

## Homosexuality Sermon Packet (After Supreme Court Decision):

I am going to talk about a really relevant subject today. It touches all of us in some way. The topic is same-sex relationships. You may have family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors who identify as “gay” and are involved in a same sex relationship.

Just over a week ago the Supreme Court of the U.S. ruled that same-sex couples may now marry in all 50 states, thus changing the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions and making it the law of the land. That has a lot of people talking and offering their opinions. I thought it would be good for us to take some time and answer two questions so you aren’t wondering, “Where does Faith Community Church stand on this issue?” So we are going to deal with two big questions.

What do we believe? How should we behave?

Both questions are important. As you can imagine, we only have time to give a big picture overview. I hope, however, this answers some of your questions, causes you to pause and think, and calms some of your fears. I pray this provides guidance for us as we go forward and as you go forward in your personal Christian life.

### 1. What Do We Believe?

This question can be responded to with another question. What do we believe about what? There are related areas. What do we believe about morality? What do we believe about marriage? What do we believe about homosexuality? We have to begin with our belief about morality because this is the foundation that enables us to answer the other two areas of belief.

- What do we believe about morality?

When it comes to thinking about life and the world or right and wrong, there are three critical areas of thought.

- (1) Metaphysics: The matter of BEING or existence
- (2) Ethics: Morals – Behavior
- (3) Epistemology: Knowledge - Truth

Notice that ethics (morals) does not stand alone. It is part of a system, a system that we consider as our world and life view. Your view of existence and your view of truth will affect your view of morals. If you believe that truth is relative and not absolute, that it is a social construct. Your code of behavior will be ever-changing, situational, and uncertain.

Francis Shaeffer said in his books (that influenced my thinking during my collegiate and grad school days), “We tend to see things in ‘bits and pieces.’” We focus on individual issues like abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and more, but we fail to see the big picture that connects the dots. In order to have a reliable moral compass we need to see the big picture. We are not grasping at moral straws, or cultural traditions, or religious traditions, there is more that stands behind our view of morality.

What is the basis for morality? What determines right from wrong? In fact is there even right and wrong or are they just the reflection of current society’s acceptance?

For the Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ, moral values are based in God. He is the personal creator of all things and that includes humanity. And He has made us in His image to reflect who He is (His nature, His character). He is perfectly holy, merciful loving, patient, generous, - and don’t miss this one - God is good. He is absolutely good. There is no evil in him at all.

This is who God is - He is good. He can’t be anything other than good. Therefore all that he does is good.

God’s perfectly good nature issues forth in commandments to us instructions for living “The good life.” These instructions become our moral duties. You shall not murder, steal, commit adultery... These are not arbitrary – I think I’ll require this of humanity - but these all flow out of his perfect nature. Doing these things violate God’s goodness and therefore are wrong.

God’s commandment is that we are to love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are to love our neighbor as ourself - this is good, this is right. What then is the moral standard for our lives? Someone will say, “It is the Bible.” I will answer, “No,” and then I will answer, “Yes.” It works like this; the moral standard is God himself - his perfect goodness, his righteousness, his holiness. Every moral action must be judged in light of his nature.

The Bible is the standard only in the sense that it is derived from God – it is the communication of who He is and what He has designed for his human creations. It is in the Bible that we learn what God has prescribed for “good” human living. We are morally responsible to do certain things and not to do others. Morality is not a human construct. It is real based on God’s perfect character and communication. When we fail to keep God’s commandments (which is called sin), we are morally guilty before him and need his forgiveness.

So morality for all humanity is based on God. Real right and wrong exist and are unaffected by human opinions. Many people today see morality as a matter of personal preference - what I like or what I don’t like. I like Brussel sprouts and you don’t. And it is the same for moral values. It may seem wrong to you, but it is right for me. There isn’t any real right or wrong, no standard that gives right and wrong meaning, it’s all just a matter of opinion.

And if there is no God well then anything goes. All morality becomes relative to different cultures, different societies, and different people. Without God, who is to say one set of values is any better than another?

The problem is, of course, we do say that. No one has no values. And some of those values they want to impose on others even though they protest that they don't. They may say homosexuality is a matter of personal preference, or a matter of genetics, or environment, or whatever. So who are you to say it is wrong? But we can ask, "Who are they to say it is right?" How about other moral issues? How about incest? How about rape? How about slavery? On what basis do you say those are wrong and people should be punished for such actions. If it is personal preference, or genetic wiring, or statistical morality, the majority wins... 50% plus 1 says what is right and wrong (or in the present case 5 justices decree it). Any of those are open to become acceptable behavior.

When you remove the standard, everything eventually becomes permissible. There is no meaningful reason to be opposed to the violation of any human rights. But, you see, if God exists, as we believe he does, it is no longer a matter of our opinions. We have to find out what God thinks on this issue - and that of course brings us to the Bible (the revelation of Himself and his will for us). We are his creation, made in his image to reflect his goodness.

But before we go further, let's look at the second area that is important to understanding our belief.

- What do we believe about marriage?

If you've been here over the past two months we've been spending quite a bit of time on understanding man and woman, male and female and the marriage relationship. So let me try to briefly summarize.

The first chapter of the Bible says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,*" (Genesis 1:27).

The image of God is seen in the complementary pair (male and female). This is the culmination of creation. Remember God made Heaven and Earth, and sea and dry land and so on and you end up with male and female. It's all about God making complementary pairs which are meant to work together.

In Genesis 2 (which describes in more detail the process summarized in 1:27) God said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him,*" (Genesis 2:18, NIV).

And as we saw that word "suitable" means "one opposite." So he's not making "same" he is making "different" and then brings them together. There is a creativity that occurs when two equal but different people (one male and one female) come together that you can't get any other way.

Genesis then applies the example of Adam and Eve to all marriages, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,”* (Genesis 2:24).

This is the design, the intent, and the ideal that God established before the entrance of sin into humanity. This “one flesh” sexual union between male and female was established as the pattern for marriage. Jesus cites Genesis 1 and 2 as the normative pattern that God expects all marriages to follow.

That has been the cross-cultural understanding of marriage for thousands of years - man and women coming together in union. The state did not determine that it is so; it has been a reflection of God’s design. The state does not possess the right to define or change marriage, because it is defined by an authority higher than and outside the state - God himself. The Supreme Court’s decision presupposes that the U.S. government recognizes no authority other than the state - that everything is a matter of the will of the people - or again in this case, the will of 5 justices. This is a dangerous position to be in, as it puts all our rights in jeopardy.

But there’s more. There is profound theological truth pictured in the marriage of a man and a woman.

The apostle Paul said that marriage pictures the love relationship between Jesus Christ and us the Church. Marriage is bound up with the gospel itself, a picture of the union of Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5:32). The last scene in the Bible is the new Heaven and the new Earth. The symbol for that is the marriage of Christ and his Church - the total union.

The Biblical narrative from beginning to end is a signpost of the goodness of the original creation. This includes man and woman marriage and the eventual restoration to that perfect goodness in the new Heavens and the new Earth. So there is a significant spiritual picture portrayed in the marriage relationship between a man and a woman that is not present in a man to man or woman to woman so-called “marriage.”

- What do we believe about homosexuality?

It is important that we make a distinction in terminology at this point. We will see the bible forbids homosexual behavior. And please note carefully the language I am using - “homosexual behavior.” I am distinguishing it from same-sex attraction (for which there may be a variety of reasons including both nature and nurture). It is never to be acted out in behavior, though it creates great inner struggle for the person with such attraction. And that’s another whole study we don’t have time for. I want to be careful to distinguish between the two so those who do struggle know that I am not including you in the same category.

The important thing is not how you got your orientation (a constant ongoing debate), but what you do with it. What the Bible condemns is homosexual behavior.

The clearest New Testament text addressing the issue is Romans, Chapter 1. Paul is cataloguing what has gone wrong with humanity because they denied God. They instead enthroned themselves, their thinking, their desires, and their will as supreme. "It's all about me," became the byline of humanity.

*"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen," (Romans Chapter 1: 24-25).*

Do you see the problem? They exchanged the truth about God - that He is, and who He is - for a lie - that the creature - that's us - is supreme. We have made ourselves our own "god" and we worship ourselves and our desires.

*"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet," (Romans Chapter 1: 26-27).*

When Paul speaks of natural use he is referring back to the nature God established for human beings in his creation. Engaging in homosexual activity is to violate his created intention in making human beings male and female. Paul cites homosexual behavior as an obvious indication of the way human beings have turned from the true God. A way they have denied God and enthroned themselves as the determiner of what is right.

Homosexuality is not the only way. Paul is going to go on and catalogue many others. Later when he mentions homosexual behavior again in 1 Corinthians Chapter 6, he does so in a list of other sins that keep one out of the kingdom of God unless one repents and is forgiven. He also offers a great hope statement.

*"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God," (1 Corinthians 6:11, NIV).*

We should be just as passionate about other marital sins as homosexual behavior. Some of these are pre-marital sexual relations, living together outside of marriage, adultery, and the like. None of those are any more acceptable than homosexual behavior.

## **2. How Should We Behave?**

- We must uphold God's intention of marriage. We must not just articulate our views of marriage; we must embody a gospel marriage culture. We have done a poor job of that in the past. Too many of our marriages have been poor examples of God's design and too many have ended in divorce. This gives the church an opportunity to do what Jesus called us to do with our marriages in the first place: to serve as a light in a dark place.

We must love. Remember Jesus said we are to, “Love our neighbor as ourselves.” The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender person is our neighbor. We must keep in mind truth is often not heard if it's not communicated in love. If we want to be heard, we should communicate in a way worth hearing. You cannot hate a people and reach a people at the same time. We must never forget that we ourselves are people who are rescued, redeemed, and renewed. We are not renewed by our own doing, but by the power and grace of God. We want that for every person we come in contact with, regardless of the sins that may bind them. We must live the words of scripture about the character of love.

***“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs,” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5, NIV).***

Facebook rants don't demonstrate love. Name calling, angry tones of voice, belittling, and avoidance all discredits what we are trying to uphold – a good God who has a good plan for his human creation and who himself is love. That doesn't mean we agree. We can respectfully make it known that we disagree but we will lose our audience if we speak with angry tones and harsh words. It doesn't matter if they are vitriolic towards us; we are responsible to represent Christ (full of grace and truth).

We are to be the ones who care for and protect our neighbors, who are the loudest voices against acts of injustice or abuse of gay and lesbian people. Sadly I have heard some say, “Well, let them all go to hell,” or “There is a special place in hell for “those” people.” That is unkind and unloving. Those words also demonstrate misunderstanding the enormity of one's own sin in assuming a position of pride in self that we have no right to. That stance ignores that there is a place in hell for the self-righteous. We are not to speak of “those” people, they are not separate from us; they are us.

- We must affirm the biblical reality that all persons, including gay and lesbian persons, are created in the image of God and deserve dignity and respect.
- We are to respond with the gospel. Let's not get detoured from our mission. Yes, we can speak into the culture with the timeless truth of God, and work within our structures to influence our culture with God's good. But regardless of how cultural issues like this are decided, and no matter what sort of authority Christian values have in culture, we must always be about Jesus' mission.
- Marriage is not the ultimate battleground. The battleground is the Gospel. The good news that God sent his Son to live a perfect life, die the death we deserved to die, and rise again to glory is of first importance and is true regardless of courts, laws, or culture. We must pray for our communities, love our neighbors and share the hope that is within us.
- As a church we are to be a place where gay and lesbian people feel welcome as they hear of the grace of God and as they seek repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This must be a safe place for people to come out with their struggles of any kind so they can find hope and healing

though Christ. We need to show in word and deed God's better way for true relationships.

- This is not a time to withdraw from our culture but to engage in it so we can be the salt and light that Jesus intends us to be. Running away or hiding out, is abdicating our responsibility both as citizens of heaven and citizens of our nation.

What has happened in the Supreme Court decision hasn't caught God by surprise. He is still sovereign and in control. It doesn't change our mission. If anything this tells us to be more about our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. If we don't try to reach them we don't have much right to complain against them. This is not a time for panic. Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, has said, "The Supreme Court can do many things, but the Supreme Court can't put Jesus back in that tomb. Jesus of Nazareth is still alive; He is still calling the universe toward His kingdom."

This is a time for prayer, for love, for action in our culture to speak the truth of Jesus Christ that sets men and women free, and to do so as the apostle Peter says, "With gentleness and respect."



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