

Clarity and Compassion: God's Word, Same Sex Marriage, and People You Love, 8
The Civil Rights Argument: "Isn't Being Gay the Same As Being Black?"

Sunday Evening Bible Study
November 8, 2015

1. **Summary of the Civil Rights Argument:** "You Christians were wrong by using the Bible to deny African-Americans their civil rights in the past, and you are wrong by using the Bible to deny gay Americans their civil rights now."
 - 1.1 "[Angelina and I] will consider tying the knot when everyone else in the country who wants to be married is legally able." (Brad Pitt, Actor, 2006)
 - 1.2 "Gay is the new black." (Michael Gross, Actor, 2008)
 - 1.3 "On matters of freedom and equality, history has not remembered obstructionists kindly. Not on abolition. Not on women's suffrage. Not on workers' rights. Not on civil rights. And it will be no different on marriage rights." (Michael Bloomberg, Ex-Mayor NYC.)
 - 1.4 55% of African-Americans say that equal rights for African-Americans are not the same as equal rights for African-Americans while just 28 percent say they are.
2. **Summary of our Response:** We concede that many professing Christians abused the Bible to deny African-Americans their civil rights in the past, but we deny that being black is the same as being gay when it comes to civil rights.
3. How Christians in Alabama missed an opportunity to glorify God:
 - 1865 Civil War ends with slavery abolished after 200 years of American Christians justifying slavery from the Bible. However, the abolitionist movement was led by Christians condemning slavery from the Bible.
 - 1870 First African-American graduates from Harvard.
 - 1955 Martin Luther King earns Ph.D. from Boston University, trained in the social gospel.
 - 1963 **June:** Gov. George Wallace blocks door at the University of Alabama; **August:** MLK gives "I Have A Dream" speech in March on Washington; **September:** Bomb kills 4 girls at 16th Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham. Many white churches voted not to admit black members.
 - 1964 Congress passes Civil Rights Act which outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
 - 1965 March 7: Bloody Sunday on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma; Nov. 7: First Bible Church begins in Decatur. Vivian Malone, first black student, graduates from UA. Dallas Seminary opens its doors to black students for the first time, one of the first conservative seminaries to desegregate.
 - 1967 Supreme Court rules state laws against interracial marriage are unconstitutional. Interracial marriage was illegal in 16, mostly Southern, states in 1967.
4. **Thesis:** The social justice that should have been championed by Bible teaching churches, especially in the South, was initiated and established by the federal government, which seized the opportunity to expand its power over the states. This trend towards expanded federal government and away from states rights contributed to the SCOTUS decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015.
5. **Disclaimer #1:** Just because many Christians were wrong about one thing, does not mean that all Christians are wrong about everything. Similarly, the Supreme Court was wrong about the *Dredd Scott* decision but was right about the 14th Amendment. Each issue should be dealt with individually.

6. **Disclaimer #2:** While there are many passages of Scripture *condemning* racism, there are no passages of Scripture *commending* same sex relationships. Just because American Christians ignored much of the Bible in the past, does not mean that we should ignore much of the Bible in the present.
7. **Warning:** Every generation is inclined to arrogantly assume they would have avoided the errors of past generations, had they been in their place.
8. **Why same sex marriage is not a civil rights issue.**
 - 8.1 Being black is not a choice. Homosexual acts (just like heterosexual acts) are most certainly a choice. The state has always exercised its authority to limit the choices of its citizens for the good of the nation.
 - 8.2 Being black is detectable through visible verification apart from self-identification. Being gay is undetectable apart from self-identification. There is no blood or genetic test to confirm sexual orientation. (I credit this insight to Vodie Baucham).
 - 8.3 Being black is an unchangeable characteristic—one cannot stop being black. Homosexual behavior is a changeable characteristic—one can stop participating in homosexual activity.
 - 8.4 Being black is a description of a person’s inherited *appearance*. Being gay is a description of a person’s willful *actions*.
 - 8.5 Being black does not automatically disqualify one from marriage by definition (heterosexual). Being gay and seeking same sex “marriage” does automatically disqualify one from marriage by definition. The state has always and justifiably denied this “right” to certain classes of people—marriage laws always discriminate.
 - 8.6 Being black has historically not prevented inter-marriage with someone of a different race (Nu. 12:1), while being gay has historically prevented inter-marriage with someone of the same sex. While there is ancient and biblical evidence for inter-racial marriage, there is no such evidence for same-sex marriage.
 - 8.7 The civil rights movement aimed to eradicate discrimination based on *appearance* (race, color, sex) which finds much Biblical support (ex., Is. 19:21-25; Acts 17:26; Ro. 10:12,13; 1 Cor. 1:23,24; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28,29, Col. 3:11), while the gay rights movement aims to eradicate discrimination based on *actions* (sexual immorality, “same sex marriage,” etc.) which enjoys no such Biblical support.
 - 8.8 “When we deem that homosexual acts are immoral, we are not stigmatizing a class of *persons*; we’re exercising our moral reason about the wrongness or rightness of *actions*. Unlike racism, principled opposition to homosexual rights has a firm basis. It’s normal to judge behavior, including sexual behavior. That’s why describing homosexual acts as immoral is not at all like calling black men and women inferior.” (R.R. Reno, *First Things*, May 2012).
 - 8.8 We are not denying the right of homosexual men and women to marriage. We are denying that they have the right to redefine marriage. The state has always denied its citizens the option of marrying “anyone you want.”
 - 8.9 It is normally wrong to discriminate against someone based on their body’s *appearance*, but it is normally right to discriminate against someone based on their willful *actions*.
 - 8.10 Historically, governments have viewed marriage as a legal relationship shaped by the needs of children for mothers and fathers. Therefore, laws should maximize the odds that children grow up with the blessing of both a mother and father in their lives. Race does not affect this ancient understanding of marriage and therefore, governments are right to strike down laws against inter-racial marriage designed to perpetuate white supremacy. However, being male or female has great bearing on the institution of marriage and governments are wrong to strike down laws merely to serve the interests of adults by facilitating a sexual-romantic companionship (I credit this insight to Robert George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University).
 - 8.11 The goal of pro-segregation laws were to keep the races apart so one could exploit the other. The goal of pro-marriage laws is to bring the sexes together so children can grow up in the secure environment of united parents. One is designed to keep people apart in order to do harm, while the other is designed to bring people together to do good. (Insight from Robert George).