

Attending Homosexual Weddings as a Christian

With the increase of states that have legalized homosexual marriage, and with the subsequent rise in gay marriages, Christians are more and more faced with the question: “Should I attend a homosexual wedding?”

As with most things, there is a spectrum of answers, from those who would adamantly say no in all circumstances to those who would advocate attendance in every case. Before diving into “the answer,” it is best to explore the reasoning behind both answers.

Opposed. Those who would not attend primarily contend (rightfully) that they would not be attending a real wedding. Since marriage is a union between one man and one woman, a homosexual relationship cannot fulfill the basic definition of a marriage.

To the question “should I attend?” they would respond with other questions. “How is attending anything other than approval of sin?” “What am I celebrating?” “What is the point of going?” They would say it is more loving to proclaim the truth with absence. Even those who are more towards the middle of the spectrum would say that it is more loving not to go, because even if they were to go, they would not be cheering or celebrating. In their view, having someone at the wedding who is not happy to be there is more upsetting than an absentee. Fundamentally, this view sees the wedding guests as being witnesses and participants. In short, attendance equals approval.

Biblically, this position would first cite Gen. 1-2 and Eph. 5 – marriage is between one man and one woman. Further, since Christians are not of this world (John 17:14-19) and are called not to be conformed to it (Rom. 12:2), they should abstain from attending homosexual weddings, as that would be seen as conforming to the pressures of the world.

In Favor. On the other side of the spectrum, there are Christians who would attend all homosexual weddings without much hesitation, and they would also ask questions. “How can you expect the relationship to remain intact if you refuse to go to something as special as a wedding?” “If the person knows you’re a Christian, shouldn’t they already know that you do not support gay marriage?” These Christians would rather err on the side of most conspicuously loving someone. Further, they see more damage being done by not going than by attending. They imagine the person being married having to constantly answer questions from their guests: “Where’s your sibling/parent/friend?” “Oh, they didn’t come? Why?” In their view, that is much more harmful than someone attending but not fully participating in every aspect of the wedding.

Those who would attend cite love for neighbor as the crux of the law (Matt. 22:39-40), and they would claim that remaining unstained from the world (James 1:27) does not entail seclusion from it. In fact, as Jesus was called to be a light to the nations (Isa. 46:9), so are his followers (Matt. 5:14).

Making a Choice. In the end, I would attend if the relationship would be harmed due to my absence. What that means for anyone faced with this choice is that they must consider the relationship

they have with the person getting married. If they are a close family member or dear friend, I would attend. If they are a colleague with whom I never speak, I would respectfully and kindly decline, only giving a reason if pressed. For everything in between, I would commend the end of Rom. 12:2 previously cited. Yes, Paul tells us to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” but he then gives a reason: “that by testing *you may discern* what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

To be clear, a homosexual wedding does not make a marriage. Biblically, marriage is between one man and one woman, and no amount of sincere, amorous feelings can change that. Humans did not create marriage, so we are not free to change the rules. I would not choose to attend because I believe that the two people saying vows to each other are truly married. Rather, I would attend to show support. I would attend because to not attend is to almost inevitably break the relationship. This is not a decision between biblical truth and pressure from the world; this is an interpretive decision of God’s holy and infallible Word.

If I am attending, it is because I have a close relationship with that person; and if I have a close relationship with that person, they know where I stand. They know I have graduated seminary and am seeking to be ordained in a conservative Christian denomination, so the fear of them perceiving my attendance as approval is nonexistent. The problem then becomes the outsiders – those who from the outside see my attendance as approval. To anyone that asked, I would patiently and kindly explain my reasoning; but the truth is that others will not ask and will instead gossip, finding that easier than engaging in a difficult conversation.

Cornelius Plantinga wrote a wonderful book entitled *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, and that is an excellent description of sin and its effects on this world and an apt description of the difficulties in answering our question. Why do well-meaning, faithful Christians disagree on whether or not to attend homosexual weddings? Is it because one side is biblically faithful and the other is ignorant or “soft?” I would answer “No.” The reason is because this is not the way things are supposed to be. We are dealing with issues that do not belong in this world, so we must recognize that our “solutions” will sometimes be imperfect.

Thus, until the new heavens and new earth, we are called to navigate this world as best we can. Some will attend homosexual weddings assured that they are fulfilling their call to love their neighbor by supporting their friends and leaving open the lines of communication for further evangelism. Some will abstain, confident that it is they who are loving their neighbor by standing firm in the truth despite the potential fallout. Whatever our differences, let us be united in our common goal to love our neighbor, and let that unity, which is ultimately in Christ, lead us to learn from, and extend grace to, one another.