

**“I’m an evangelical Christian and I think same-sex marriage should be legal”<sup>1</sup>**

(The Essential Importance of Love as Serious Jesus-followers)

**KE’s Suggested subtitle**

I live in Canada. Here, it is legal for same-sex couples to marry each other. And somehow, the apocalypse has not occurred. *Shocking, I know.*<sup>2</sup>

As someone raised in a post-Christian culture, now living in a post-same-sex-marriage culture<sup>3</sup> AND as someone that is a heterosexual evangelical Christian herself,<sup>4</sup> **I think that same-sex marriage should be legal** –and I think that Christians, even those that believe homosexuality to be a sin, need to back off the issue.<sup>5</sup>

**From a purely pragmatic standpoint, it doesn’t affect my own life negatively.** For my friends and acquaintances that are GLBT, the ability to have a legal standing on par with heterosexual couples carries weight in every area of their lives. And **the fact that two consenting adult people love each other and are committed to one another does not devalue me, my marriage, my religion, or the society I live in.** If anything, it has created a more stable, tolerant, and accepting society.<sup>6</sup>

Most of us evangelicals in Canada, regardless of personal beliefs about homosexuality, can admit that since same-sex marriage has been legalised in Canada, our society has not gone to hell in a hand basket, nor has traditional marriage, or our families been under attack. Scare tactics and wild-eyed fear-based rhetoric rarely turns out to be true. In actual practice, our society has become “live and let live” which is actually a rather tolerant and comfortable place to be.<sup>7</sup>

**My personal definition of marriage goes beyond the government’s definition of marriage, to that of a religious sacrament** undertaken within the context of an affirming community of believers, serving as a foreshadowing or a demonstration of Christ’s love for the church. With that in mind, I think that, in the interest of separation of church and state, a post-Christian or post-religious society should, in fact, be exactly that – *post-religious*.<sup>8</sup>

In Europe, most of the governments do not ‘marry’ couples. Rather, they issue civil unions allowing for legal connection in matters of health, access, finances, custody and adoption etc. regardless of sex. Then, if one is religious, you go to your faith community and participate in a marriage ceremony as your tradition dictates and understands that sacrament. As long as the government is in the business of performing marriages, there is no need to discriminate.<sup>9</sup>

**I don’t believe that the traditional family needs me to “defend” it in the least.** Within Christian community, family is defined liberally, crossing blood lines to include all of those within the community of believers anyway.<sup>10</sup> God’s promises place the lonely within families.<sup>11</sup> We are even cautioned against the idea of making an idol out of our familial relationships.<sup>12</sup>

My marriage is the greatest relationship of my life, spiritual in every way. And my ability to have a strong marriage that affirms God’s heart for relationships and demonstrates unconditional love is not altered by someone else’s inability or disinclination to do so. If people around me are getting divorced or having affairs or treating each other terribly, I’m still called to a Godly marriage. If people around me are in same-sex relationships, I’m still called to a Godly marriage.

We raise our tinies in spirit and truth, regardless of what the world, the church, or the neighbours, are doing. Even if one believes that same-sex marriage or relationships are a sin, their existence doesn't threaten the very existence and sanctity of your own marriage. <sup>14</sup>

(Part of me also asks “*What traditional family?*” Perhaps that is a cultural ideal, but the truth is that most of us were not raised in a “traditional” two-parent, 2 kids, 1 dog home (well, I was but that's beside the point). Whether it's due to divorce, death, or some other circumstance, most children are not raised in 50s-television-show homes, which, from what I can tell, is what many of the staunchest “marriage defenders” are actually looking at as the ideal.) <sup>15</sup>

**Finally, most arguments against same-sex marriage fail to take one thing into account: love** – and not just love between two people that wish to live their lives together. <sup>16</sup>

Rather, **we miss an opportunity to love those that are different than us, to express love to those that we even disagree with strongly, to affirm their right to make choices different than our own.** As Nathan Albert wrote, we have turned it into an ‘issue’ to debate, to fear, to feel anger over and lobby. On both sides, probably with cause. <sup>17</sup>

But we have forgotten that it is not just an issue. **It's about people.** So when we debate an “issue” and forget that it is backed by people – imperfect, wounded, beloved people on both sides – we dehumanize each other. <sup>18</sup>

It's missing the point. The point of God, the point of Jesus, the point of the Holy Spirit is not to block same-sex legislation. The point of Christianity is not to create a theocratic Christian society. No one is won to Love by hate or legislation.

God does not need me to defend marriage. He does not need me to block other people's decisions. He does not need me to wade into a culture war or gang up on a minority or sow seeds of discord and fear. He does not need me to defend Him, my understanding of His best or even my way of doing life. I have much to learn.

He *has* called me to an active, all encompassing, radical love that looks beyond all things to see the value, dignity, and humanity of each person, to speak the words “**you are loved more than you could ever imagine**” to every soul. And then to try to live out that Love. <sup>19</sup>

## Intergenerational Translation Footnotes Notes

<sup>1</sup>(The Essential Importance of Love as Serious Jesus-followers) would be a good subtitle

<sup>2</sup>Canadian culture has changed in a fundamental way with regard to how marriage is defined and the Canadian government has supported the change. It's a nonissue for me.

<sup>3</sup>I have grown up in a post-Christian culture in which the issue of same-sex marriage has come and gone.

<sup>4</sup>I am a heterosexual evangelical Christian.

<sup>5</sup>The government has made same-sex marriage legal. Therefore I “believe” that it should (be regarded as) legal. There's nothing that can be done about it. The Scriptures admonish us to respect the government. Under the Lordship of Jesus, Christians need to decide how to live in this reality and use their energy in other ways.

**Translator's note:** The nuance of the following phrase is not clear. Possible nuances are inserted in brackets ... *“and I think that Christians, even those that believe homosexuality to be a sin, (like I do? like I don't?) need to back off the issue.”*

<sup>6</sup>Living in a culture where same-sex people are married (I know lots of them) does not affect how I live my life as a follower of Jesus. I follow Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>The reality of legal same-sex marriages has not affected the marriages and the families that live under the Lordship of Jesus and are active in a discipling community.

<sup>8</sup>Evangelical Christians go with the biblical definition of marriage rather than the government's legal definition.

<sup>9</sup>What the government provides is a legal “civil union”. What the Christian community provides when it marries is a “civil union” plus a biblical understanding of a three-dimensional interpersonal union based on “loving God, loving my spouse, loving myself”. Christians live out their marriages with the support of a community of people who are committed to the Lordship of Jesus and the authority of His Word.

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said that the Christian community was his family. Matthew 12:46-49

<sup>11</sup>Jesus said that the lonely are to be included. Matthew 25:35

<sup>12</sup>“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26

<sup>13</sup>I keep my eyes focused on Jesus as Lord in spite of what others are choosing to do.

<sup>14</sup>I disciple my children (a.k.a.“tinies”) to follow Jesus as Lord.

<sup>15</sup>A single parent (widower, divorcee) rearing children, a childless couple caring for abandoned children are each expressions of a traditional family in addition to the family portrayed in “Leave it to Beaver” is one expression of a traditional family.

<sup>16</sup>A prayerful repetition of the “Great Commandment” and a serious reaffirmation of its place in a Jesus follower’s life needs to be read here before proceeding further in the article.

<sup>17</sup>“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.” Luke 6:32

<sup>18</sup>Repeat Luke 6:32 to yourself again.

<sup>19</sup>1 Corinthians 13 is required reading at this point in the article – especially the following excerpt : Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.