

Jesus' emphasis in relationships was love- surely marriage is a quality of relationship not a prescribed shape?

Songs, slogans and (more recently) tweets have often supported the widespread contention that 'All you need is love'. More recently, it has been suggested that Jesus's teaching on relationships had a priority and focus on the quality and nature of love and that, as such, our Christian ethic should be more concerned with the quality of relationships than their shape or pattern.

However, a closer look at Jesus's teaching suggests that two complementary understandings combine to undermine this simple (and sometimes convenient) assertion.

It is clear that Jesus saw marriage as being grounded in the creative activity of God who made human beings as male and female and then brought them together in a sexual union in marriage (Matthew 19:3–6).

Secondly, and into that framework Jesus advocated marital permanence and exclusivity, avoiding divorce (Matthew 19:6–9) and adultery (Matthew 5:27–30). There is no suggestion that the former of these – the framework for marriage – is either any more or less important than the quality of the relationship expected.

All this means that the quality of a relationship and its shape cannot be separated in a scriptural ethic. A relationship can only have the quality of love if the form of that relationship is appropriate within the order that God has created. This means in turn that a loving marital relationship can only exist in accordance with the nature of marriage as God has created it – a permanent and faithful union between one man and one woman.

RESOURCES:

A particularly good video on Jesus and his teaching on sexuality from [Robert Gagnon](#).

['Was Jesus "inclusive"?'](#), Ian Paul