



The plebiscite is coming. It's not the one we were told we'd be having (then told we were not having) but it is still a chance for us to make our opinion on whether same-sex marriage should be legalised known. Now that it has been decided that it's happening, lobby groups and people with opinions all over the country are gearing up for a fight. For those of us who are Christians, how we engage with this is important; we can either help the cause of Jesus or hinder it. So here are four ideas for Christians about how we can do this plebiscite well.

Don't say horrible things about other humans

No matter where you stand, there's a very good chance that all of us are going to be tempted to say mean things about other people – whether they identify as LGBTQI, as a conservative Christian, a progressive Christian, a politician, a combination of these, or something else entirely. Facebook is already full of people debating the value, or lack thereof, of this plebiscite. All the people you interact with, and speak about, whether in broad generalisations or in very specific terms, are made in the image of God, they are loved by him, and Jesus died for them. Treat them for who they are. They are God's and he will take your treatment of them personally.

Particularly watch how you speak about people from the LGBTQI community, especially if, like me, you're a Christian who is not from this community yourself and therefore may not know what you're talking about and probably cannot speak on their behalf. You may say something deeply hurtful out of ignorance more than malice, but whatever your motives or intentions, you are still responsible for your words. Be careful. How should you be careful? I'll show you a most excellent way...

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry

In case you're wondering, that's a quote from [James 1:19](#). What if our first response to someone who disagrees with us either online or IRL was "Tell me more", "I don't know enough about this, help me understand", or "Thank you, I hadn't thought of things that way." Chances are whatever you want to say has already been said, so you probably don't need to say it again, they've heard it before. But what if you were known as someone who listened, someone who was thoughtful, and someone who was not easily baited. That's probably better than being known as someone who thinks they're right, and tells everyone else why they're right, and how everyone can be right like them.

If you're going to vote, don't be proud of how you are going to vote

You may be tempted to be proud of how progressive and accepting you are because you are choosing to vote for same-sex marriage. You may be tempted to be pleased with yourself for standing firm in the face of negative public opinion because you will choose to vote against same-sex marriage. But there is no place for pride in the life of a Christian. Your value is not found in your moral values or your political or social opinion. You are no better or worse a person in the eyes of God because you vote "Yes" or "No". Boast only in Christ, approach everything else with the humility of someone who knows your righteousness is not found in your actions but in his.

If it won't help the Gospel, stop

My biggest concern with any discussion about this plebiscite is that we get distracted by things that are less important than the gospel. Sure there are important things at stake, but if the things we yell about stop people from hearing of the love of Christ, we've lost the most important battle.

For some of you, this may be the most controversial thing I say all post, but unless something crazy happens, soon same-sex marriage is going to be legalised. The question is, how do you want followers of Jesus remembered when all is said and done? Do you want us to be remembered as the ones who tried to deny the legal right of marriage to a group of people who we claim to love, many of whom do not claim to be Christians and adhere to Christian beliefs and values? Do you want us to be remembered as the people who hurled abuse at each other online and said horrible things about minorities? Do you want us to be remembered as the people who fought a losing battle and in the process further eroded our reputation as people of love? Or do you want us to be remembered as the people who spoke with love, who acted with love, who listened with love, and who won and lost with love?

Same-sex marriage does not threaten the Lordship of Jesus, but how you act as a follower will reflect his Lordship to the world. We are Christ's ambassadors, so if our words and actions could stop people from hearing the good news of what Jesus has done for them at the cross, it's time to stop, there are more important things at stake than the legal definition of marriage.