

Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

**A Free Article that may be Printed in Newspapers, Magazines, or Journals, or
Posted on the Web**

**You have my permission to print the following opinion piece for free in newspapers,
magazines, or journals, or to post it for free on the Web.**

David Bruce

Two versions follow. One is long (2,490 words); one is short (1,100 words).

Cover Art

LESBIAN COUPLE DATING CLIP ART □

© Madartists

Dreamstime.com

Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

By David Bruce (2,490 words)

I know some gays and lesbians, and I like them and realize that they are capable of long-term, committed, same-sex relationships. I would not deny them the ability to marry someone they love simply because they love someone of the same sex as themselves. Therefore, I am for same-sex civil marriage.

Arguments For Same-Sex Marriage

My main reason for wanting to allow same-sex couples to be legally joined in a civil marriage is that marriage is a way for committed couples, whether same sex or opposite sex, to show love and commitment to each other. Many same-sex couples have been together for years, are deeply in love, and wish to be married. Kathy Belge tells the story of how she came to be married to Tay, her partner of almost twelve years, in her online article “A Lesbian Marriage: I Wed My True Love.”

In February 2004 she and her partner went to San Francisco in order to be legally married. Ms. Belge was so nervous that she held out the wrong hand for her partner to put the ring on. Ms. Belge had to take the ring off and put it on the correct hand. Ms. Belge writes, “They say every woman dreams of her wedding day. As a child, I never did. But if I had, I don’t think I could have imagined a day with more meaning. It meant so much to be able to share that moment with so many other couples. My wedding day was not just about me and my beloved. It was about making a statement for the rights of people everywhere to be able to love whom they please.”

All adult same-sex couples who wish to be married should have the same right to be married in civil ceremonies as adult opposite-sex couples.

In addition, same-sex couples need to be married to enjoy important rights that heterosexual married couples have. Mary Bonauto, Project Director, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), wrote this on the GLAD Web site on 15 August 2003: “While gay and lesbian families can protect themselves in limited ways by creating wills, health-care proxies and co-parent adoptions, this does not come close to emulating the automatic protections and peace of mind that marriage confers. People cannot contract their way into changing pension laws, survivorship rights, worker’s-compensation dependency protection or the tax system, to name just a few.”

Evidence for this can be found in the experience of many gay and lesbian couples. For example, Kenneth Jost, whose *CQ Researcher* article “Gay Marriage: Should Same-Sex Unions Be Legally Recognized?” appears online (subscription required), writes about Bill Flanigan and Robert Daniel, a gay couple in San Francisco, who protected themselves as much as possible by registering themselves as domestic partners under a San Francisco law. In addition, Daniel executed a health-care proxy. This proxy allowed Flanigan to make medical decisions for Daniel, who had AIDS.

Unfortunately, on Oct. 16, 2000, Daniel was admitted to the University of Maryland’s Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. Because Daniel and Flanigan were not legally married, and despite the health-care proxy that Daniel had executed, Flanigan was not allowed to see Daniel in his hospital room. Not until four hours had passed and Daniel’s mother and sister arrived was Flanigan allowed to see Daniel. By then, Daniel was unconscious, and he died before the two men were able to say goodbye.

Jost also points out that legal marriage gives other rights that unmarried gay and lesbian couples do not enjoy. For example, under the law marital communications are confidential: A spouse cannot be made to testify against his or spouse. Marriage also has important financial and tax benefits. For example, Richard Linnell has a health policy that covers the child whom he and his partner, Gary Chalmers, adopted, but to have Chalmers covered by the policy, Linnell has to pay extra. In addition, Gloria Bailey and Linda Davies, a lesbian couple, will have to pay taxes when they retire and sell their home and joint psychotherapy practice—taxes that a married couple would not have to pay.

Rebuttals of Arguments Against Same-Sex Marriage

One argument that is sometimes made against legalizing same-sex marriage is that legalizing same-sex marriage would require churches to marry same-sex couples. This is not true. In the United States, the First Amendment guarantees religious freedom: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In the United States, church and state are separated. If Congress were to pass a law that legalized same-sex marriage, that law would apply only to civil marriages. Churches would still be able to marry whomever they wish, and they would still be able *not* to marry whomever they wish.

Another argument that is often made against same-sex marriage is that homosexuality is against God’s wishes as revealed in the Bible. However, a Catholic priest who has argued well against this belief is Daniel A. Helminiak, author of “What the Bible *Really* Says About Homosexuality.” In his “Preface to the Millennium Edition,” Helminiak says that the goal of his book is “to make available in easily readable form a summary of a growing body of scholarly

literature on homosexuality in the Bible. Even in 1994, the inevitable conclusion of the scholarly research was already clear. Taken on its own terms and in its own time, the Bible nowhere condemns homosexuality as we know it today.

Helminiak does not advocate a literal interpretation of the Bible in which “a text means whatever it means to somebody reading it today.” Instead, he advocates a historical-critical reading of the Bible in which “a text means whatever it meant to the people who wrote it long ago.” Both ways of reading the Bible agree that the Bible is the Word of God.

Should a text mean whatever it means to people today, or should it mean whatever it meant to the person or people who wrote it? Let’s take a look at a passage from “The Silver Chair,” one of the children’s novels in C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of books with Christian themes. The characters Puddleglum, Scrubb, and Jill are among some dangerous giants. Puddleglum wants the children Scrubb and Jill, as well as himself, to pretend to be “[a]s if we hadn’t a care in the world. Frolicsome.” The children agree to the plan, and a little later we read this about Jill: “She made love to everyone—the grooms, the porters, the housemaids, the ladies-in-waiting, and the elderly giant lords whose hunting days were past. She submitted to being kissed and pawed about [...].”

How should we interpret the phrase “made love to” in this passage? To today’s readers, “made love to” means “had sex with,” but that hardly seems to be the best way to interpret this passage from a Christian novel for children. What did C.S. Lewis, the author of the passage, intend by the phrase? “The Silver Chair” was first published in 1953, when “to make love to” meant to flirt with someone and be charming. That meaning is obsolete now, but it is the meaning with which Lewis used the phrase. Jill is not having sex with all these characters in the novel; she is simply being charming and making them like her.

Possibly, someone could argue that God will make sure that the words in the Bible have the meaning that He wants them to have. However, this is incorrect. For example, a 1631 edition of the King James Bible contained this remarkable typo: “Thou shalt commit adultery” (its translation of Exodus 20:14). Because of this typo, this edition of the Bible is known as the “Wicked Bible.”

When it comes to understanding what the Bible says about same-sex relationships, we have to understand what the authors of the Bible meant by same-sex relationships. In our modern culture, we know that gay men and lesbians can have loving same-sex relationships. However, what is referred to in the Bible as homosexual acts are not of that kind. For example, in the story of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-19), the men of Sodom wanted to rape the angels to whom Lot was providing hospitality. Here the offense is rape and inhospitality, not a condemnation of homosexuality as we know it today. Helminiak writes, “Not homosexuality but hardheartedness is the offense of Gibeah [see Judges 19] and of Sodom.”

According to Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13 states, “If a man lie with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.” Here the Bible condemns the penetration of one man sexually by another man, but Helminiak looks at the reasons why this kind of sex is condemned.

The condemnation occurs in what is called the Holiness Code of Leviticus, which is concerned with keeping Israel “holy” in the sight of God. To be holy is to be set apart. The author of Leviticus was concerned with keeping the Jews different from the Gentiles. At the time, some Gentile societies permitted the penetration of one man sexually by another man. Helminiak writes, “The point is that The Holiness Code of Leviticus prohibits male same-sex

acts for religious reasons, not for sexual reasons. The concern is to keep Israel distinct from the Gentiles. Homosexual sex is forbidden because it is associated with Gentile identity.”

Helminiak uses an analogy here. At one time Catholics did not eat meat on Friday. Of course, most people think that nothing is wrong with eating meat. But the Catholics were concerned with acting like Catholics and with not acting the same way as Protestants. A Catholic who then ate meat on Friday was guilty of an offense against a religious responsibility. Of course, a Catholic who now eats meat on Friday is not guilty of an offense against a religious responsibility.

Leviticus 20:13 advocates the death penalty for gay penetrative sex, and Leviticus 20:9 advocates the death penalty for cursing one’s parents: “For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.” Today, we do not advocate putting to death a person who curses his parents, nor do we advocate putting to death a person who is homosexual. The circumstances that led the writer of Leviticus to prescribe the death penalty for these actions have changed.

By the way, the late Monty Python member Graham Chapman once appeared on a TV talk show, in which he discussed his homosexuality. A viewer wrote in to the talk show, enclosing in her letter some prayers for Chapman’s soul, as well as the Biblical injunction that if a man lie with another, he shall be taken out and killed. Python member Eric Idle read the viewer’s letter, then wrote her in reply, “We’ve taken him out and killed him!”

Helminiak examines other Biblical passages that seem to condemn homosexuality; his book is well worth a read. Reading his book can make people much more accepting of gays and lesbians. For example, when gay author Michael Thomas Ford came out to his sister, her response was, “Well, you know I’m okay with it, but God says it’s wrong, so you’re probably

going to hell.” If Ford’s sister had read this book, she may not have said to her brother that he would probably go to hell.

An argument that is often made against homosexuality in general is that it is unnatural. However, homosexuality is widely practiced in nature by animals, as scientists are beginning to discover. Joan Roughgarden, a professor of biology at Stanford University, is one of several scientists who have studied homosexual behavior among non-human vertebrates. In the introduction to her book “*Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*,” Ms. Roughgarden writes, “Much of this book presents the gee-whiz of vertebrate diversity [including] how species incorporate same-sex courtship, including sexual contact, as regular parts of their social systems.” Ms. Roughgarden believes that sex has more than just the purpose of human reproduction; it can simply be a way to have fun or to create social bonds.

Other scientists have also studied the gay animal kingdom. Bruce Bagemihl spent ten years researching his book titled “*Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*.” Part of his book is devoted to showing the reaction of researchers when they realized that the animals that they were studying were gay.

Susan McCarthy, in an online review of Bagemihl’s book in *Salon*, wrote this: “One unusually candid biologist wrestled with the realization that the bighorn rams he studied frequently had sex with each other, and weren’t just showing nice wholesome aggression. ‘To state that the males had evolved a homosexual society was emotionally beyond me. To conceive of those magnificent beasts as ‘queers’—Oh God!’”

In “*Biological Exuberance*” Bagemihl writes, “Homosexual behavior occurs in more than 450 different kinds of animals worldwide, and is found in every major geographic region and every major animal group.” The main point here, of course, is that homosexual behavior is found

in the natural world. If homosexual behavior is natural for animals, then we can justifiably assume that it is natural for human beings. After all, we are another species of animal, and if it were not natural for some—of course, not all—of us, then we would not see homosexuality among human beings.

Conclusion

I believe that same-sex marriage ought to be legal, and I hope that you agree that it ought to be legal, too. Of course, I am not advocating that churches ought to be forced to marry same-sex couples. I am simply saying that same-sex couples ought to be allowed by the government to have civil marriages. In doing so, same-sex married couples would have all the rights of opposite-sex married couples. In addition, they would be able to express their love and commitment to each other.

All of us should be as accepting of gays and lesbians as country music superstar Garth Brooks, whose sister is lesbian. Brooks made a pro-gay (and pro-freedom-of-religion) statement in his song “We Shall Be Free”: “When we’re free to love anyone we choose, / When this world’s big enough for all different views, / When we’re all free to worship from our own kind of pew, / Then we shall be free.”

Brooks also made a pro-love statement in that song, which celebrates love, whether it is between people of different races or people of the same sex. His sister helped educate Brooks, who is heterosexual, simply by being who she was. Brooks says, “The longer you live with it, the more you realize that it’s just another form of people loving each other.”

David Bruce teaches English at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

###

Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

By David Bruce (1,100 words)

I know some gays and lesbians, and I like them and realize that they are capable of long-term, committed, same-sex relationships. I would not deny them the ability to marry someone they love simply because they love someone of the same sex as themselves. Therefore, I am for same-sex civil marriage.

Arguments For Same-Sex Marriage

My main reason for wanting to allow same-sex couples to be legally joined in a civil marriage is that marriage is a way for committed couples, whether same sex or opposite sex, to show love and commitment to each other. Many same-sex couples have been together for years, are deeply in love, and wish to be married. Kathy Belge tells the story of how she came to be married to Tay, her partner of almost twelve years, in her online article “A Lesbian Marriage: I Wed My True Love.”

In February 2004 she and her partner went to San Francisco in order to be legally married. Ms. Belge was so nervous that she held out the wrong hand for her partner to put the ring on. Ms. Belge had to take the ring off and put it on the correct hand. Ms. Belge writes, “They say every woman dreams of her wedding day. As a child, I never did. But if I had, I don’t think I could have imagined a day with more meaning. It meant so much to be able to share that moment with so many other couples. My wedding day was not just about me and my beloved. It was about making a statement for the rights of people everywhere to be able to love whom they please.”

All adult same-sex couples who wish to be married should have the same right to be married in civil ceremonies as adult opposite-sex couples. In addition, same-sex couples need to be married to enjoy important rights that heterosexual married couples have. Mary Bonauto, Project

Director, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), wrote this on the GLAD Web site on 15 August 2003: “While gay and lesbian families can protect themselves in limited ways by creating wills, health-care proxies and co-parent adoptions, this does not come close to emulating the automatic protections and peace of mind that marriage confers. People cannot contract their way into changing pension laws, survivorship rights, worker’s-compensation dependency protection or the tax system, to name just a few.”

Evidence for this can be found in the experience of many gay and lesbian couples. For example, Kenneth Jost, whose *CQ Researcher* article “Gay Marriage: Should Same-Sex Unions Be Legally Recognized?” appears online, Bill Flanigan and Robert Daniel, who were a gay couple in San Francisco, protected themselves as much as possible by registering themselves as domestic partners under a San Francisco law. In addition, Daniel executed a health-care proxy. This proxy allowed Flanigan to make medical decisions for Daniel, who had AIDS.

Unfortunately, on Oct. 16, 2000, Daniel was admitted to the University of Maryland’s Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. Because Daniel and Flanigan were not legally married, and despite the health-care proxy that Daniel had executed, Flanigan was not allowed to see Daniel in his hospital room. Not until four hours had passed and Daniel’s mother and sister arrived was Flanigan allowed to see Daniel. By then, Daniel was unconscious, and he died before the two men were able to say goodbye.

Jost also points out that legal marriage also gives other rights that gay and lesbian couples do not enjoy. For example, under the law marital communications are confidential: A spouse cannot be made to testify against his or spouse. Marriage also has important financial and tax benefits. For example, Richard Linnell has a health policy that covers the child whom he and his partner, Gary Chalmers, adopted, but to have Chalmers covered by the policy, Linnell has to pay

extra. In addition, Gloria Bailey and Linda Davies, a lesbian couple, will have to pay taxes when they retire and sell their home and joint psychotherapy practice—taxes that a married couple would not have to pay.

Rebuttals of an Argument Against Same-Sex Marriage

One argument that is sometimes made against legalizing same-sex marriage is that legalizing same-sex marriage would require churches to marry same-sex couples. This is not true. In the United States, the First Amendment guarantees religious freedom: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In the United States, church and state are separated. If Congress were to pass a law that legalized same-sex marriage, that law would apply only to civil marriages. Churches would still be able to marry whomever they wish, and they would still be able *not* to marry whomever they wish.

By the way, the late Monty Python member Graham Chapman once appeared on a TV talk show, in which he discussed his homosexuality. A viewer wrote in to the talk show, enclosing in her letter some prayers for Chapman’s soul, as well as the Biblical injunction that if a man lie with another, he shall be taken out and killed. Python member Eric Idle read the viewer’s letter, then wrote her in reply, “We’ve taken him out and killed him!”

Conclusion

I believe that same-sex marriage ought to be legal, and I hope that you agree that it ought to be legal, too. Of course, I am not advocating that churches ought to be forced to marry same-sex couples. I am simply saying that same-sex couples ought to be allowed by the government to have civil marriages. In doing so, same-sex married couples would have all the rights of opposite-sex married couples. In addition, they would be able to express their love and commitment to each other.

All of us should be as accepting of gays and lesbians as country music superstar Garth Brooks, whose sister is lesbian. Brooks made a pro-gay (and pro-freedom-of-religion) statement in his song “We Shall Be Free”: “When we’re free to love anyone we choose, / When this world’s big enough for all different views, / When we’re all free to worship from our own kind of pew, / Then we shall be free.”

Brooks also made a pro-love statement in that song, which celebrates love, whether it is between people of different races or people of the same sex. His sister helped educate Brooks, who is heterosexual, simply by being who she was. Brooks says, “The longer you live with it, the more you realize that it’s just another form of people loving each other.”

David Bruce teaches English at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

###