LGBTQ+ Theology

What Will this Class Attempt to Address?

1. God's design for marriage in Creation, as affirmed by Jesus.
2. Bible verses that address homosexuality.
3. The biblical interpretations "revisionist theologians" make in response to the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality.
4. The arguments revisionists theologians make for same-sex marriage.

What Will this Class Not Address?

1. Political issues.
2. Legal issues.
3. Specific behaviors.
4. Why buttered toast always falls face down.

Fundamental Questions*

1. What is marriage?
2. How do you define marriage?
3. Where did you get that definition?
4. How does Scripture define marriage?
5. Are sex differences an essential part of marriage?

* Adapted from Preston Sprinkle and Sean McDowell, "Responding to the Top Biblical Arguments for Same-Sex Marriage (ft. Preston Sprinkle)," YouTube video, July 24, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WTao98xODs.

What Are the Theological Positions Called?

- My position would generally be called "historical", "traditional", or "nonaffirming." I prefer "orthodox Christian position."
- What is Their Theological Position Called?
- Their position would generally be called "affirming." I prefer "revisionist", as do many orthodox Christian theologians.*
- Ninth, Scripture teaches that genuine believers may stumble and fall, but they will persevere in the faith (1 Cor. 1:8)..."

*For a larger discussion see Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 20.

Have Christians Done Actual Harm to LGBTQ+ People?

- There are many stories of legitimately harmful treatment of same-sex attracted people by Christians and the church.
- Christians often treat same-sex relations as a greater sin than adultery or other sexual sins.
- That doesn't mean we should fail to speak the truth of God's Word in love, especially when it relates to someone's eternal destiny. (cf. 1 Peter 3:15-16; Col. 4:5-6; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Why Discuss LGBTQ+ Since it is Divisive?

"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." Ephesians 5:11-13

How to Apply the Analogy of Scripture and Faith

1. Start with the passage in its own setting (grammar, genre, historical situation, author's purpose).
2. Compare it with other passages that address the same subject, giving priority to clearer texts.
3. Check the result against the broad lines of biblical teaching so the part does not overturn the whole.
4. Where texts seem to be in tension or conflict (faith and works, law and gospel, divine sovereignty and human responsibility), accommodate or hold both rather than forcing one to erase the other.

Revisionist Arguments for Same-Sex Unions

- According to my reading of Sean McDowell[1], Kevin DeYoung[2] and Preston Sprinkle[3], there are at least 21 biblical arguments made by revisionists.
- There is a common thread among revisionists—they do not make a direct argument from the Bible because there isn't one.
- Matthew Vines[4] agrees that the Bible condemns homosexuality, but he wants to argue the application of the Bible.
- Patrick Cheng[5] just claims that "queer theology" reads the Bible "creatively" and "constructively."

Sources

[1]Sean McDowell, "Responding to the Top Biblical Arguments for Same-Sex Marriage (ft. Preston Sprinkle)," YouTube video, July 24, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WTao98xODs.

[2]Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

[3]Preston Sprinkle, *Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage? 21 Conversations from a Historically Christian View* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2023).

[4]Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011).

LGBTQ+ Theology

"However, it is important to note that queer theologians have gone beyond these 'texts of terror' [Bible passages addressing homosexuality] and have read the Bible in creative and constructive ways as a means of affirming LGBTQ experience." Patrick S. Cheng *

What is he saying about his view of Bible interpretation?

*Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011), 13. Cheng has a Ph.D., M.Phil. and M.A. in systematic theology from Union Theological Seminary. As an example of creative interpretation, he cites the possibility that David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, and others were in same-sex relationships.

Some Thoughts on Our Culture

- Our culture idolizes sexual relations.
- People have become obsessed with safety and harm.
- Our culture does not hold Biblical marriage in its proper place.

- Our society has made this problem far worse by politicizing it.
- Our culture does not understand human flourishing.

Why Have Parents of LGBTQ+ Become More Accepting?

Matthew 10:37 — "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Luke 14:26 — "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

Main Arguments by Revisionists

- The homosexuality in the Bible is not the type of same-sex relations understood today.
- The homosexuality in the Bible was aggressive, dominant, and power driven—not consensual.
- People in the Greco-Roman world (1st Century) did not understand consensual same-sex relationships as they are understood today.
- Revisionists see a difference in attraction, behavior, and identity.

Questions for Orthodox Christians

- Was the "one-flesh" union in Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:5 only possible for a male and female? Answer: Yes.
- Does the Bible address all sex outside of marriage as sinful? ("porneia" is the Greek word used for illicit sex outside of marriage). Answer: Yes.
- Is "human flourishing" dependent on having a sexual partner? Answer: No.
- Are Christians on the wrong side of history, as some were concerning slavery and as Old Testament patriarchs were concerning polygamy? Answer: No

Christopher Yuan

"It's not about heterosexuality or

homosexuality, but holy sexuality."*

*Christopher Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God's Grand Story* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2018), quoted in Sean McDowell, "Tough Qs on Same Sex Marriage," YouTube video, July 28, 2023, 12:01, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc1rvFDFup4&t=721s.

Experience Over Scripture

Sean McDowell and Matthew Vines, "What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality? Sean McDowell and Matthew Vines in Conversation," YouTube video, posted by Sean McDowell, February 3, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFY4VtCWgyI. The Living Oaks Church (Newpark, CA) held the series *Get a Grip* hosting speakers to discuss current issues.

Sean McDowell, Ph.D.: associate professor of Christian Apologetics at Biola University. The son of Christian author Josh McDowell, he holds master's degrees in theology and philosophy and a Ph.D. in apologetics and worldview studies.

Matthew Vines: author of *God and the Gay Christian* and founder and executive director of The Reformation Project, established in 2013 to advocate for LGBTQ inclusion in Christian churches.

Look for the Arguments

Vines: Experience over Bible interpretation

Border context

Bible interpretation is causing harm to LGBTQ+

McDowell: Bible interpretation should inform our beliefs.

Experience does not trump Bible interpretation.

Vines needs biblical text to prove his points.

The Main Bible Passages Applied to Homosexuality

1. Genesis 1:17; 2:21-24; & Matthew 19:5 (creation unity)
2. Genesis 19:1-11; Judges 19:22-25
3. Leviticus 18:22
4. Leviticus 20:13
5. Romans 1:26-27
6. I Corinthians 6:9-10
7. I Timothy 1:9-10

God's Design - The Creation Account

Genesis 1:27-28 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; ..."

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

- "First, the way in which the woman was created indicates that she is the man's divinely designed complement.
- Second, the nature of the one-flesh union presupposes two persons of the opposite sex."*
- "Third, only two persons of the opposite sex can fulfill the procreative purpose of marriages.
- Fourth, Jesus Himself reinforces the normativity of the Genesis account. (Matthew 19:5): "and [Jesus] said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"
- Fifth, the redemptive-historical significance of marriage as a divine symbol in the Bible only works if the marital couple is a complementary pair."

*Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 27–32.

Genesis 19:1-11

"Before they [the two angels] lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them" (Genesis 19:4-5).

Judges 19:22-25

(verse 22) "While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows, surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have relations with him."

Leviticus 18:22

"You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13

If *there is* a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

Why here in 20:13 would both be put to death if it wasn't consensual?

Romans 1:26-27

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Timothy 1:9-10

"realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

The Bible Doesn't Even Mention Same-sex Marriage

"The Argument From Silence"

THE REASONING:

Because the Bible doesn't mention same-sex marriage, it must be okay.

THE RESPONSE:

Is everything that the Bible doesn't condemn permissible?

EXAMPLES

- Drunk driving
- Internet pornography
- Identity theft
- AI creation of fake recordings

Sprinkle's 21 Arguments that Revisionists Make*

- Argument 1: Sex Difference Is Described, Not Prescribed, in Scripture
- Argument 2: "One Flesh" Does Not Imply Sex Difference
- Argument 3: No One Actually Believes in "Biblical Marriage"
- Argument 4: Paul Was Not Talking about Consensual Same-Sex Relationships
- Argument 5: Romans 1 Is Condemning Excessive Lust, Not Same-Sex Love

- Argument 6: The Biblical Writers Didn't Know about Sexual Orientation
- Argument 7: Romans 1:26 Isn't Referring to Female Same-Sex Sexual Relationships
- Argument 8: The Word Homosexual Was Added to the Bible in 1946
- Argument 9: The Biblical Writers Were Products of Their Homophobic and Patriarchal Culture
- Argument 10: Jesus Never Mentioned Homosexuality
- Argument 11: Paul Said It's Better to Marry Than to Burn (1 Cor. 7)
- Argument 12: Jesus' Sabbath Hermeneutic Informs How We Should Interpret Same-Sex Prohibitions
- Argument 13: God's Acceptance of Gentiles Mirrors How We Should Accept LGB People
- Argument 14: The Trajectory of Women and Slavery Justifies Same-Sex Prohibitions
- Argument 15: The Traditional View of Marriage Is Harmful toward Gay and Lesbian People
- Argument 16: Some People Are Born Gay, So It Must Be Okay
- Argument 17: Same-Sex Marriage Is on the Right Side of History
- Argument 18: Christians Are Hypocritical
- Argument 19: Love Is Love
- Argument 20: It's an Agree-to-Disagree Issue
- Argument 21: The Traditional Sexual Ethic Is Not Livable for LGB People

*Preston Sprinkle, *Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage? 21 Conversations from a Historically Christian View* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2023).

Recommended Resources

Conservative Evangelical Books:

DeYoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Sprinkle, Preston. *Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage? 21 Conversations from a Historically Christian View*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2023.

Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

Rosaria Butterfield, *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023).

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*, expanded ed. (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2014).

Scholarly Pro LGBTQ+ Books

James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

Readable Pro LGBTQ+ Book

Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Convergent Books, 2025).

YouTube Videos

McDowell, Sean, and Matthew Vines. "What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality? Sean McDowell and Matthew Vines in Conversation." YouTube video, posted by Sean McDowell, February 3, 2018. Video.

McDowell, Sean. "Responding to the Top Biblical Arguments for Same-Sex Marriage (ft. Preston Sprinkle)." YouTube video, July 24, 2023. Video.

McDowell, Sean. "Tough Qs on Same Sex Marriage." Featuring Preston Sprinkle. YouTube video, July 28, 2023. Video.