

Dr. Jennifer G. Bird

Marriage in the Bible:

Working through Relevant Passages

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Why This Workshop?

- Churches across the country are struggling to know what their faithful response should be to matters related to the LGBT community, specifically whether or not to affirm same-sex marriages and whether or not to ordain such members. Perhaps you are a part of one such congregation. Or maybe you would like to have more information on the topic in order to have productive conversations with others.
- Dr. Jennifer Bird knows what it is like to be uncertain about what the Bible says on important issues. (That is what got her to seminary to begin with!) The thing is, the Bible is quite complex on this (or any other) topic. Wanting a simple, clear-cut answer is understandable, but is not quite fair to expect of Scripture.
- Part of the solution is to be careful and honest about what *is* and *is not* in the Bible that relates to this conversation.
- Dr. Bird is making the rounds, eager to give members of congregations some space and time in which to read and wrestle with what is and is not in the Bible on this topic, guided by her award-winning teaching style and compassion. When a minister asked what her agenda is for these workshops, she responded: “To educate. How the congregation wants to handle the information is up to you to negotiate.”

What to Expect

- This workshop requires a full day (and can include a short session the night before). Each half of the day has two parts. First, people will get into small groups to read through passages and talk through their own beliefs, and formulate whatever questions they may have. For the second part, we come together as one large group to work through the details and contextualization of the passages.
- The handouts and prompts for reading and discussing the passages are created with the intention of helping people get to a place where they can discuss the relevant passages with others, with confidence.

Bio

Dr. Jennifer Bird comes from a family steeped in the United Methodist Tradition. Her seminary work at Princeton Theological Seminary (2001) included two internships with Presbyterian (PC(USA)) churches in New York City. In her second year of PhD course work, she also filled a one-year part-time position at First Presbyterian Church, in Waco, Texas. Throughout her ten years in Nashville, Tennessee and Greensboro, North Carolina, she sought out opportunities to teach classes crafted for local churches.

Jennifer's PhD is in New Testament & Early Christianity (2007), from Vanderbilt University's Graduate Department of Religion. Upon completion of her dissertation, she began a full-time position at Greensboro College, in North Carolina. It was during her time there that North Carolina held a vote on Amendment One, which, in effect, led to defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Her first blog piece for Huffington Post was published two days after that vote, "[How Amendment One Distorts the Bible](#)," and has been followed by many others, including, "[Biblical Marriage: I Do Not Think It Means What You Think It Means](#)," and "[An Open Letter to Kim Davis](#)." Jennifer is invested in helping congregations or groups have productive conversations about what the Bible does and does not say about marriage. Her goal is to educate, pure and simple.



Photo credit: Jessica Johnson

Pricing/Expenses

Travel to and from

- train or airplane fares vary
- mileage (.54 /mile) a 3-hour drive

Housing ● varies: local hotel or guest room in someone's home

Workshop Fee ● \$150/per hour + \$100 for worksheets for next steps

Bishop Melvin Talbert, UMC

“I’m excited to hear that Dr. Jennifer Bird is offering her services by planning some workshops designed to help congregations begin to work through what the Bible does and does not say about marriage.

Having worked with her on this process a few months ago, I’m more than pleased to recommend and endorse her as a very inspiring and competent leader in this field of endeavor.”

Sample Schedule

8:30-9:00	Gather, mingle over coffee, find small groups
9:00-10:00	Small Groups: First round of passages
10:00-10:15	Break: water, coffee refills, bathroom, etc.
10:15-11:45	Large Group: Lead by Dr. Bird
11:45-1:15	LUNCH
1:15-1:30	Gather back into small groups
1:30-2:30	Small Groups: Second round of passages
2:30-2:45	Break
2:45-4:15	Large Group: Dr. Bird
4:15-??	Q&A, discussing what is desired for the next steps

A Friday night session can also be added, in addition to having a suggested/required reading list, so that people come to the workshop having read the biblical passages through at least once on their own.