

XIX. Contending and Defending the Faith in Biblical Perspective
Contending and Contenders—Defending and Defenders
“What About Same Sex Marriage and Civil Unions?”

Mark 10

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I'd like to look at Genesis 1. In the previous study I did a general overview of the Biblical doctrine of marriage and why it's continually under assault from the day that sin entered the world. Satan has brought an assault against all the created glory of our God and all the institutions that He has established. In this study I want to go a step further in this tsunami wave of this legal, cultural, academic and arts being devoted to the promotion of the redefining of marriage, the notion of same sex marriage and civil unions.

I want to set up going to Genesis 1 in this manner. Jesus has been tested by the Pharisees around the doctrine of marriage and the current assault on marriage among the Israel people and that was the notion of a particular school of rabbis that had reinterpreted the provision of divorce that Moses had written out. It could be characterized as something similar to our no-fault divorce but it was kind of any-fault divorce. The question which can be found in Matthew 19, a parallel text to Mark 10, was, is it ok for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all. The reaction to Jesus' reply was, are You sure You want to say this for it will cut down on Your crowd and if You're expecting this to be permanent it would be better not to marry. So there was this strike back to Jesus which is similar to what happens to us as we hold fast to the doctrine of marriage.

People seem to say if you're faithful in this matter of marriage then the people you want to win to Christ aren't going to want to listen to you because you are opposing what they want which I believe sells short both the devastation of sin, the work of the Holy Spirit drawing people to Himself and the work of the Gospel which is that people are saved from their sins. You can't be saved from your sins unless you're willing to identify the sins you are to be saved from by God's grace. This position is not culturally winnable or you end up being on the wrong side of history or the wrong side of the trajectory of the culture. Those are the same things we're hearing today in the matter of the church as we are watching this movement of the redefinition of marriage.

I can only characterize it as the return to the Neopaganism which is a sophisticated return to the paganism of our forbearers. Many here are from Africa or Europe and our forbearers in paganism had totally distorted marriage and any notion of social ethics. Then the Gospel came in what was called the Middle Ages. It won people to Christ and began to inform the culture. Now all this sexual chaos began to bring order and sex was put back within its appropriate boundaries of marriage and marital norms began to be established that were consistent with God's Word – one man, one woman for on life. We received those glorious benefits and now here we all are in this nation also having received two Gospel awakenings and many providential blessings, consciously turning back to the paganism of sexual anarchy and marital chaos. Those who would say wait here is what marriage is, are now determined as bigots. So you see how the Scriptures are being fulfilled where they call good evil and evil good. That's where we are in the flow of things.

So how should we contend and defend for the faith in general but in particular on this subject of marriage? In this series we have looked at case studies and have seen how Paul contended and defended for the faith in the book of Galatians, Acts and Corinthians. Now we see Jesus contending and defending for the faith in terms of marriage and we have seen that from the passage in Mark 10 in the last study. What Jesus does here is a marvelous clue to us.

Let me put it this way. I made three great decisions in my life. I thought they were good decisions but I had no idea how great those decisions were. They are all interrelated. My three great decisions are Jesus, Cindy and Covenant College. I would commend the first one to you, Jesus but you can't have the second one for I'm not letting go of that one, my wife, Cindy and thirdly, I would at least ask you to consider Covenant College but that is the role of the church to give people what they hadn't gotten before. When I made the choice to pursue Cindy that is what led me to Christ and then the next thing I am called to the ministry. I knew I wasn't going to get prepared for the ministry at East Carolina even though there was a lot of ministry to do there but that when I had narrowed it down to three colleges – Columbia Bible College, Toccoa Falls Bible College and Covenant College.

I remember visiting Covenant College and singing the college hymn, *All For Jesus* and that's when I decided to go there. I still wasn't entirely sure what I was doing even to the fact that the first day of class I was challenged to the point that I was ready to resign and leave there but in the context of all of that God began to challenge me. I found out that Christianity was not a one hour a day deal or a one day deal for it was a seven day a week and a 365 day a year deal. Jesus had His claims on me for every area of life. To quote Kiper there is not one square inch that is not claimed by Jesus Christ, this is Mine in this world. Then to know that the Bible could give you a world and life view and that you could think Christianly about the issues of life. The Bible was not just a collection of good Bible stories nor even of that compendium of that Gospel message alone. It was the glorious essential truth of the Gospel with all of its intended truth that can equip you so you can understand history, spelling, math and science. It gives you the framework for everything. It gives you the compulsion to move into every area.

That call to develop a Christian world and life view culminated into realizing my head was there for more than just a football helmet, a baseball cap and a golf visor. I actually found out there was something more to do with your head. It was an extraordinary blessing for me to learn those things and has set me on a wonderful journey of life of learning and growing because I have so much to learn and so little ability to learn but God is gracious.

As you go to God's Word for this Christian world and life view there are four elements that you build your Christian world and life view around. Jesus uses them in Mark 10. Number one to understand life you have to understand God as Creator in His act of creation. Number two is then you have to move from Genesis 1 and 2 to Genesis 3, the fall where man has fallen into sin. What are the ramifications of our fall into sin and the judgment of God that brings spiritual death, inevitably physical death and consequence of eternal death? What does it mean to be born with a sin record, a sin nature and a darkened mind? We call it total depravity. That doesn't mean absolute depravity but total depravity where everything I think and do is looted by my sin nature.

So there is the doctrine of Creation that answers who am I, why am I here, how did God make me and why did God make me. We were made in the image of God – Imago Dei – the creation is the home that God built for His people. What does it mean to be a good steward of that? All of those things are answered around the doctrine of Creation where God is Creator.

Secondly, is the doctrine of the fall that tells you man is in rebellion against God as we are born as sinners. It is not that we're born sin and become sinners but we're born sinners and that is why we sin. We have a darkened mind that needs to be set free. We have a heart that is not able to think because it is devoted to self-absorption.

Then there is the third element of a Christian world and life view and that is redemption. Behold I make all things new. I give you a new record, heart, life, family, home and the ability to have a new mind as your mind is being transformed and you are not being conformed to the image of this world. Now the dominion of sin has been broken. You are not sinless but you can sin less. The power of sin has been broken and you're born again. You have a new status of being right with God. You have the new ability to grow not for grace but in the grace and knowledge of Christ. This new Gospel and all the truths that you have been given lead you in His way, including another glorious truth attached to redemption and that's the promise of God's providence. God in His providence upholds the world in common grace but also works all things together for your good in redeeming grace.

The fourth element is the consummation. That is when Jesus' victory has brought the fruits of the victory. That is all that Jesus has endured at the cross and affirmed at the resurrection where He has defeated all of our enemies but it is only at His second coming that He destroys them. He has initiated His Kingdom but His Kingdom that is now is not yet in its fullness and it will not be in its fullness until the King returns.

When marriage is under assault and they come to test Jesus what does Jesus do? He goes back to creation. From the beginning God made them male and female and for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. Number two, Jesus deals with the issue of the fall, sin. That's why a provision of grace has been provided for those who have been violated in the covenant of marriage and that's divorce. Then Jesus brings the Good News saying that you don't have to live there for you can by God's grace go back to what God intended and your marriage can reflect all the elements that God has put into marriage and creation because God's grace is greater than your sin. We can pursue our spouses and raise up another generation with the promise from God – I'll be a God to you and your children after you.

Then we anticipate that glorious second coming when there will be no marrying or giving in marriage. I don't know what that means. I have three ideas as to what this means but this is not the time for me to give you those three ideas but that's all they are – ideas. Cindy is probably praying one of my ideas won't work but creation, fall, redemption and consummation at the Second Advent of Christ are what we look for in those four elements. The Triune God in the preeminence of Christ through whom all things were made and by whom the judgment of sin will be ultimate and final, in whom there is redemption and He is coming again to bring everything to consummation. That is the Christian world and live view.

Whenever you face the issues in the culture you need to sit down with a Christian mind. Remember the WWJD – what would Jesus do? To know what Jesus would do

you have the opportunity to have the mind of Christ as Paul has said. It is in His Word. By His Spirit you can understand it and absorb it. In a life long journey of learning it will go into eternity because God is inscrutable. You will always be learning of Him and finding out about Him even into eternity but we need to what His Word says by His Spirit with the core Gospel message to know what to say and do in the challenges of life. Jesus models that for us. He goes forward by taking us backward to creation acknowledging the fall but then through creation He shows us the power of redemption. Jesus is referring to Genesis 2:24 but before I get there I want to look at Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:26-31 says [26] *Then God (singular) said, "Let us (plural) make man (singular) in our (plural) image, after our (plural) likeness. And let them (man-plural) have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* (So this man, them, will be our vice regents) [27] *So God (singular) created man (singular) in his (singular) own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

[28] *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* [29] *And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. [30] And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food."* And it was so. [31] *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

Here God establishes for us the sixth day where He makes man in His image. The first three days of creation He forms the creation and the next three days He fills the creation. It is now formed and filled and gives us this insight that He makes man in His image. Then God said "Let us..." which is plural. Now that doesn't give you the doctrine of the Trinity but it accommodates the doctrine of the Trinity – One God in Three Persons. He says to make man (singular) in His image and man is male and female so to image God it requires both male and female to properly do that in all His glory and majesty as a reflection of Him.

Now we move from this general statement of creation to a focus of creation, from the creation of the world and the heavens to now the Garden itself in Genesis 2. This is not another creation account. We have just gone further into creation, the Garden and we find out more of the location of the Garden. As we go into the Garden we are also focused on the intricacies of the sixth day of creation and the making of man male and female. He gives the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-4 and let's pick up at verse 15.

Genesis 2:15 says [15] *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.* Here He has given man a mandate. He wants man to do three things – subdue the earth (which is the dignity of work), rule over the creation (God's vice regent) and thirdly, be fruitful and multiply. Now man is put in the Garden. Now what happens when that occurs?

Genesis 2:16-17 says [16] *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Now this

covenant of works that He has given to man has a negative. This covenant had three positives and now a negative which is not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Everything up till now has been good except this – the man is alone. Genesis 2:18-25 says [18] *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* [19] *Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.* [20] *The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.* [21] *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.* [22] *And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

[23] *Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* [24] *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* [25] *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Why were they not ashamed? It was because there was no sin so there is no shame or guilt. There is no need to cover up. God had made them and made them for one another in a one flesh relationship. So let's look a little closer at this text.

He put him in the Garden and told him not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There all the other trees to eat from and God would sustain them with that. God told them He would be with them and He wanted them to be in the Garden to subdue it, rule over it and be fruitful and multiply. He couldn't do it by himself for it is hard to be fruitful and multiply by yourself. You can't have dominion by yourself, you need help. You need help subduing and then he names the animals. To name is to show authority and to define. That is what name means in Hebrew cosmology and he is having dominion over the creatures and not one is a suitable helper for him to have dominion, rule over the creation and to be fruitful and multiply.

Then God brings the verdict saying it is not good for man to be alone and reaches into his side. God doesn't take it from his head for she is not over him or from his feet for she is not under him but from his side to complete him and come along side of him. There is another covenant with the Second Adam who has a bride. The Second Adam is Jesus and His bride is the church. Where do we come from? We come from His blood which flowed from His side.

Adam was brought from the dust of the ground and this reminds me of the story of the little boy who came to his mother and said “Mom did Adam come from dust?” She said “Yes” and he pointed to under the bed and said “Look at that.” She said “I see it.” He said “When you die you go to dust, right?” “Well, we either have someone coming or going, I'm not sure.” So as a special act of creation Adam was formed from the dust of the ground

Another special act of creation was when He made the woman from the side of the man that they may joined as one flesh. So origin and consummation declared the one flesh relationship as well as the biological framing of what God designs in terms of the intimacy they are to enjoy together. Now with her he can have dominion, subdue the earth and be fruitful and multiply. He wakes him from the sleep and he looks at her and

says “Wooman! This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” One name for man is *adam* and is transliterated Adam in your Bible and the other is *ish* where when she shall be called woman it is *isha* which is a reflection of man, ish. So here is the reflection of and they are to be joined together.

Then God gives the first marriage covenant and the declaration for this cause. A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one. I build a miracle into My creation – one plus one equals one, as you leave and cleave together. That is what Jesus brings us back to and that’s where He places us.

Having done that, we now have a working definition of marriage. Five times Genesis 2:24 is used in the Bible to deal with the assault upon marriage. It is found in Mark 10, Matthew 19, I Corinthians 6 and you can find references to it in other places as well. Marriage is a Divinely designed institution of creation, framed as a lifelong, conjugal, heterosexual, monogamous covenant of intimacy. I have drawn this out of Genesis 2:24 and it affirmed throughout the Bible.

Marriage is not something that evolves from society. It is Divinely designed and delivered. It is not temporary for it is to be lifelong. It is conjugal and a one flesh relationship whereby biologically, socially, emotionally and spiritually they are called to be one. It is instituted by the one flesh relationship in consummation. It is continued by the one flesh relationship in recreation and it is multiplied in the one flesh relationship with procreation. It is therefore heterosexual because that is how God has made us. You cannot have the conjugal marriage covenant without the heterosexual design of God. It also designed to be monogamous with one man and one woman.

It is all reflected in the law of God later when God’s people are being saved out of the pagan societies and they are given the law of God in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. There is even the moral law of God where a child is called to honor their father and mother. What’s expected? It is expected that the marriage with the husband and wife has put in place one father and one mother. It is not two mothers or two fathers but one father and one mother because it starts with one husband and one wife. So that becomes the working definition of marriage.

What about Christian marriage? I bring this up because what we have been going through is not just for Christians. This is revealed in natural law to all creation and defined with clarity in God’s special revelation. It wasn’t socially evolved but it has been socially attacked throughout the ages and so we’ve got to understand that this particular gift of God is for all of creation. This is a creation ordinance for humanity to reveal God’s covenant work with His bride, His people and to establish the instrument for human flourishing, the family that flows from this definition of a marriage.

A Christian marriage works from this definition except that it has one more modifier. We are to marry in the Lord. That means a Christian marriage is between two Christians where they have a personal relationship with Christ. They are guided by God’s Word. They are indwelt by God’s Spirit and their marriage is not for human flourishing but is for the glory of God – the One who has saved them from their sins.

So what is the contemporary definition of marriage and why? Same sex marriage is working off of this new definition of marriage and I have tried to be honest with it as I’ve done my research over the last few months. Marriage today is considered, not a creation institution or a covenant, but a contract of commitment between two consenting adults for the duration of desire. It is not considered Divinely designed but it is

considered socially evolved. It is considered a sociological development. It is not instituted, refreshed, a-newed and furthered in a conjugal relationship of sexuality. It is not a conjugal relationship of sexuality. It is not necessarily heterosexual and ultimately it will not have to be monogamous.

When you see this that is manufactured out of social approval at the moment, legal pressure and a movement of society to make these things a part and partial of life, the following questions have to immediately be asked. Why a contract? Why not just a one night stand? Why a commitment? Why not sex without a commitment? You are vulnerable and transparent but you don't have to be committed. Why consenting? Why two? Why adults? There is no objective ethical statement to support this definition of marriage though this current push is a definition of marriage to accommodate same sex marriage and or civil unions and is destined for the trash heap as our sexual rebellion will not stop in allowance with this.

Finally, what about this matter of civil unions? Civil unions are basically trying to find something in which we don't feel like we've compromised marriage so it becomes kind of like married like, where it's marriage but not marriage. We don't call it marriage so we feel better about it but it is actually marriage like and still institutes the same problem of a distorted family because of a deformed marriage definition and all the results that happen with children that either now have a fatherless or motherless home, not because of the fall that we have to respond to ministry with orphans or divorces etc. because of social determination we will create families with fatherless and motherless homes.

Why and how should we respond to this? How should Christians defend and contend the Christian institution of marriage in responding to same sex marriage with this definition or marriage like civil unions? The first thing is we cannot and we must not participate. Secondly we cannot and must not celebrate them. Thirdly, we cannot and must not isolate ourselves from them. We cannot accommodate them. Right now the church is dividing itself over silence, denial or accommodating the culture because we don't want to be on the wrong side of culture or trying to create marriage like with civil unions.

Those who have the agenda of affirming the unhindered pursuit of sexual eroticism, housed within a redefinition of marriage, will never be satisfied with marriage like civil unions. We may promote it because we want to feel better about ourselves and think we've found a middle ground but there is no middle ground on this matter. So we cannot participate, celebrate, propagate, accommodate but we must not isolate. We cannot withdrawal. We have to engage, not with the marital definition and celebration but with the people who are engaged in it. We must minister. We must love them. We must care for them. We must open our hearts to them.

Do you not understand where they are? Very seldom will you find someone who says they are a heterosexual promiscuist but when someone says they are a homosexual or they believe in same sex marriage, they are recreating an institution to give approval to what they have determined is their identity in life and you have a great message for them. By creation your identity is that God made you in His image.

Secondly, in Jesus Christ you have an identity that you are His and He is yours. You can be in union with Christ and the power of sin can be broken in your life. Forgiveness of sins is freely granted in your life. So we want to reach to those who are

searching for identity that is nothing more than an identity of despair. One said to me that it was an identity of depravity but I think it is a movement to depravity but it's an identity of despair whenever we try to find our identity anywhere other than being made in the image of God or redeemed by the Son of God. So we need to hold fast to marriage as a sacred institution, not participating in its perversion and distortion or celebrating or accommodating it and not isolating ourselves from those who are embracing it.

We are to embrace the sacred institution that reflects the covenant of redemption that Christ has His bride in which is permanent, He pursued her, deserves her and loves her and nothing can separate Him from her. This is a marriage that reveals God's relationship with His people through Christ and has been given for human flourishing that is crucial to establishing families so that cultures can flourish in common grace as we proclaim the message of redeeming grace.

Here is what you do. Make the case, full throated, unashamed, for the institution of marriage that is sacred, given by God to reveal His relationship with His people and for human flourishing. Make the case thoughtfully, intentionally, lovingly and firmly. Make the case in the context of where you are in the culture. This is hard for you in Alabama to get this for you are a minority.

Recently I took a group of young people through the halls of Tuskegee to learn from Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver and how you hold to truth from a minority status. When we call ourselves moral majorities people actually look at us and say "Are you crazy? What color are the clouds in the world?" That doesn't mean you back off on the truthfulness of what Biblical morality is, and you don't couch it within the Gospel of saving grace in Christ but you must understand that you're a minority. Therefore minorities have a certain way to function. In fact you can borrow it from those who are now capturing the majoritarian view of the culture but in fact are minoritarian in number. How did they do it?

I shared it with you in the last study. They made the unthinkable thinkable. Once you make it thinkable then you make it doable. Once it is doable then you make it acceptable. Once you make it acceptable you make it affirmable. We have watched this over the last 25 years. It actually goes beyond that but at least that. Then make use of amazing tools such as the performing arts, telling stories well, and producing programs appropriately making those sexual abhorrent behaviors and sexual promiscuous behaviors as comedies.

Let me assure you heterosexual promiscuity and homosexual anarchy does not end up with pretty pictures. A person came to me the other day and asked me why I wouldn't call it gay and I will not because it is not. I have ministered to too many. I love them too much to buy into a euphemism that is a lie. So what is it that we do? There is a better way and it's the love of God in Christ and we tell better stories. We do the arts better and we don't make comedy of the destruction of sin in order to make it palatable or honest. We have integrity. That's why as a church we have to get back to the fine arts, popular arts and the performing arts. We have to tell the stories.

There is a movie coming out soon called Woodlawn for they found a narrative. Watch what they do to racism with that narrative. Watch what they do to show the power of Gospel revival of a high school football team. I'm giving them a free advertisement here gladly.

The other thing you need to do is pray for preachers because you'll never have the arts and the academy or athletics do what they can do in the culture without the pulpit equipping and holding forth the truth of God's Word. It just won't happen so we have to pray for a reformation in pulpit ministry, an insertion – a ministry throughout society with a Christian world and life view that makes full use of those things.

Here is something very practical. You happen to live in a country where God and His providence has given you an instrument and don't let go of it. It's called the First Amendment. You live in a country where God has given you a great blessing called Rule by Law, a Constitution. If I was in another country I wouldn't even have this argument but I'm in this one. So be full-throated in making the case. Learn to use narratives, stories and do what you do in excellence. Learn appropriate argumentation that is not contentious and defensive but that makes the case to win people and win the argument. Learn how to make full use of the God-given gift of the First Amendment of the freedom of religion and speech. Learn how to hold to the Constitution that is there to protect that freedom of speech, religion and liberty. Learn how to promote what is good and true. Learn how to share all the blessings that come and make these stories.

Pray for pulpits, who will again be instruments of redeeming grace for evangelism and discipleship and common grace to the public square for public policy and the public good. Then let's go to our knees in prayer. Find prayer groups here at Briarwood. There are many of them that meet regularly for this revival, for this reformation. If you can't find one then start one. Call upon the Lord. We are not in a culture war. We are in a spiritual war. The culture, marriage, sexuality are just battlefields. Don't shrink from the battle but understand where the real war is and remember that Jesus has already won it. So call upon Him to bring the fruit of His victory to this nation again and may the marriage bed be held in honor among all (Hebrews 13). Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You, Father, for Your Word. Thank You, Father for the privilege to have a Christian heart, a Christian life and a Christian mind. Give us a life view, a life love and a life style whereby we as Your people will defend the faith, contend for the faith and Father, may the glorious truths of Your Word again find ascendancy for men and women to be saved and for the common good. Father, not only let the rain fall on the just and the unjust through the lives of Your people with Gospel words and deeds but would You rain down again the showers of blessings of redeeming grace. Send revival, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.