality to the culture. With a new concept of marriage comes a new morality, enforced by incredible social pressure, and, eventually, legal threats.” Finally, the true church must focus in a fresh, new way on marriage as an institution created by God and God’s plan for human sexuality in all its fullness and beauty. Mohler: “We must develop pastoral approaches that are faithful to Scripture and arm this generation of believers to withstand the cultural pressure and respond in ways that are truly Christian.”

- A concluding comment. In 1985, Don Baker published a book, *Beyond Rejection*, which chronicled the story of Jerry, who struggled with homosexuality from his childhood, through seminary and into marriage. Over 25 years later, it still provides a needed window into the extreme difficulties of this struggle and yet the hope provided by Jesus Christ. It is must reading for the church, for it provides the balance of truth and compassion so needed on this issue. Based on the balance brought by this book, let me suggest several action points for dealing with the reality of homosexuality in our culture:
 1. Remember that to the homosexual subculture, evangelicals are the enemy! Because the Bible speaks so clearly on this issue and evangelicals reflect that truth, there is no room for compromise or discussion. Patience, love and compassion are needed as relationships are developed.
 2. Remember that homosexuality is a sin. But it is not the “worst” sin. God’s grace is completely sufficient to deal with this bondage but, although scandalous, it is not singularly worse than others.
 3. Unconditional love is an absolute requirement in ministry to those in bondage to this sin. Compassion, empathy, patience and commitment for the long haul are necessary prerequisites. The reality is that many will fall back into the lifestyle, even after conversion to Jesus Christ. That is why organizations like “Exodus International” are so critical. A ready-made support group of encouragers and accountability are central to this organization’s ministry.
 4. Repentance must always be the goal. There must be the complete break with the past and with the lifestyle. There is no compromise or middle-ground available. Here again, “Exodus International” is so central to ministering to the homosexual.

There is no sign that the homosexual issue will subside in Western Civilization. Somehow the church of Jesus Christ must be able with one hand to declare that this lifestyle is morally and ethically wrong, while with the other reach out the hand of love, acceptance, and compassion. Only God, working through His Spirit to enable the church, can accomplish this most difficult and seemingly impossible task.

See Charles Krauthammer in the *Washington Post* (18 May 2012); Albert Mohler, “The Challenge of Same-Sex Unions,” in *Tabletalk* (April 2012), pp. 82-83; and James P. Eckman, *Biblical Ethics*, pp. 47-52.