

DOES GENESIS 2 SUPPORT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE? AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

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Abstract: *The rapid moral and cultural changes in Western society have not left the evangelical church unscathed. Instead, an increasing number of scholars, self-professed evangelicals included, are lining up to offer their affirming interpretations of the key biblical texts related to the same-sex discussion. One area in particular that has seen a seismic shift within evangelical circles is the push for the acceptance of “Christian” same-sex marriage. The purpose of marriage to combat loneliness as found in Genesis 2 vis-à-vis the mandate of procreation in Gen 1:26–28 represents the heart of the debate. Does Genesis 2 support same-sex marriage on the basis of kinship ties as opposed to procreation as taught in Gen 1:26–28? This paper argues that affirming scholars have misinterpreted Gen 2:18–25 as promoting only kinship ties and not procreation as well. Moreover, Gen 2:18–25 must be read in light of Gen 1:26–28. Indeed, Gen 2:18, 20, and 24 serve as the basis for promoting procreation and physical fitness within marriage. This paper will also show how a number of ancillary arguments used as biblical “support” for same-sex marriage are either false dichotomies or are simply wrong when placed against the rubric of Scripture. Only one paradigm for marriage appears within the Bible, namely, heterosexual marriage established by God himself in Gen 2:24 and reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Mark 10.*

Key words: *same-sex marriage, Genesis 1:26–28, Genesis 2:18–25, creation, homosexuality*

In light of the rapid moral and cultural changes in the West—one of which has been the redefining of marriage—in recent years it has become popular for biblical interpreters to turn to the Bible for approval of these seismic shifts in the landscape of the family structure and sexuality. Interpreters—some self-professed evangelicals included—now see a need to justify these cultural changes by appealing to the very text which has been used throughout history to inveigh against such behaviors and institutional changes.¹ However, affirming scholars who push for same-sex marriage “rights” rarely desire to do away with or make obsolete traditional marriage customs. On the contrary, even though some may reinterpret certain aspects of the language related to marriage (e.g. What is “biblical marriage?”), they are careful to acknowledge the goodness of heterosexual unions as ordained by God within the Scriptures. Instead, scholars of this persuasion want to “ex-

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¹ See a similar concern of Os Guinness, *Impossible People: Christian Courage and the Struggle for the Soul of Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 110, 220–21.

tend,”² or “add to”/“revise”³ marriage to include same-sex unions. To “strengthen” their case, many times affirming scholars proffer a variety of supposed “parallels” between same-sex rights and other struggles from the past (e.g. women’s rights vis-à-vis patriarchy, slavery, women’s ordination, Gentile inclusion in the church, etc.).⁴ Indeed, one of the more popular assertions is the belief that same-sex coupling produces “good fruit” and is therefore proof of the Spirit’s blessing and God’s approval of these relationships.⁵ However, these types of arguments merely muddy the water and non-affirming scholars have shown that many of these arguments amount to false dichotomies.⁶

Along with these supposed “parallel” arguments, heartfelt appeal to cultural shifts and public opinion of the church has also been cited as a valid reason for making these changes in the definition of marriage. Indeed, in some cases, the citing of national polls, which show the church as “judgmental” or “anti-gay,” serves as a means of arguing for change so that the Bible and Christianity will no longer be the sources of “bigotry” and “exclusion,” traits—whether real or imagined—which could hurt the church’s “witness for generations to come” if change is not enacted quickly.⁷ Yet, the oft-cited argument that the church has an “exclusionary stance” vis-à-vis same-sex oriented people is misleading. While I am sure one could find churches that are bigoted in this area, the majority of churches would welcome same-sex persons with open arms—I know my church would. However, rejecting one’s sin, whether sexual or otherwise, does not make a church “exclusionary” but rather biblical.⁸ And the assertion that heterosexual marriage is “church-prescribed”⁹ is simply not true; as I will demonstrate below, the Bible in fact sets the standard and tone in this case.

Generally speaking, the reason for the scholarly shift in the area of same-sex marriage, apart from the cultural shift and the sexual revolution, is usually the result

² Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage: An Evangelical’s Change of Heart* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), xiii.

³ Megan DeFranza, “Journeying from the Bible to Christian Ethics in Search of Common Ground,” in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church* (ed. Preston Sprinkle; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 90, 93.

⁴ E.g., *ibid.*, 99–101; or Ken Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation* (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit, 2014), 30–35, 108–10.

⁵ E.g., Achtemeier, *Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 14; William Stacy Johnson, *A Time to Embrace: Same-Sex Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 127–29; and Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 1–20. However, see Michael L. Brown’s refutation of this perspective in *Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding with Love and Truth to Questions about Homosexuality* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2014), 186–200; see also Brian Neil Peterson, *What Was the Sin of Sodom: Homosexuality, Inhospitality, or Something Else?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 16.

⁶ See, e.g., S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 167–89, 381–85; Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 460–69; Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*, 60–80; or Peterson, *What Was the Sin of Sodom?*, 1–13.

⁷ Achtemeier, *Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, xiii–xiv.

⁸ See Guinness, *Impossible People*, 72–75.

⁹ Achtemeier, *Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 58.

of some personal experience with a friend, child, or parent/spouse who has “come out” and now desires to embrace this way of life.¹⁰ In some cases, those who have made the decision to pursue a same-sex lifestyle—preferably including the option to get married—still desire to remain within the Christian tradition. In light of these personal experiences, every one of the oft-cited anti-same-sex texts has been “reimagined,” “reinterpreted,” or “set aside” in order to push forward an affirming agenda.¹¹ Of late, one text in particular, Gen 2:18–25, has been the focus of affirming scholars in their efforts to find validity for same-sex marriage.

Almost every person who has ever attended a wedding has heard the text of Gen 2:24 recited or read at some point in the marriage ceremony: “Therefore a man shall forsake his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife. And they shall become one flesh.” A straightforward reading of the text seems to make clear that this is a picture of the marriage union of Adam and Eve. Indeed, Jesus himself quotes the text in the context of discussing the sanctity of marriage vis-à-vis divorce (Matt 19:5). The central purpose of Gen 2:24 was to teach the Israelite audience (and by extension, all humanity) about the sanctity of marriage and the antiquity of the institution. God was there at the beginning bringing validity to this fundamental societal pillar within which family could be formed and thrive.

Despite the clear instruction and marriage paradigm set forth within the second chapter of the Bible, a segment of modern exegetes have not been deterred from trying to contort this portion of Genesis in order for it to fit a mold recently cast by proponents of same-sex marriage. The basic argument can be summarized as such: Because Gen 2:18–25 focuses on the *aloneness* of Adam, marriage, at least as presented in Genesis 2, was basically ordained by God to combat this condition. Marriage, in this context, was not for procreation, as some propose, but to establish a “family” through the bonds of kinship ties. As such, any pairing of individuals (male-male; female-female, male-female) can meet the criteria set forth in Genesis 2 to eliminate loneliness and establish a kinship bond which in turn reflects a nuclear “family.”¹² Proponents bolster their position by noting that procreation is not a

¹⁰ E.g., James Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 11–13; Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation*; Achtemeier, *Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, xiii, 1–15. Here, Achtemeier notes that as of 1996 he was an active proponent *against* same-sex people being ordained in the PCUSA but has since changed his mind.

¹¹ It is telling when even some of the most respected affirming scholars conclude that the Bible is univocal on the rejection of all forms of same-sex activity (e.g., William Loader, Luke Timothy Johnson), yet others insist that the Bible is either “silent” or “misunderstood” when it comes to interpreting the anti-same-sex texts. See William Loader, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, 17–48; and Luke Timothy Johnson, “Homosexuality and the Church,” *Commonweal* (June 11, 2007), <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/homosexuality-church-1>. At least scholars like Loader and Johnson are honest when they inform their readers that they choose to affirm those in same-sex lifestyles based upon experience, not the Bible.

¹² A number of individuals have made this assertion. See, e.g., John J. McNeill, *Sex as God Intended: A Reflection on Human Sexuality as Play* (Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe, 2008), 23–26; Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster, 2011), 62–63; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 32–34, 86–97; and Johnson, *Time to Embrace*, 120, 123. Johnson (p. 123) calls Gen 2:18 “the most important verse in all of Scripture for the gay marriage debate.”

central tenet of marriage as evidenced by the marriage of infertile and/or elderly people, or couples who decide not to have children.¹³

In light of the ongoing discussions surrounding the viability of scriptural support for same-sex marriage vis-à-vis Genesis, in this paper I will argue that Gen 2:18–25 does not support the claims of affirming scholars but rather the text presents God's design of heterosexual marriage. Moreover, I will show that the author had procreation in mind as a central purpose for the institution. I will come to this conclusion along three lines of argumentation: (1) Gen 2:18–25 seems to be painting a fuller picture of Gen 1:26–28; (2) the grammar of Gen 2:18 and 20 points to the “fittedness” of the male and female bodies for sexual pleasure in marriage; and (3) the phrase “one flesh” in Gen 2:24 is not isolated to kinship ties alone, but also has procreation in view. I will conclude my study by briefly addressing some of the ancillary arguments related to this debate.

I. GENESIS 2:18–25 VIS-À-VIS GENESIS 1:26–28

At the heart of the above-noted scholarly debate is the historical-critical assertion that the two creation accounts found in Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25 stem from two different sources and present two completely different creation accounts with different foci.¹⁴ According to source theorists, the first account is attributed to the putative Priestly author and the latter account is assigned to the so-called Yahwist/“J” source.¹⁵ The argument is therefore proposed that the Priestly source focuses on procreation as seen in the statement in Gen 1:28 “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” whereas the “J” source is concerned with kinship ties that remedy loneliness as exemplified in Gen 2:18.¹⁶ Based upon this scholarly assertion, many affirming scholars are more than willing to offer their full support for the inclusion of same-sex couples and marriage in the church because, they claim, the “J” source has opened the door for any marriage relationship that remedies loneliness through the establishment of a kinship bond.

There are at least four major problems with this line of argumentation. To begin, when Jesus was teaching on the sanctity of marriage, he actually linked the teaching of Gen 1:27 with Gen 2:24 (Matt 19:4–6). Obviously, Jesus saw a similarity in the foci of these two texts, namely, in Genesis 1, God created humans with differences of gender for the purpose of procreation within a family/marital struc-

¹³ So Achtemeier, *Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 60; and DeFranza, “Journeying,” 97–99.

¹⁴ While 2:4b–3:24 represents the first major section attributed to the conjectural “J” source, here I will focus on chapter 2, namely, 2:4b–25. Source critics also tend to include 2:25 with chapter 3 or to view it as the narrator's comment; see Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 4–14; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (trans. John J. Scullion; repr., Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 234; George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 49–60; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 14–20. On the other hand, some argue that Gen 2:4 should be the introduction to chapters 2–4; see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 49.

¹⁵ See for example Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1885; repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), 297–308, or Speiser, *Genesis*, 18–19.

¹⁶ See note 12 above.

ture as seen in Genesis 2. Second, affirming scholars' assertion that chapter 2 deals *only* with loneliness is misguided and a false dichotomy. As I will demonstrate below, while chapter 2 does in fact present the marriage bond as a remedy for loneliness, it also teaches the physical complementarity of male and female for sexual pleasure *and* procreation. Third, it is completely speculative and theoretical to argue that there are two separate authors of the two creation accounts with two completely different agendas.¹⁷ Even if one does follow source theory related to the creation accounts this does not mean that the accounts are presenting different perspectives related to procreation—an erroneous either/or scenario.

This brings us to the fourth concern: Do the two creation accounts present two contradictory stories of creation? According to a variety of scholars, there are a number of ways of understanding the two Genesis creation accounts. For example, Gerhard von Rad sees the accounts of P and J as coming from different traditions whereby the J source is more interested in anthropological concerns.¹⁸ George Coats points out that chapters 1 and 2 are not parallel accounts but rather focus on different things: the cosmos vs. paradise gained.¹⁹ John Walton asserts that chapter 2 is a “sequel” to chapter 1, that is, it presents the creation of more humans at a later date.²⁰ Walter Brueggemann, James McKeown, and John Hartley argue that the second creation story is a completely separate account that should not be taken as a parallel telling of creation,²¹ a position that hardly seems tenable in light of the clear connections between the two (see more below). Indeed, Tremper Longman III correctly proposes that chapter 2 is a synoptic presentation of the creation of man in chapter 1.²²

Despite these seemingly conflicting views, it seems most likely that the final author/editor of this material would not have been satisfied with competing ac-

¹⁷ There is also the problem of the dating of the two sources. “J” is generally dated to the 10th century whereas the Priestly source is dated to 500 BCE or later. Yet even on this scholars have not reached a consensus.

¹⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (OTL; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 76.

¹⁹ Coats, *Genesis*, 52.

²⁰ John Walton, “A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (ed. Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 108–11. Although Walton asserts that Adam and Eve were real people in the distant past, his explanation of how Adam and Eve’s sin affected every living person contemporaneous with them is theologically problematic (pp. 113–15, 117). So, too, the conclusion of C. John Collins, “Response from the Old Earth View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, 130.

²¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 40; James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 30; John Hartley, *Genesis* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 58.

²² Tremper Longman III, *Genesis* (The Story of God Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 46–47. So, too, Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1—11:26* (NAC 1A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 188–89. Bill T. Arnold (*Genesis* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 55) uses the term “synoptic” for the two accounts but notes that the editor has done such a good job that chaps. 2–3 are a “second look” at chapter 1.

counts of creation sitting side by side.²³ It seems more likely that the second account in some way complemented the first account. Even McKeown concludes that the two accounts are “complementary” with the second one covering select aspects of the creation event in more detail. And E. A. Speiser notes that even though these may be from different sources, “the subject matter is ultimately the same in both sources.”²⁴ In this regard, Nahum Sarna is no doubt correct when he notes the total dependence of chapter 2 on chapter 1. He goes on to assert that chapter 1 focuses on the “heavens and the earth” whereas chapter 2 centers on the “earth and heavens” (Gen 2:4b), which pushes one to the conclusion that chapter 2 compliments chapter 1 by zeroing in on the creation and role of humans.²⁵ T. Desmond Alexander concurs that these chapters are complementary: one broadly focused and the other “zoomed in.”²⁶ It seems evident that this zooming in is for the purpose of drawing attention to the creation of the Garden of Eden, its animals, and the man and the woman.

Therefore, Nahum’s and Alexander’s positions seem to be on the right track especially in light of the fact that Jewish tradition also sees Genesis 2 as an elaboration on day six from Genesis 1 (e.g. Tob 8:6; Wis 10:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.34);²⁷ whether day six is an actual 24-hour period is another discussion altogether.²⁸ As such, it appears that chapter 2 serves to zero in on the creation of man and woman, which was only outlined in Gen 1:26–28. In this vein, Kenneth A. Mathews notes that, “the sixth day’s events regarding the creation of man and woman and their dominion (1:26–28) are taken up in 2:4–25.”²⁹ Mathews goes on to point out that this was a common feature in ANE creation accounts (e.g. in Sumer and Babylon), whereby a more general overview is followed by a more detailed treatment.³⁰ If this

²³ See similar comments by Richard Hess, “Genesis 1–2 in Its Literary Context,” *TynBul* 41 (1990): 143–53 at 143. See also the assessment of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 141–47.

²⁴ Speiser, *Genesis*, 19.

²⁵ Nahum Sarna, *Genesis* (The JPS Torah Commentary; New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 16; Russell R. Reno, *Genesis* (Brazos Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 66–67.

²⁶ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 120. See a similar conclusion by William Barrick, “A Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View,” in *Two Views of the Historical Adam*, 208.

²⁷ See the comments of Collins, “Response from the Old Earth View,” 127 n. 58, and C. John Collins, “Discourse Analysis and the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4–7,” *WTJ* 61 (1999): 269–76 esp. 274.

²⁸ Collins (“Discourse Analysis,” 274) suggests that the days of Genesis 1 may be long periods of time. For this reason, the events of Genesis 2 do not need to fit into 24 hours of time.

²⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 189, 191. So, too, Collins, “Historical Adam,” 156.

³⁰ For example, in the Sumerian primeval history, Mathews avers that in “*Enki and Ninmah* (ca. 2000 BC) the first account of the creation of human life is a general one, with creation by nipping off clay, and the second account covers the same ground in more detail. Babylonian *Atrahasis* has the first creation from the remains of a slain deity mixed with clay, and the second elaborates, showing that the first humans were created in seven pairs by snipping off clay. In both cases the former is general and the second specific” (*Genesis 1–11:26*, 189). See also Isaac M. Kikawada, “The Double Creation of Mankind in *Enki and Ninmah*, *Atrahasis* I 1–351, and Genesis 1–2,” *Iraq* 45 (1983): 43–45; Isaac M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1–11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 38–40. Mathews (p. 189) goes on to note that this narrowing of focus is similar to the genealogies of chapters 4 and 5 and 10

is the common pattern in ANE creation accounts, then it should not be surprising to find the motif of procreation—a central tenet of 1:26–28—also a focus of chapter 2. But how exactly does the second account accomplish this without clear reference to being fruitful and multiplying? I believe the answer lies in the language and grammar of chapter 2, something overlooked by affirming scholars.

II. A HELPER FIT FOR THE MAN

The first hint that sexual coupling and procreation are also a central concern for the author of Genesis 2 appears in 2:18 and again later in verse 20.³¹ After the obvious lack of a suitable companion for Adam vis-à-vis the animals, God declares the first thing that is “not good” (לא־טוֹב) in his creation. In verse 18 he declares, “it is *not good* for the man to be alone.” Affirming scholars use this verse as the central pillar of their argument for the inclusion of same-sex coupling to combat loneliness while downplaying any sexual component.³² However, their argument falls flat when the rest of the verse is taken into consideration especially the description of what God determines is a suitable companion for the man. Although the loneliness of the man is a central idea in this section of chapter 2, the incompatibility of the animals for the man bespeaks the duality of the sexes (i.e. male and female) and the man’s total aloneness in this regard.³³ What is more, the aloneness of the man makes it impossible for him to be “fruitful and multiply;”³⁴ an obvious concern of God.

The key Hebrew phrase, which addresses the issue of sexual complementarity, is עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*ezer k’negdo*). There are only two places in the Hebrew Bible where this exact phrase appears: both in Genesis 2 (vv. 18 and 20). As such, the phrase is hard to interpret³⁵ and has been variously rendered by modern translations: “an help meet for him” (KJV); “a helper suitable for him” (NASB; NIV); “a helper fit for him” (ESV); “a companion who will help him” (NLT); “a helper as his partner” (NRSV); and “a fitting helper for him” (NJPS). All of these translations zero in on the concept of a fitting “helper” (*ezer*) without doing translational “justice” to the second word in the phrase, *k’negdo*. *K’negdo* is a combination of three different Hebrew words: the preposition כְּ, the word נֶגֶד, and the third masculine singular pronominal suffix י. The כְּ means “like” or “as” and נֶגֶד can be rendered as an adverb of location meaning “in front of” or “opposite of.” As the object of the clause, the י simply means “him” or if it is rendered as a genitive, it can be translated as “his.” When these words are considered in conjunction with one another the idea

and 11 where Seth and Shem’s lines are focused on in the subsequent chapters. See further Hess, “Genesis 1–2 in Its Literary Context,” 143–53.

³¹ So, too, Barrick, “Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View,” 210.

³² E.g., Johnson (*Time to Embrace*, 124) downplays the “anatomical” aspect of this word in order to emphasize companionship.

³³ So, too, James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 34.

³⁴ So, too, Reno, *Genesis*, 72.

³⁵ See discussion by John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 176–77.

that is generated is “as/like in front of him” or “as his opposite.”³⁶ God seems to be declaring that the man needs a helper that, when standing “in front of him” (*negdo*), is his opposite. As such, the physical complementarity of the man and woman come to the forefront as opposed to the simple idea of a “fitting helper,” which most translations present in a non-sexual way.³⁷

Not surprisingly, other scholars have noted a similar interpretation. Gordon Wenham notes that *k^enegdo* has the idea of “matching him,” which, among other things, includes the procreation of children.³⁸ And Allen P. Ross notes that the idea behind *k^enegdo* means a correspondence between the man and the woman on the physical, social, and spiritual levels.³⁹ George Coats is more cryptic when he notes that “no helper fit for *intimacy* with the man appeared among the animals.”⁴⁰ However, Bill Arnold is indeed correct when he concludes that the context “has marriage and procreation in view, as well as general human companionship.”⁴¹ The sexual needs of the man are clear in the context. Nahum Sarna says it succinctly when he states, “Celibacy is undesirable.”⁴²

Now while it is true that the phrase can, and no doubt does, include nuances of social and psychological complementarity, the physical/sexual component cannot be overlooked either especially when the entirety of the phrase is considered.⁴³ The physical complementarity is further supported by the second appearance of the phrase *‘ezer k^enegdo* in verse 20. In this second occurrence, after all the animals had been created and paraded in front of the man for him to name, God once again notes that there was no suitable helper for the man. There can be no question that the author wants to stress the idea that the man is lacking a companion to “be with” beyond mere emotional friendship (see *Gen. Rab.* 17:4). The man needs a mate for both companionship *and* for the purpose of procreation and sexual pleasure.

This understanding flies in the face of affirming scholars who propound that if sexual coupling was in view, the female animals could have fulfilled the sexual needs of the man.⁴⁴ This is patently absurd in the context. The reason that man’s aloneness is “not good” has to do with the fact that the animals could never be a fitting sexual *or* emotional mate for the man (cf. Lev 18:23; 20:15). What is more, the man would never be able to procreate with animal species: he needed a helper

³⁶ In the latter case, the pronominal suffix would be used in a genitive fashion.

³⁷ Contra DeFranza (“Journeying,” 97), who suggests that physical complementarity is an argument from nature, not Scripture. Such a conclusion also misunderstands Paul’s argument in Romans 1. For an argument for the physical complementarity of the sexes, see Gagnon, *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 60–62, 254, 488.

³⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

³⁹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 126 (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ Coats, *Genesis*, 53 (emphasis added). Of course, here intimacy can have a variety of meanings. Coats goes on in the next paragraph to talk about “intimacy of kinship.”

⁴¹ Arnold, *Genesis*, 60–61.

⁴² Sarna, *Genesis*, 21. See also *Gen. Rab.* 17:2.

⁴³ So, too, Gagnon, *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 60–62.

⁴⁴ E.g. Johnson, *Time to Embrace*, 126.

that “fit him” in this regard. That is why God “built” (בָּנָה; v. 22) the woman with the perfect physical anatomy that would “fit” the man’s anatomy when they stood “in front of” (קָדְמוּ) one another! This physical complementarity is bolstered by what follows in Gen 2:24–25.

III. GENESIS 2:24: BECOMING ONE FLESH

As noted in the introduction, gaining traction in the recent debate for same-sex marriage is the assertion that unlike Gen 1:26–28, Gen 2:24 is not about procreation, but rather, becoming one flesh is focused *only* on kinship ties.⁴⁵ Prototypical of this opinion is Miguel De La Torre who asserts that “if we define the purpose of marriage to be procreation, then, yes, same-sex marriage should not be allowed. But if marriage is more than simply having children, if marriage is to become *one flesh* by creating a familial relationship, then the race, faith, ethnicity, or gender of the participants ceases to be important.”⁴⁶ Here De La Torre is setting up a false dichotomy: if marriage is not about procreation but rather kinship ties then same-sex marriage should be allowed. However, the issue is not either/or, but both/and. Indeed, in light of our discussion immediately above—which supports seeing procreation in Genesis 2—verses 24 and 25 reinforce the idea of procreation within the marriage bond.

When God brought the woman to the man the result was a marriage arrangement that certainly included emotional and kinship bonding; no one would deny this fact. However, it does not end there. The man and the woman were to become “one flesh.” This is not simply kinship ties as proposed by some affirming scholars; this includes the sexual/procreation facet as well. In interpreting the meaning of “one flesh,” scholars in general (non-affirming as well) have tended to vacillate between the idea of sexual activity and procreation and the resulting kinship bonds. For example, while John Hartley suggests that the “one flesh” notation does not point explicitly to sexual connectedness or the children that would result from such a union, he does conclude that “it does not exclude these expressions of their union.”⁴⁷ And Christopher Seitz correctly concludes that becoming “one flesh” is also for “sexual coupling.”⁴⁸ Indeed, sexual coupling is a central teaching of this portion of Gen 2:24. Due to these sexual nuances in verse 24, I cannot agree with affirming scholars that it does not include procreation. True, there are those who cannot procreate due to some physiological fault of the man or woman or both, no doubt a result of the fall,⁴⁹ but that does not preclude the possibility of children for the majority of couples who marry.

⁴⁵ See note 12 above.

⁴⁶ De La Torre, *Genesis*, 63 (emphasis added).

⁴⁷ Hartley, *Genesis*, 64.

⁴⁸ Christopher Seitz, “Human Sexuality Viewed from the Bible’s Understanding of the Human Condition,” *ThTo* 52 (1995): 244. See a similar conclusion by Longman, *Genesis*, 55, and Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 20.

⁴⁹ See Christine Curley and Brian Neil Peterson, “Eve’s Curse Revisited: An Increase of ‘Sorrowful Conceptions,’” *BBR* 26 (2016): 1–16.

Genesis 2 does more than present the picture of a man and woman coming together for the purpose of creating a kinship bond where sexual encounters within marriage are God's design; the "one flesh" notation also anticipates the bearing of children.⁵⁰ Martin Luther certainly understood Gen 2:18–25 as a clear picture of marriage for the purpose of the propagation of the human race.⁵¹ Luther even goes so far as to say that couples who marry but refuse to procreate are displaying evidence of a fallen nature whereby God's greatest temporal gift to a couple—offspring—is rejected.⁵² One could argue that having a child within the marriage bond is perhaps the best demonstration of becoming "one flesh." All one has to do is look at a child produced by the act of sexual coupling and it becomes clear that two separate individuals have literally become "one flesh." The closing line of Gen 2:25 reinforces the sexual component of the narrative: "The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed."

Even some affirming scholars recognize the sexual component involved in the context of Gen 2:18–25, especially verse 24.⁵³ Procreation was understood in the Genesis 2 account especially in light of Gen 1:28. Indeed, marriage offered the institutional parameters for family to emerge. In this regard, Meredith Kline aptly notes,

Created male and female, man was to multiply through sexual fruitfulness. In Genesis 1 the procreation mandate is formulated in simple functional terms. Genesis 2 adds the institutional (i.e., the familial) aspect, so assigning human procreation to its proper context in the marital relationship.... It was within this marital relationship of legal troth that the procreation function of the cultural commission was to be fulfilled. As the words of the marriage ordinance in Genesis 2:24 indicate, it was in this covenantal union that the man and the woman were to become 'one flesh.'⁵⁴

Hermann Gunkel also notes that the concept of "one flesh" is clear by the surrounding language: "The nature of the love he [Adam] intends is very clear from the expressions he uses: it is sexual union."⁵⁵ And Gerhard von Rad intimates that "one flesh" means the union of the man and woman for the purpose of children when he queries, "Whence this inner clinging to each other, this drive toward each other which does not rest until it again becomes one flesh in the child?"⁵⁶ Similarly, Gordon Wenham notes that "one flesh" includes a variety of concepts beyond kinship ties, two of which are sexual union and children, the natural product of the marriage bond.⁵⁷ In light of the obvious connections between the one-flesh union

⁵⁰ See also Reno, *Genesis*, 74–76, and Walton, *Genesis*, 178–79.

⁵¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis: Volume I Chapters 1–21* (trans. J. Theodore Mueller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 55, 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵³ Achtemeier, *Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 46.

⁵⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Oakland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 68–69, 71. See also Walton, *Genesis*, 178.

⁵⁵ Gunkel, *Genesis*, 13. So, too, Sarna, *Genesis*, 23.

⁵⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 85.

⁵⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

and the expected procreation from that union, we can conclude that affirming scholars who limit chapter 2 to kinship ties *only* have in fact misread and misunderstood the heart of the narrative.

IV. ANCILLARY ARGUMENTS AND CONCERNS

One of the theological/interpretive “side effects” of the affirming argument for same-sex unions is the insistence of affirming scholars that the ubiquitous marriage metaphor between Yahweh and Israel, and Christ and the church (cf. Jeremiah 3; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1–3; Colossians 3; Ephesians 5) does not *ipso facto* exclude same-sex coupling. In the NT in particular, the marriage metaphor is meant to reflect the self-giving love of Christ for his bride, the church. In light of this motif of “self-giving” love, affirming scholars aver that the “self-giving” love found in same-sex marriages can also fit this paradigm.⁵⁸ This line of thinking falters on a number of levels, the most important one being that God chose the heterosexual relationship found *naturally* in his good creation as a metaphor for the relationship between God and his people. To suggest that Israel would have accepted a same-sex paradigm for their metaphorical relationship with God is illogical.⁵⁹ Second, if self-giving love is the main criterion for allowing same-sex marriage to represent Christ’s love for his bride, then why not allow any form of self-giving relationship to reflect God’s relationship with his people (father-son; mother-daughter; sister-sister; brother-brother, friend-friend, person-pet, etc.)? The fact remains that God chose what was *natural* to his well-ordered creation.

Third, one of the obvious reasons the heterosexual marriage paradigm was employed, as opposed to other forms of “self-giving” relationships, had to do with the simple fact that heterosexual marriages produced “fruit”/children.⁶⁰ In the same way a husband and wife marry and procreate and bring forth a new generation, so, too, the love between Christ and his “bride” was to produce “children” in a metaphorical sense, that is, spiritual children through the spreading of the gospel in order to propagate belief in God to the next generation (Matt 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47–48; Acts 1:8; 13:46–47; etc.). Failure to do so would cause the church to cease in one generation. This is made clear through the way the marriage metaphor is used in the OT. God takes Israel to task for killing his “children” through their idolatrous activities of child sacrifice. In this case, the literal begetting of children by the “spouse” of Yahweh (i.e. Israel) was to ensure the next generation of Israel (Ezek 16:21; cf. Exod 23:26). Those who threatened Israel’s propagation were dealt with severely.⁶¹ Same-sex unions can never reflect this important aspect of the marriage metaphor. In fact, barring adoption, the heritage of same-sex

⁵⁸ Achtemeier, *Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 58.

⁵⁹ See a similar conclusion by Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 468–69.

⁶⁰ On the importance of the nuclear family to culture, see Guinness, *Impossible People*, 186–89, 220.

⁶¹ God’s judgment of Pharaoh in Exodus is an example of what happens when someone tries to exterminate Israel and/or their children (Exod 1:16). Of course, the fate of Haman and the enemies of the Jews in Esther also applies.

people ceases with their death—certainly not an uplifting picture compared to the blessed image of the marriage metaphor in the Bible.

Another argument posed for the acceptance of same-sex marriage involves this query: if procreation is the biblical standard and goal of marriage, then why does the church condemn same-sex couples but accept the marriages between infertile couples, elderly people, or those who choose not to have children? Again, there are a number of problems with this line of argumentation. First, and most importantly, despite an inability to procreate (or desire to procreate), no marriage models within the Bible support same-sex unions; they are all heterosexual. Second, unlike the obvious up-front knowledge of “infertility” that accompanies same-sex coupling, infertile heterosexual couples generally do not know they are infertile until *after* they are married. And, within the Bible these couples are often aided by God to overcome that infertility (Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah, Elizabeth and Zechariah, etc.). As such, modern heterosexual couples who are infertile may seek God’s intervention as well; of course, this could never be true for same-sex couples. Third, elderly couples beyond the age of childbearing who marry do not sin because male-female marriage is ordained by God, and the companionship and male-female sexual coupling for pleasure noted in Gen 2:18–24 come to the forefront. Finally, couples who choose not to have children for some reason still meet the biblical mandate of male-female coupling. Whether or not God looks down upon those who refuse to have children is another question altogether (cf. Matt 24:19). While some of the early Church Fathers such as Augustine would have questioned such a marriage,⁶² the erroneous belief that marriage is *only* for procreation misses the heart of the discussion above. Companionship is in fact a key aspect of marriage as is sexual pleasure rooted in God’s good design of sexual fittedness. Same-sex coupling may meet the criteria of companionship, but the fittedness and procreation aspect can never be attained. And, as just noted, nowhere does the Bible open the door for such pairings. In fact, the Bible is clear—despite affirming scholars’ attempts to say otherwise—that all forms of same-sex acts are wrong.

While there are numerous variations of the arguments I have been handling, I will address one final proposal put forward for the full acceptance of marriage for Christian same-sex couples. Megan DeFranza, a self-professed evangelical theologian, has proposed that the creation narratives were never meant to be exhaustive in their presentation of all of God’s good creation.⁶³ She asserts that Adam and Eve’s marriage may be the “majority” paradigm, but this does not mean that other non-majority forms of coupling such as same-sex marriage should not be included. DeFranza proffers as evidence for her position the reality that the creation narrative of Genesis 1 presents only distinct kinds/groupings (i.e. land animals, water creatures

⁶² See Augustine, *Marriage and Virginity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999); or Augustine, *On Genesis* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004), as noted by Wesley Hill, “Christ, Scripture, and Spiritual Friendship,” in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, 127 n. 7.

⁶³ I chose to critique DeFranza’s work because she is representative of the evangelical shift from a non-affirming stance to affirming. I also know Megan personally.

such as fish, and birds of the air) but does not mention hybrid forms such as amphibians (land *and* water dwellers).⁶⁴ Because of this laconic presentation of the creation narrative, DeFranza suggests that same-sex marriage should be allowed within the church as a type of “hybrid” of the majority paradigm. In further support of her position, DeFranza notes that in the same way that modern egalitarian marriages have moved beyond the “biblical marriage” paradigm of oppressive and one-sided patriarchal marriages, so, too, we can revisit and add to the biblical marriage paradigm.⁶⁵

DeFranza builds her argument for the acceptance of practicing same-sex persons upon her belief that intersexed persons and eunuchs are a part of God’s good creation (cf. Isa 56:3–8; Acts 8) instead of being products of the fall. (On this point alone, many would disagree with her assessment.) From this vantage point, DeFranza moves forward to include transgender and same-sex people as part of God’s good creation who should be accepted as they are.⁶⁶ Although DeFranza’s desire to open the door for same-sex marriages no doubt is founded upon a genuine desire to be inclusive of all individuals, her position is nonetheless untenable from a biblical perspective.

First, DeFranza’s assertion that the creation narrative is laconic, while correct, still does not allow for the inclusion of same-sex coupling. The “majority” paradigm of male-female coupling is the *only* paradigm endorsed by the Bible beyond Genesis 1 and 2. To suggest that we can include other paradigms is an argument from silence. Second, although the Bible records a variety of marriage types (e.g. polygamous, patriarchal, war brides, etc.), this does not mean that these man-made marriage arrangements were God’s ideal. Jesus himself notes that this was in fact the case when he was speaking on divorce (cf. Matthew 19; Mark 10). Third, while the fall clearly has clouded humanity’s view of marriage that does not give us the liberty to cloud it even further by opening the door for church-sanctioned same-sex coupling. Fourth, DeFranza’s belief that the creation account does not include various “hybrid” forms of life is to misconstrue the purpose of the creation narrative. It was never meant to be exhaustive when dealing with the specific naming of every life form: It speaks in generalities. Nevertheless, Gen 1:24 makes clear that God created *all* “creeping things” (שׂרָץ), which would include amphibians and the like. Even despite the generalities, amphibians, for example, still breed within male-female categories and produce after their own kind (רִבּוּ).

Next, DeFranza’s assertion that the “biblical authors never defend marriage on the basis of procreative, physical, or psychological complementarity”⁶⁷ is to misunderstand the rhetorical features of the Bible, Genesis especially. As I have demonstrated above, all of these features are included in the Genesis 2 account—in

⁶⁴ See DeFranza, “Journeying,” 70–71, 90. In another work (*Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 175–81, esp. 177) DeFranza adds to this list the absence in Genesis 1 of rivers, planets, asteroids, dusk, dawn, etc.

⁶⁵ DeFranza, “Journeying,” 89–93.

⁶⁶ On the dangers of “gender fluidity” note the warnings of Guinness, *Impossible People*, 130–31.

⁶⁷ DeFranza, “Journeying,” 98.

the context of the marriage ceremony, no less! Furthermore, procreation (and physical and psychological complementarity) was an understood reality that did not need to be stressed in a culture that would never have accepted same-sex coupling: A cursory reading of the Song of Solomon, especially chapters 3–6, reinforces the picture of the physical and psychological complementarity of the husband and the wife.⁶⁸ What is more, the very presence of genealogies throughout Genesis underlines the unstated reality that procreation was central to marriage (Gen 4:17–22; 5:1–6:1; 10:1–32; 11:10–26; cf. 1 Chronicles 1–9; Matthew 1; Luke 3:23–38; etc.). And it is patently false to suggest that the authors of the Bible did not defend marriage based upon procreative activity. Consistently we find references to married couples wanting offspring in the midst of barrenness or other difficulties (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Tamar, Hannah, Samson’s mother, Ruth, Elizabeth, etc.). Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and Hannah all defended their marriages—and to a degree their worth as women—based upon their ability to procreate (e.g. Gen 25:21; 29:31–32; 30:1–2; 1 Sam 1:11), especially after God lifts the curse of barrenness (Gen 29:32–35). Certainly, these women understood marriage and procreation to go hand in hand: companionship, for them, while important, was a secondary issue in many cases.⁶⁹

Also, the flood narrative and its aftermath are telling of God’s plan for marriage, and the biblical authors’ mindset related to human coupling in the context of marriage. God’s preservation of four *married* couples from the devastation of the flood followed by the command of God to procreate (Gen 9:1, 7), which is in turn followed by a genealogy in chapter 10, makes clear both the biblical author’s and God’s purpose of highlighting the complementarity of the sexes for procreation. Indeed, there is a reason God brought the animals two by two (male and female) to be on the ark in the first place. God’s purposes of procreation and coupling (physiologically) were central even for the animals (6:19; 7:2, 3, 9, 16)!

Finally, requiring the biblical authors to defend marriage consistently with the rigid criteria of procreation, and physical and psychological complementarity is unrealistic. Indeed, do the authors of the Bible make explicit theological arguments for the Trinity and Christological issues (e.g. Arianism, Docetism, Nestorianism, etc., vs. orthodoxy)? No! Yet, no evangelical would disagree that the Bible supports these key doctrines. So why are so many affirming evangelicals so quick to add to the clear teachings of the Bible on marriage? Like others before her, despite De-Franza’s attempts to open the door for same-sex marriage, her arguments are simply not convincing.

⁶⁸ See the excellent discussion on this by Duane Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (NAC 14; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 347–432, esp. 384–42.

⁶⁹ Elkanah’s statement to Hannah during her period of grieving for a child that he was better than ten sons (1 Sam 1:8) certainly shows the importance that the Israelites placed on procreation within marriage. Indeed, it was common practice to marry a second wife if the marriage/wife could not bear children, something intimated in 1 Samuel 1 with Elkanah’s marriage to two women (Penninah and Hannah), and as can be seen when Abraham married Hagar, and Jacob took on the handmaidens of Leah and Rachel—Bilhah and Zilpah.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The recent Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage has opened the proverbial Pandora's box for pastors and counselors who are now faced with the dilemma of how to deal with same-sex married people who may convert to Christianity or who are already Christians and get married. To a degree, some may argue that this is a somewhat similar problem to that faced by missionaries working in other cultures where polygamous marriages are the norm. What happens when someone in a polygamous marriage gets saved? Should they divorce?⁷⁰ Or, should the missionary/pastor make an allowance for the polygamous marriage to continue?⁷¹ To a degree, dilemmas like this are clear evidence of the result of living in a fallen world. I do not pretend to have all the answers, but I am glad we do have the Scriptures to fall back on. In this case, I would err on the side of the Bible's authority rather than human emotion.

The only real answer to the same-sex marriage dilemma facing evangelical Christians today is to rely on sound biblical exegesis as opposed to emotional appeals and cultural shifts. As I have attempted to show in my discussion above, Gen 2:18–25 must be understood in light of Gen 1:26–28 and the overall context of the creation narratives. Procreation and heterosexual coupling is the *only* paradigm set forth in the Bible to which we can appeal—we do not have the right to adjust, add to, reimagine, or revise marriage to fit our cultural context and liking. Once we move beyond the clear teaching of the Bible, all ethical moorings are cut and the ever-shifting sands of cultural and its biases will rule the day as opposed to the scriptural condemnation of sin. In this regard, it seems that NT scholar Sigurd Grindheim is on the right track when he concludes that the purpose of the Scriptures is to discipline, condemn, and judge human sin.⁷² Of course, in today's post-modern world of no absolutes, identifying certain behaviors as "sin" is no longer politically correct. Yet, if we continue to move the proverbial goalposts when dealing with sin, then evangelicals might just as well forget our distinctives and join the world, for certainly, sooner or later there will be no difference between us and

⁷⁰ Mark Achtemeier (*Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 7–8) notes that the forced divorces in Ezra's day (see Ezra 9–10) does not serve as a fitting example of what moderns should endorse due to the apparent lack of divine initiative in the Ezra account. Instead, Achtemeier appeals to Malachi's strict denunciation of divorce leveled at the nation (2:13–16), which he argues may have been aimed at the events of Ezra's day, to show that God would never require such a thing from his people. However, one cannot blame God for putting people in the position of dealing with same-sex attractions (see Achtemeier, *Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 13–14), nor can one say God is responsible for forcing them to marry. Furthermore, Achtemeier's assertions about the forced divorces in Ezra and Malachi's supposed response, while possible, is nonetheless an unprovable point.

⁷¹ This is a concern noted by Steven Holmes in his essay "Listening to the Past and Reflecting on the Present," in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, 190–93. He calls for "pastoral accommodation" for same-sex couples who are in this predicament. Achtemeier (*Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, 7) also suggests that same-sex couples should not be forced to divorce (see n. 70).

⁷² Sigurd Grindheim, "Biblical Authority: What Is It Good For? Why the Apostles Insisted on a High View of Scripture," *JETS* 59 (2016): 791–803, esp. 803.

them.⁷³ In this vein, I end with a fitting, although somewhat prophetic, quotation from Os Guinness on the present state of evangelicalism:

For a generation now the air has been thick with talk of “changing the world” but who is changing whom? There is no question that the world would like to change the church. In area after area only the church stands between the world and its success over issues such as sexuality. . . . Something is rotten in the state of Evangelicalism, and all too often it is impossible to tell who is changing whom. . . . Today’s Evangelical revisionists should take sober note. Time and again I tremble when I hear or read their flimsy arguments. They may be lionized by the wider advocates for the sexual revolution for fifteen minutes, because they are siding with that wider culture in undermining the clear teaching of Jesus and the Bible that stands in their way. . . . But in truth, the sexual revolution has no real interest in such Evangelicals, and they will be left as roadkill as the revolution blitzkrieg gathers speed. But that is nothing compared with the real tragedy of the revisionists. It is no light thing for anyone to set themselves above and against the authority of Jesus and his Scriptures. . . . Judas stands as the warning for all who betray Jesus for their personal, sexual or political interests and condemn themselves for their disloyalty.⁷⁴

⁷³ See, e.g., the concerns Os Guinness, *Impossible People*, 68–74, 110–11, 134, 198.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 73–74.