

To the members and participants of the Senate Judiciary Public Hearing

My name is Michael Ozaki.

I live in Forks, ND. With my wife and 4 children.

I have been an ordained and installed minister in the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) for the last 12 years.

I am also a Licensed Graduate Social Worker.

I have a Masters of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Masters of Social Work from Rutgers University.

I share all of this because many biblical, theological and social arguments are being made against marriage equality. And while I believe they are coming from well meaning individuals, it doesn't change the fact that they often contain many inaccurate assumptions and false facts.

As someone who has studied these subjects deeply I'd like to share a few facts on the matter.

**1) Bible has no law against same sex relationships.**

Verses like Leviticus 18:22 (*"Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman"*) are often quoted. Which seems straight forward, except that in Hebrew the literal translation is more like, *"With a male you shall not lie lyings of a woman; it is taboo."* A sentence as awkward in that language as in our own. But what's more interesting is the word "Taboo" at the end. A word used in all OT mentions of this law. In Hebrew the word is *"to'evah"*. A word exclusively used in religious settings and it comes right after the law to not "give" your child to Molech.

There is also never any reference to female on female sexual activity in the OT. Which seems like an odd thing to leave out.

What does it mean? That the law has to do specifically with what was happening in the religious rituals of the non-jewish people around them. Namely, that men would take part in the common ancient practice of "Pedantry" which is men having sex with boys, in this case as a religious rite, in order to take "strength" from them and the Gods.

In other words, this is not a law about homosexuality. This is a law about who you worship, how God gives power and wants you to treat children.

If you want to point to stories like Sodom and Gomorra (Gen 19) well, that's even easier. Ezekiel tells us what they real sin was that got them destroyed:

*"This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy."*

*-Ezekiel 16:49*

But perhaps the more troubling truth of the laws that are quoted is that in doing so we pick and choose. Because if we are going to try to legislate God's law then we also better go after tattoo parlors, labs cross breeding crops, anyone who has sex while menstruating or factories making cotton blend clothing. All of which are forbidden in that same Chapter of Leviticus.

But that's not going to happen because that's not really why we bring up the Bible when talking about same sex marriage. We bring it up as a tool, a weapon to wield against people not like us who do things we don't understand. A natural human instinct, to be sure. But in doing so, we not only misrepresent what this book is saying, we actually violate it and the faith we claim at a much deeper level.

## **2) Biblical Marriage is NOT between one man and one women.**

Marriage between one man and one woman in the bible is a rarity. Abraham had 3, Jacob at 2 or more and David had at least 8. Marriage between way more than one man and one woman was seen as fine and even commanded in some cases (Deut. 5)

Instead, marriage was seen as a way for humans to be deeply connected and in care for one another. It was out of that connection that life comes forth in all forms, not just biologically. For this reason and from this perspective there were not limits put on it except to make sure it wasn't used by men to turn twist marriage itself into a way to use or dominate women.

Which is also why, in the New Testament, writers like Paul say that it is better for people to not get married at all (1 Corinth. 7). The church was seen as the "bride of Christ" and their deep connections and mutual care for each other across race, nationality, social status and more was all they needed to be who they were meant to be. Humans, made equal and sharing everything because everything was given as a gift from God for the purpose of sharing as a Gift to others made by the same God.

And that kind of world can't be legislated.  
It can only be chosen by those who choose to give.  
Not because of what they hate but because of who they love.

## **3) No Law can ever bring people close to God or who we are meant to be.**

In the end, this is why all the Biblical arguments about removing marriage

equality must be discounted. In the end the biblical logic about how God changes us isn't by the enforcement of better rules but by the granting of more freedom and trust that love demands. Or, as Galatians 5 puts it:

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

## **Conclusion**

Rescinding marriage equality and its protections will do nothing to make us a more Christian nation or improve any heterosexuals marriage. In fact, it will do the opposite. As Christians it violates the deepest tenants of our faith by oppressing a minority group's freedom. A freedom they use to love each other more fully. And then taking action that holds no love or respect for freedoms towards them.

Don't do this.

There are so many other people who need you to intervene in their lives.

Gay and Lesbian married people are not one of them.

At least, not like this.