

Dr. Michael Brown Has 40 Answers and 2 Questions for 'Gay' Christian Matthew Vines

I am answering the 40 questions put forward by "gay Christian" advocate Matthew Vines, after which I will put two simple questions to Matthew (and his allies). What is absolutely stunning, though, is that in these 40 questions, he failed to ask the only one that really matters, namely, "What does the Bible say about homosexual practice?" The reason for that is self-evident, namely, it is impossible to make a case for homosexual relationships using the Word of God alone.

That's why, for the last decade (and until this moment), I have offered to debate the issue of the Bible and homosexual practice with any qualified representative of the "gay Christian" position, yet I have had no takers. (Matthew and I did engage in a brief debate hosted by Moody radio, but as is well known, Matthew agreed to do the broadcast before realizing he would be debating me, after which he felt it would be worse publicity to drop out rather than do the show. Those interested can watch the debate [here](#). (For a relevant follow-up article, go [here](#).) I also address many of the questions Matthew raises in my book *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*, but for the benefit of those who don't have the book, and so as to answer all the questions conveniently in one place, I've responded to each of them [here](#).

Before addressing the questions, it's important to address Matthew's premise, namely, those of us who uphold Scripture "oppose marriage equality." Actually, we oppose redefining marriage; as for so-called "marriage equality," as I have pointed out, advocates of "same-sex marriage" represent just one group clamoring for changes in marriage laws, including polygamists, polyamorists, and adult incestuous couples.

That's why the Marriage Equality Blogspot calls for "Full Marriage Equality," specifically, "for the right of consenting adults to share and enjoy love, sex, residence and marriage without limits on the gender, number or relation of participants." So, from that point of view, Matthew also opposes "marriage equality."

To answer the 40 questions:

1. Do you accept that sexual orientation is not a choice? Sexual orientation is a relatively modern construct, but if you mean is it true that, generally speaking, homosexual men and women did not choose to be attracted to the same sex, the answer would be yes, it is not a conscious choice they made, any more than someone who struggles with angry desires, violent desires, or adulterous desires consciously chose to have those desires.

2. Do you accept that sexual orientation is highly resistant to attempts to change it? Again, using your definition, in the majority of cases, certainly. However, we must not downplay the many successful stories of change through counseling and, more importantly, the possibility of change through the gospel. Cannot Almighty God change a homosexual into a heterosexual if it so pleases Him? Has the church really devoted itself to seeking God to help men and women who struggle with same-sex attractions?

3. How many meaningful relationships with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people do you have? My first organ teacher, when I was barely 7-years old, was openly gay, and he and his partner would come to our home and have dinner with our family. Over the years, I've had good friends who came out of homosexuality (including someone very close to my family), and I interact as often I can in as much depth as I can with those who identify as LGBT.

4. How many openly LGBT people would say you are one of their

closest friends? None that I know of, but that is not because of my rejection of them. I have never turned away from a person because of their sexual brokenness or sexual desires. If, however, they openly scorned God's Word and God's ways, I'm afraid it would be hard for us to be close friends. That being said, I have close friends who are very religious Jews, yet they still believe my faith in Jesus is wrong and I still believe they are lost without Him. In other words, friendship with people (or lack thereof) has absolutely nothing to do with determining the truth of God's Word.

5. How much time have you spent in one-on-one conversation with LGBT Christians about their faith and sexuality? Many hours, and many more hours reading their stories prayerfully, sometimes having to put down the book I'm reading and get on my knees in prayer, even with tears and a heavy burden. I hurt deeply over the pain they have experienced and I long to see them find wholeness in the Lord.

6. Do you accept that heterosexual marriage is not a realistic option for most gay people? Probably so—again, with God, all things are possible—but this too has nothing to do with what God has to say about homosexual practice. It calls for great compassion from the church, but not for rewriting the Bible. Also, unless we get caught up with the spirit of the age, it's important to realize that "heterosexual marriage" is the only marriage God acknowledges.

7. Do you accept that lifelong celibacy is the only valid option for most gay people if all same-sex relationships are sinful? I accept that our Father knows best, that His ways are ways of life, and that if He does not enable someone to enter into a heterosexual relationship then He will give grace to that person to be celibate, just as He gives grace to a believer suffering decades of imprisonment and torture, just as He gives grace to a drug addict to get free from addictions, and just as He gives grace to many heterosexuals to live in lifelong, non-chosen celibacy.

8. How many gay brothers and sisters in Christ have you walked with on the path of mandatory celibacy, and for how long? Less than 10, and not more than 10 years so far, but the term “mandatory celibacy” is misleading, since I’ve walked with heterosexual believers for decades who did not choose celibacy but never met their mate, and they found Jesus to be more than enough to carry them through. Plus, Jesus requires all of us to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Him, and He does not promise any of us a spouse. I also have close friends whose spouses divorced them and who believe they cannot remarry as long as their spouse is alive, and they too have survived and even thrived by God’s grace despite years of singleness imposed on them by their convictions.

9. What is your answer for gay Christians who struggled for years to live out a celibacy mandate but were driven to suicidal despair in the process? This is a heartrending issue that I do not take lightly, but my answer is that anyone who says, “I will kill myself unless I can have sex and be intimate with another human being” is not taking hold of what God has for them. Generally speaking, it’s also true that people who commit suicide are struggling with other emotional issues; otherwise, no matter how acute their problems, they would not take their own lives. Ultimately, though, I cannot see our Father responding positively to the threat of, “Unless you let me have a relationship that satisfies me, I will kill myself.”

10. Has mandatory celibacy produced good fruit in the lives of most gay Christians you know? Again, I object to the term “mandatory celibacy,” and I believe the term “gay Christian” is misleading and unhelpful, but yes, the single Christians I know who are still same-sex attracted are enjoying the Lord, enjoying healthy friendships, and are really quite vibrant. Others have seen a shift (or complete change) in their attractions, and they are happily married to their heterosexual partner. I’ve been quite close with some of them

over the years.

11. How many married same-sex couples do you know? Only a few on a fairly personal level, but I've read as many stories as I can to try to hear their hearts and enter into their worlds. When I have spent time with them, the wrongness of the relationship was underscored to me, along with the depth of my love for them.

12. Do you believe that same-sex couples' relationships can show the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? I believe that humanly speaking, some of these couples are probably exemplary, similar to some religious Jewish couples I know (and probably similar to some atheist couples, Muslim couples, Mormon couples, and others). Do I believe they are being supernaturally empowered by the Spirit to walk in a same-sex relationship? Certainly not. The Spirit would not back or empower that.

13. Do you believe that it is possible to be a Christian and support same-sex marriage in the church? Not a Christian that is walking fully in the light of God's Word and God's Spirit. Only a Christian walking in some level of ignorance could support something that is a fundamental violation of God's heart and intent for marriage, and there are certainly well meaning, misinformed Christians that do that very thing.

14. Do you believe that it is possible to be Christian and support slavery? In Old Testament times, it was right for faithful believers to support the God-ordered system under the Torah, which was closer to that of indentured servants than to the modern slave trade, but it was never proper for a Christian walking fully in the Word and Spirit to support the barbaric African slave trade (or other related forms).

15. If not, do you believe that Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards were not actually Christians because they

supported slavery? They were Christians with blind spots, some very serious, to the point that Luther's words were used verbatim by Adolph Hitler in his violent against the Jews, beginning November 9th-10th, 1938). Do we therefore support murderous Jew-hatred today because of Luther's virulent anti-Semitic writings?

16. Do you think supporting same-sex marriage is a more serious problem than supporting slavery? They are both very serious problems. In fact, because of Old Testament laws concerning slavery and New Testament guidelines for dealing with slavery, misguided Christians actually had verses to use when they argued wrongly for barbaric slavery practices. In contrast, there is not a single verse in the Bible supporting same-sex "marriage" while the entire, positive testimony of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation opposes homosexual relationships. Moreover, while the Bible clearly points to liberation of slavery as a good thing and even a fruit of the gospel, advocates of same-sex "marriage" can point to no such themes or texts in Scripture to support their position.

17. Did you spend any time studying the Bible's passages about slavery before you felt comfortable believing that slavery is wrong? Being raised in the second half of the 20th century (and in New York, for that matter), I grew up believing that slavery and segregation were wrong. But as an Old Testament scholar, it was important for me to work through the biblical passages on slavery and to conclude that it was right for us to oppose slavery today.

18. Does it cause you any concern that Christians throughout most of church history would have disagreed with you? That is certainly a broad statement that is not easily documented, but even if it were true, we must recognize that there have been various forms of slavery in history, that it was Christians, using the Bible, who successfully fought for the liberation of slavery, that in American history, there was constant debate

about slavery in the church, and, in stark contrast with homosexual practice, of which there is not a single supporting syllable in the Scriptures and which has been universally condemned in church history, the Bible is a book of liberation from slavery and bondage.

19. Did you know that, for most of church history, Christians believed that the Bible taught the earth stood still at the center of the universe? Biblical authors used descriptive language, just as we speak of the sun rising and setting, and, more importantly, the Bible is not here primarily to teach us science. It is God's Word to teach about who He is, what He requires, and how we can live lives that are pleasing to Him. You could believe that the earth is made of ice cream and still go to heaven, but Paul (and others) teach that those who practice willful, unrepentant, and habitual sin—be it adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, or drunkenness—will not inherit the kingdom of God.

20. Does it cause you any concern that you disagree with their interpretation of the Bible? Of course not, for the reasons just stated. Questions like this, sad to say, underscore the paucity of your arguments and the complete absence of Scripture in support of your view.

21. Did you spend any time studying the Bible's verses on the topic before you felt comfortable believing that the earth revolves around the sun? This is not a point of biblical faith or morality and so it did not concern me in the least. However, again, as an Old Testament scholar, I have devoted decades to understanding the Bible in its ancient Near Eastern (and later Mediterranean and Jewish context) so as to rightly interpret and apply it to today.

22. Do you know of any Christian writers before the 20th century who acknowledged that gay people must be celibate for life due to the church's rejection of same-sex relationships? The question is itself misleading and self-

defeating. What Scripture and the church have always addressed is the question of behavior, not just feelings, since every human being is broken and sinful outside of Jesus and many human beings have all kinds of sinful sexual thoughts and desires, including every kind of sexual perversion known to man. What has been universally called for is holiness of heart and life, meaning sexual purity while single and sexual purity within marriage (which has always and only been male-female in God's sight, and which remains so today, regardless of what any court rules). Some of the greatest leaders in the church have been single, and it's possible that not a few of them, like the Catholic leader Henri Nouwen, wrestled with same-sex attraction.

23. If not, might it be fair to say that mandating celibacy for gay Christians is not a traditional position? Absolutely false. What is emphatically not a traditional position is the idea that two men or two women could enter into a blessed, romantic and sexual relationship. That is not just unbiblical and untraditional; it is diametrically opposed to everything Scripture teaches (and the church has taught) about sexual and marital intimacy. Anyone who could not marry someone of the opposite sex—to repeat, the only marital option before God—or who chose not to marry would be celibate.

24. Do you believe that the Bible explicitly teaches that all gay Christians must be single and celibate for life? First, I reject the category of “gay Christians,” as if someone's sexual desires and romantic attractions defined their entire being. Many researchers today believe that pedophilia is innate and immutable, but would we dare call someone a “pedophilic Christian,” even if that person renounced those feelings and was living a holy life? Why then speak of “gay Christians”? That is embracing the spirit and mindset of the world rather than that of the Lord. That being said, without possible question, Christians who are same-sex attracted can seek the Lord for His grace to change (and many, thank God,

have been helped in that way) or, one day at a time, seek His grace to be celibate. Those are the only options, and the church must stand with them in faith, love, friendship, and support. Theirs is a very holy calling.

25. If not, do you feel comfortable affirming something that is not explicitly affirmed in the Bible? Again, your question is based on a false premise. What is explicitly affirmed over and over again in the Bible is that God requires holiness of all His people and that the only outlet for sexual intimacy is in the confines of marriage, which, to repeat, can only be the union of a man and woman. This is as explicit as anything in the Word.

26. Do you believe that the moral distinction between lust and love matters for LGBT people's romantic relationships? Not anymore than the distinction holds in matters of fornication and adultery, meaning, many fornicating couples love each other, but their relationship is still sinful, and many adulterers truly fall in love with their adulterous partner, yet their relationship is still sinful. It's the same with homosexual couples, even if they love each other.

27. Do you think that loving same-sex relationships should be assessed in the same way as the same-sex behavior Paul explicitly describes as lustful in Romans 1? Absolutely, in terms of being contrary to what God intended. The fundamental issue, as the Greek text indicates, especially when compared to the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation) of Genesis 1, is that such behavior is contrary to the Creator's design for His creation—it really is self-evident that God designed a man to be with a woman, on many levels, and that He did not design a man to be with a man or a woman to be with a woman—which is also why, on average, there is far more homosexual and bisexual promiscuity than heterosexual promiscuity, not to mention a greater percentage of sexually transmitted diseases. I realize there are committed homosexual

couples (although, in many cases, their definition of monogamy is hardly traditional), but the Word never says that an inherently sinful act somehow becomes sanctified by repeating it with the same person.

28. Do you believe that Paul's use of the terms "shameful" and "unnatural" in Romans 1:26-27 means that all same-sex relationships are sinful? Without a doubt, based on the consistent testimony of Scripture, which Paul reaffirms in Romans 1, which is why numerous gay and lesbian scholars have stated that Paul explicitly opposed all forms of homoeroticism.

29. Would you say the same about Paul's description of long hair in men as "shameful" and against "nature" in 1 Corinthians 11:14, or would you say he was describing cultural norms of his time? Actually, you cannot possibly compare Paul's condemnation of homosexual practice in Romans 1 with his teaching about long hair (and or veiling of the hair) in 1 Corinthians 11, nor does he ever make the latter a matter of salvation, whereas he clearly does of the former (as in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). As to "nature" in 1 Corinthians 11, actually, women by nature have longer and fuller hair than men, and to this day, it is a much more serious issue for a woman to lose her hair than a man. And in the culture of the day, for a married woman to go outside her house unveiled would be immodest, so the question was raised as to what conduct was proper in a house church meeting. How can this be compared to the radical redefining of marriage and to the attempt to sanctify something that God says is detestable?

30. Do you believe that the capacity for procreation is essential to marriage? Procreation is essential to the design of marriage, which means only a man and woman can marry because only they are designed to procreate. That is self-evident from the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, where human beings are commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and where Adam needs a suitable helper (not just companion) because he

and his wife must produce offspring for the future of humanity, and they are the paradigm emphasized throughout Scripture, reinforced by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Paul in Ephesians 5.

31. If so, what does that mean for infertile heterosexual couples? Heterosexual couples who are infertile have not violated the design of marriage; rather, they have a disability within the designed parameters of marriage, just like a bird with a broken wing. But to compare a homosexual couple to an infertile heterosexual couple is to compare a fish to a bird with a broken wing.

32. How much time have you spent engaging with the writings of LGBT-affirming Christians like Justin Lee, James Brownson, and Rachel Murr? I have spent countless hours studying these writings, amassing a large library of pro-LGBT books, even praying as I read them for God to show me any blind spots in my own understanding. I can safely say that not one of them makes the slightest, genuinely biblical, positive case for homosexual practice and that not one of them adequately refutes the clear teaching of Scripture prohibiting all forms of homosexual practice. (On the sociological end of things, readers can work through the 1,500 endnotes in *A Queer Thing Happened to America* or consult the bibliography here. On the biblical end of things, readers can work through the 15-page select bibliography in *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* or the 518 endnotes to that book, in which I quote extensively from those who differ with my position.)

33. What relationship recognition rights short of marriage do you support for same-sex couples? I support their treatment as fellow-human beings and to be protected from acts of hatred and violence, like everyone else is entitled. I support no special recognition of their relationship.

34. What are you doing to advocate for those rights? I have

often spoken against gay bashing and bullying, and I follow the principle of “reach out and resist,” meaning, reach out to LGBT people with compassion, resist gay activism with courage. Because of this emphasis, when gay protesters came to my home church several years ago, they quickly apologized to our people once they began to interact, with the organizer calling my radio show the next day to apologize to me personally (I was not there when the protest occurred), stating, “Once we got there Sunday morning we were greeted with absolutely perfect love. I mean, it was fantastic.” This proves that you can oppose homosexual practice as sinful yet do so full of God’s love.

35. Do you know who Tyler Clementi, Leelah Alcorn, and Blake Brockington are, and did your church offer any kind of prayer for them when their deaths made national news? Yes, of course I know about these tragic stories, as my article on the suicide of Joshua Alcorn, written with sensitivity and pain, indicates. As for my congregation specially focusing on them, to be candid, while we care deeply about the wellbeing of those who identify as LGBT, there are millions of people dying around the world, with unspeakable tragedies taking place day and night across America and in other countries. It would be very strange for us to focus on these few tragedies as opposed to the tragic deaths of these countless others. (May I ask, in turn, how much time you spend fighting against human trafficking in the Third World—our ministry school grads are actively engaged there, as well as in America—or how much humanitarian work you actively support in war-torn Muslim countries—our grads are serving there as I speak, at the risk of their own lives—or how much time you invest in stopping the slaughter of the unborn—again, our grads are fighting for life every day.)

36. Do you know that LGBT youth whose families reject them are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide than LGBT youth whose families support them? I teach Christian parents to

demonstrate unconditional love to their kids who come out as gay, telling them, "You know what we believe, but you are our child and we love you and care about you just the same, and we are here for you." To my joy, I have received testimonies from both parents and older children who have come through these struggles, with those children now serving the Lord and living holy lives. What I also know is that adult homosexuals, even in gay-affirming environments, continue to have higher instances of depression, suicide, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases. Why would I want to "support" that?

37. Have you vocally objected when church leaders and other Christians have compared same-sex relationships to things like bestiality, incest, and pedophilia? I have clearly and emphatically distinguished between consensual adult sexual behaviors and, say, sexual abuse of children, also openly correcting those who use unhelpful rhetoric. At the same time, you must protest against Leviticus 18, which group's homosexual practice together with incest and bestiality—in other words, these are serious violations of God's intent for His people—and if you eliminate Leviticus 18 from your canon of relevant Scripture, on what basis should incest be forbidden?

38. How certain are you that God's will for all gay Christians is lifelong celibacy? Once more, I object to your "gay Christian" moniker as a term of self-identification, but am I sure that people who cannot marry (meaning, male-female marriage) must be celibate? Yes, 100 percent sure. The Scriptures are unequivocal on this.

39. What do you think the result would be if we told all straight teenagers in the church that if they ever dated someone they liked, held someone's hand, kissed someone or got married, they would be rebelling against God? That is an irrelevant question. Instead, we should teach all teenagers (whose sexual desires and attractions are also known to

fluctuate more than adults) that God requires holiness of heart and life, that by His grace, He will empower them to live overcoming lives, forgiving them when they fall short and come to Him in repentance, that as long as they are single, He will be more than enough for them, and that if it His will that they marry, He will provide a spouse for them and help them to be ready. Interestingly, a guest on my radio show who works in the Muslim world told me that when a Muslim comes to faith in Jesus, they are asked two questions: Are you willing to suffer for Him? Are you willing to die for Him? I would say that those are far more sobering questions than the ones you posit here. Similarly, every year when we baptize believers in India, my dear Indian colleague asks them, "Are you willing to follow Jesus to your last breath, to your last drop of blood?" I'm sure this is a weightier question than, "Are you willing to be single if God called you to be?" I don't deny the weight of the question. I simply say your emphasis is all wrong. In fact, it's the common theme through your questions, namely, "Surely God wouldn't want me to live without sex and intimacy, therefore I must reinterpret the Bible in that light."

40. Are you willing to be in fellowship with Christians who disagree with you on this topic? I do my best to interact with believers who differ with me by every means at my disposal, both privately and publicly, and my open invitation to sit with professing "gay Christians" and simply hear their stories—without me debating them—remains valid. However, if someone claimed to be a follower of Jesus and was openly advocating same-sex relationships, thereby misleading people as a false teacher, if that person would not repent, I would have to break fellowship with them.

Now, my two questions to Matthew Vines, since I noticed in our brief debate that he did not quote a single Scripture in clear support of homosexual relationships.

1. Can you give me a single, unambiguous biblical example of a God-blessed homosexual relationship?

2. Do you agree that every reference to homosexual practice in the Bible is decidedly negative?

I appeal to everyone reading this article to read with heart and mind, to search the Word carefully and prayerfully, to listen to followers of Jesus who have renounced homosexual practice, and to be moved by what our God says more than what our (often fickle and misleading) emotions might say. It is the truth alone that will set us free and, to repeat, Jesus is enough for all of us.

Michael Brown is the host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire* and is the president of *FIRE School of Ministry*. His newest book (September, 2015) is *Outlasting the Gay Revolution: Where Homosexual Activism Is Really Going and How to Turn the Tide*. Connect with him on Facebook at *AskDrBrown* or on Twitter *@drmichaellbrown*