REASON FOR HOPE

The Church and Culture Conference 2015

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# A Word of Greeting

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to* ***a living hope*** *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Pet 1:3*

*But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for* ***a reason for the hope*** *that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. 1 Pet 3:15.*

Dear Friends,

There is no need to establish urgency for a conference to consider the biblical view of sexuality. Culture is questioning marriage in a manner unseen in the entire 2,000 year history of the Church.

But what I do need to say to you is how soberly and seriously I am considering the opportunity to preach and teach with you. I am motivated knowing that as a shepherd this is a central issue for all local churches at this time.

I would caution you to be neither discouraged (as in “oh my, he’s going to try and cover all this”) or, less likely, impressed by the length of what is attached. My goals for today are modest. Broadly, I have to objectives.

1. **To encourage you that there is reason (“reason” is a noun in this objective) for hope.** I pray that through the prayerful proclamation of 1 Peter you will be reminded that, no matter how dire things may seem, we have every reason for hope. Our King has won the victory and secured our salvation such that it can never perish, spoil, or fade. We must focus on the beauty and majesty of our Savior, and his love for his Bride. He must be the central focus of our local churches rather than discouragement and despair over the direction of culture.
2. **To encourage you to reason (“reason” as a verb in this objective) for hope.** Brothers and sisters, we must be so deeply rooted in the faith once for all entrusted to the saints that our churches are the pillar and buttress for the truth that God intended (1 Peter 3:14-16). We must be prepared to give an answer for our hope. And this means diving deep into what has happened in Western culture for the last 500 years that has culminated in the revolutionary changes we have seen in recent months.

Please know that the attached notes are more or less a draft of my study notes. I edited them some, and removed a fair amount of material, but they are mainly a resource to point you to other sources that may be of use.

When I was eight year old, a music teacher invited my family to be her guest at a GARBC church in Farmington, Iowa. My pretty wife, the former Jamie Limbaugh, grew up in Algona, IA where she attended a GARBC church all our life and graduated from Faith Baptist Bible College. So Jamie and I owe a debt of gratitude for our Savior’s grace through the GARBC that we can never express. I am so thankful to be with you.

There’s reason for hope so reason for hope!

Pastor Chris Brauns

# Biblical Propositions About Marriage and Human Sexuality

1. Standards of morality, including those pertaining to sexual morality, are rooted in the attributes of our Creator rather than individual preferences or appetites (Leviticus 4, 19:1; Leviticus 25:17, 1 Pet 1:16). What is right and wrong flows out of who God is, not who we are.
2. God is Trinitarian and personal. He is an eternally loving God ever giving and self-giving in relationships which is to say, among other things, that love is eternal. Humans created in his image will be created relationally at the depths of their being.
3. God reveals his plan for human sexuality through his inspired and inerrant Word. For the prayerful believer, God’s Word comes not simply as information, but rather with soul reviving, wisdom defining, life-giving power (Deut 8:3, Psalm 19:7-11, Isaiah 66:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:16).
4. Genesis 2 established the need for marriage and the plan for it as well: one man and one woman intimately and monogamously joined together for life (Genesis 2, Matt 19:4-6). Genesis 2 and Paul’s reflection on it in Ephesians 5:22-6:4 are the foundational biblical passages for studying marriage and the family. These passages by themselves are sufficient to establish the traditional view of marriage.
5. God’s design is for children to be raised by a father and mother (Deut 6:4-9). The well being of children rests on their relationship with parents as stated in the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:12).
6. In God’s created world, there is an emphasis on corporate solidarity as well as the individual. Humans are bound together. The rights of individuals must be weighed against those of the corporate whole.
7. Original sin twisted humanity and creation at the most basic levels including, perhaps even particularly so, marriage and sexuality (Genesis 3). Rebellion against God has consequences for the very heart of our identity.
8. Sinful humans are prone to idolatry (Rev 20:4, 1 John 5:21, Jonah 2:8). Perhaps the three most common idols are, in this order, children, sex, and marriage. As a part of its disastrous consequences, idolatry may destroy the relationship between the idolater and the idol and/or it may destroy either the idol or the idolater (Psalm 135:15-18, Jeremiah 10:1-5).
9. The Bible treats sexual sin with great seriousness (Lev 18, 19:20-22, 29-20, 20:10-21; 1 Thess 4:3-9). Scripture consistently and frequently warns and shows that a failure to be sexually self-controlled meets with disastrous consequences (2 Sam 11, Prov 7:1-27, 1 Cor 10:8, 1 Thess 4:3-9). Pornography, and all that it entails, is a serious and damaging sin (Matt 5:27-30). Homosexuality is a particularly serious sin and its presence represents the downward spiral of a society (Rom 1:18-32).

## Table 1. Select Bible Passages Related to Homosexuality Discussion

| **Passage** | **Select Scripture Passages** |
| --- | --- |
| Gen 1-2 | God created Eve to fit with Adam in every way. |
| Gen 19 | Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The sin of Sodom was not exclusively sexual sin, but sexual sin was involved.  *Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7 ESV)* |
| Lev 18:22, 20:13 | *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. Leviticus 18:22.*  *If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. Leviticus 20:13* |
| Rom 1:26-32 | Romans 1:26-27 includes homosexuality as part of the culmination of a downward progression of humanity’s rebellion against God.  *[26] For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. [28] And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. . . . Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Romans 1:26-32* |
| 1 Cor 6:9-11 | *[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. 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 Cor 6:9-11* |
| 1 Tim 1:8-11 | *[8] Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Tim 1:8-11* |
| Jude 7, 28-23 | *Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. [7] . . .[18] They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” [19] It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. [20] But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, [21] keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. [22] And have mercy on those who doubt; [23] save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Jude 1:18-23.* |
| Rev 2:19-21 | *“‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. [20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. [21] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Revelation 2:19-21* |

1. Biblical gender roles, which may be/are painful because of the fall, are to be redeemed rather than rejected (1 Tim 4:11-4:16).
2. Given that the two become one flesh, the death of a spouse is a devastating consequence of the fall (Matt 19:4-6). Divorce, with its separation of what God has brought together, is also devastating. Local churches should minister with ongoing compassion to those who have lost spouses, or gone through divorces, and to the extent with which we recognize the beauty of marriage our hearts should go out to those who lose a spouse.
3. Christians, who are sinners saved by grace, should demonstrate genuine humility when relating to everyone. This includes when giving a reason for our hope in the context of same sex marriage discussions (1 Pet 3:13-17). Christians are called to love all people including those who do not accept God’s plan for human sexuality. Christian love should feature humility and proclamation of the gospel.
4. In the gospel, we find both the power and pattern needed for the journey of marriage when we look to Christ our King who gave himself for his bride the church.[[1]](#footnote-1)
5. The Church is an extended family for believers. Christians are brothers and sisters. And the allegiance of the believer to Christ and his church is the basic commitment for the Christian, even above the nuclear family (Matt 10:34-39, Matt 12:46-50, 1 Pet 2:9-10).
6. As Christians seek to grow, and as families strive to work through their differences and difficulties, they should be reminded that sanctification (being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ) is a gracious process that takes place over time (2 Cor 3:17-18). God works particularly through worship, the proclamation of the Word, sharing life and Christ with other believers (fellowship), and prayer (Acts 2:42). Rather than seeking quick fixes, Christians should give themselves to growth in their local church over the long haul. Complete victory over besetting sins is possible in this life, but not necessarily guaranteed.[[2]](#footnote-2)
7. God calls all people to celibacy for a portion of their lives and some to singleness for life (1 Cor 7:7). Spiritual gifts, including the gift of singleness, are given for the benefit of the Body. The gift of singleness does not mean that the single person is freed from ever wanting marriage. Rather he or she has advantages in furthering the cause of Christ and serving the body.[[3]](#footnote-3) There are distinct advantages both to being single and being married (1 Cor 7:29-31).
8. Christians and local churches should prepare to be persecuted for their beliefs regarding marriage and homosexuality (Matt 5:10, 1 Pet 3:16, 4:12).

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# Glossary of Terms Related to Apologetics

**Apologetics** – The branch of theology concerned with giving a reasoned defense of our faith or hope.[[4]](#footnote-4) Apologetics seeks to carry out the mandate of 1 Peter 3:15-16:

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:15-16 ESV)

Apologia / ἀπολογία appears 8 times in the Greek New Testament. It references a speech of defense, as action in court, as an excuse. In Acts 22:1 Paul says in Jerusalem, “let me give a defense.” Again in Acts 25:16 when Paul speaks of using a defense he uses this word. It appears in: Acts 22:1, 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; Phil 1:7, 16; 2 Tim 4:16; 1 Pet 3:15.

David Wells:

“Evangelism in the West, however, commonly assumes that the simple presentation of the gospel message - - perhaps the simpler the better - - will create the least hindrance to the acceptance of Christian faith and that God will miraculously provide whatever other understanding is needed. This approach would be frowned upon on the mission field - - and rightly so - - but it is singularly inappropriate in the West as well. It appeals to our swift, technological, fix-it age: in no time at all, millions can claim to be “reached” with the gospel. But beaming gospel truths at the masses is not the same as “reaching” them. We cannot claim that Christian faith has been communicated until it has been understood, and most secular people are no longer in a position to understand Christian truth if they hear only a minimal, packaged version of the gospel and are asked for immediate assent.”[[5]](#footnote-5) David Wells

It is important to remember that apologetics is done for the benefit of believer as well as unbelievers.

**Defeater Beliefs and Implausibility Structures –** Defeater Beliefs are “common sense” consensus beliefs that automatically make Christianity seem implausible to people. A defeater belief is “Belief-A” that, if true, means Belief-B *can’t*be true. When enough defeater beliefs combine, they become a cultural **implausibility structure** - - so that people no longer feel that it is even necessary to evaluate Christianity.[[6]](#footnote-6) Keller identifies six “defeater beliefs”:

1. Other religions / Pluralism - The exclusivity of Christianity seems obnoxious.
2. The Problem of Evil / Suffering
3. The ethical straitjacket - Christianity dictates everything people must do so that they cannot be true to themselves
4. The record of Christians –
5. The angry God - Christianity seems to be built around the idea of an angry judgmental deity.
6. The unreliable Bible - The Bible isn’t trustworthy and much of it is legend.

**Descartes, Renee (1596-1650)**  - Usually called the “father of modern philosophy,”[[7]](#footnote-7) he was very impressed with science and sought to bring the precision of mathematics to philosophy. His goal was to construct a system of true knowledge based on the powers of reason alone. In so doing, he helped set the stage for a move to a man-centered worldview made by Kant (see page 8) and others.

**Deism** – Deism is the view that God exists, but that He is not directly involved in the world, the idea that God wound up the clock but now lets it tick on its own. In deism, because God does not reveal himself through special revelation / the Bible, there is no true basis for love nor any basis for ethics. Because this view is so weak philosophically, it has very little standing in the intellectual community. However, it is held on a practical level by many, see “moralistic therapeutic deism” below on page 9.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Individualism (Radical Individualism / Ontological Individualism / Expressive Individualism)**[[9]](#footnote-9) - With radical individualism the autonomous self, what Scot McKnight calls “self in a castle,” is seen as ultimate. An individual’s right to choose is considered sacred. Freedom is defined as getting to do what I want, when I want, and how I want.[[10]](#footnote-10) Describing a new generation of emerging adults who are radically individualistic Christian Smith summarizes:

According to emerging adults, the absolute authority for every person’s belief or actions is his or her own sovereign self. Anybody can literally think or do whatever he or she wants.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Elsewhere, Smith adds:

American youth, like American adults, are nearly without exception profoundly individualistic, instinctively presuming autonomous, individual self-direction to be a universal human norm and life goal.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804)**  - Important German philosopher who helped lead the movement to make values subjective. Kant postulated that it is the structures of the mind that shapes the view of reality. Describing Kant’s theory, Peter Kreeft said that Kant thought of reality as unshaped cookie dough batter and the mind as cookie dough cutters that gives shape to reality.[[13]](#footnote-13) Kant argued that there is a consistency between minds such that they shaped reality in similar ways. Kant’s legacy is to move knowledge to the subjective.[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Modern Age** – Era that is sometimes dated (loosely) as beginning with the French Revolution in which science became central and humanity moved from a God-centered worldview to a man-centered worldview.

The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defence for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God’s acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock. C.S. Lewis[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism** - The label given by sociologist Christian Smith to describe the prevailing cultural philosophy that though some sort of god may exist, his purpose is to make us feel good and that there are only vague moral implications. By this term Smith means that most U.S. teens (and adults too) believe in “a benevolent God unattached to a particular tradition who is there mostly to help with personal problems.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Smith says that most young people are practical deists who see God as a being whose job it is to meet their needs.[[17]](#footnote-17) See, How Christian Smith helps us understand young adults.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Philosophy** – An attempt to understand the world in its broadest, most general features. The basic questions of philosophy are found in the areas of metaphysics (being), epistemology (knowing), axiology or ethics (doing), and aesthetics (beauty).[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Pluralism** – The belief that there isn’t one true religion but that multiple religions can be correct at the same time.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Postmodernism** – An intellectual and cultural movement that rejects the confident optimism of the modern age. Postmodernism is not confident of what can be known.

**Problem of Evil**  - The problem of evil is the question that asks, “How it can be simultaneously true that (1) God is all-powerful, (2) God is good, (3) Evil exists?[[21]](#footnote-21) The problem of evil presents both an emotional (how can this be?) and an intellectual (how can I understand it?) problem.

Keller successfully shows that the assets to deal with struggling reside only in a robust, distinctive Christian faith:

(1) Personal, wise, infinite, and therefore **inscrutable** God[[22]](#footnote-22)

(2) The **incarnation**: Christ came to earth and suffered with us - - which proves despite all inscrutability -- that God cares.[[23]](#footnote-23)

(3) Through faith we can have **assurance of salvation**.

(4) **Resurrection** - - the reversal of the seemingly irreversible![[24]](#footnote-24)

**Scripts** – Yarhouse shorthand for how we might dialogue with a young person experiencing same sex attraction. Christians should encourage the person that fundamental identity is in Christ. Secular culture, in contrast, encourages young people to *discover* their identity.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**Sexual Identity** – “the act of labeling oneself based upon one’s sexual attraction,”[[26]](#footnote-26) in contrast with *Sexual orientation*. Sexual identity can be divided into the *public* identity and the *private* identity.[[27]](#footnote-27) **Yarborough’s 3 Tiered Distinction Regarding Homosexual Identity**[[28]](#footnote-28) – (1) *Same sex attraction*: The part that can’t be controlled, urges experienced. (2) *Homosexual Orientation* - An enduring attraction for the same sex. (3) *Gay Identity* – Considering this one’s identity. Unfortunately, these three tiers are often collapsed into one category.

**Secularization** - The transformation of a society from close identification with religious values and institutions toward nonreligious (or irreligious) values and secular institutions.

**Theological liberalism -**[[29]](#footnote-29)The religion which developed in the modern era built on the foundation of autonomous human reason (meaning humans can understand reality without God’s Word) which led to the denial of basic tenets of the faith such as the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, authority of Scripture, imminent return of Christ, and bodily resurrection. While theological liberalism claimed to be Christian, it is clearly not biblical Christianity.

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# Bibliography For Material Related to Homosexuality / Marriage

Pastor Chris Brauns

This is not an exhaustive list. It includes those sources I have come across in my studies. By listing a source here, I do not mean to imply that I am in complete agreement. Far from it! *“But test everything; hold fast what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).”*

\*Indicates those resources that are either most helpful or most relevant to the discussion. Again, I reiterate that my intent is *not* to say that I agree with them completely.

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