

Big Q's?

Part 4: Homosexuality...A Biblical Perspective July 25, 2010

Gay...bisexual...lesbian...transgender! Never has it been more confusing when one tries to sort out a Biblical response to one of the most divisive topics in our culture. Our approach is simple. What does the Bible say, and what doesn't it say about this topic?

I. Our assumptions

- A. God loves all people regardless of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual identity. Therefore, crude humor and disrespect is irresponsible and unbiblical. This is a very painful subject. Some in this room wrestle with same sex attraction. They are not closeted in the sense they are secretly active – they are conflicted and deeply wounded. They want freedom from these incessant thoughts and they want a word from us that goes beyond condemnation. [The Story of Ben](#).
- B. I believe that the Bible specifically condemns homosexual behavior on multiple levels, but does not specifically condemn same sex attraction. This is consistent with what both Focus on the Family and Exodus International teaches.
- C. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are not equals but neither are they two opposites. Homosexuality, like all forms of sexual immorality, is a counterfeit to God's creative design – not the opposite. We should introduce homosexuals to the opposite sex; we need to introduce them to Jesus Christ. And if they are already believers, we need to make disciples of them. Before God gave Adam a helpmate, God gave Adam Himself, the relationship that precedes all earthly relationships.
- D. Isn't like Satan to take something like a healthy male friendship (ex. David and Jonathon) and twist it into some pro gay argument.

II. Our approach

- A. I will compare and contrast the major biblical references to homosexuality in the Bible. I will not cover every passage, only the major ones. This is a summary position not an exhaustive one. The Christian Left (Soul Force, Metropolitan Community Church, etc.) will take a very different approach to the passages presented. I will represent their views fairly but will point out their faulty exegesis where appropriate.
- B. I will not comment on the relevant medical and scientific issues involved nor will I discuss the origins of homosexuality. I will only briefly describe an approach to dealing with those who struggle with homosexuality in the church and our response as Christians.

III. Getting started: A few questions

- A. **Is there a difference in being a practicing homosexual and having same sex feelings and/or orientation?**
 - 1. Yes, some people have same sex attraction but do not practice or participate in any same sex sexual activities. They may have “feelings, desires, and inclinations, but do not succumb to the temptation of acting out these feelings. I prefer the term “person with same-sex attraction” because it does not imply – as does “homosexual” – that a person is sexually active or that they are part of a gay advocacy group. A person with same-sex attractions is a person first – before they are same-sex attracted.
 - 2. I will show that the Bible conclusively speaks to homosexual behavior. It does not conclusively speak about orientation, desires, feelings and inclination.

B. Can you be a Christian and be a “practicing” homosexual?

1. Yes, if you are a member of the Metropolitan Community Church and other pro gay or “inclusive” churches. There are 300 Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) that meet in 18 countries worldwide. The gay denomination was founded by defrocked Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) minister Troy Perry in 1968 and has a membership of more than 32,000. It is the largest of the gay church networks and they feel that they have a valid Biblical basis for their lifestyle.
2. The National Gay Pentecostal Alliance (NGPA) was founded in 1980 with churches operating in nine states. It includes the Potter's House Fellowship in Tampa, Florida, founded in 1998 by Robert Morgan, a gay pastor with roots in the Assemblies of God (AG) and United Pentecostal Church (UPC).
3. Mel White, Dean of UFMCC's Cathedral of Hope in Dallas--the largest gay church in the world--believes homosexuality is simply a variation of God's creation. He says he came to that conclusion after 35 years of unsuccessful attempts--which included electroshock therapy and seeking healing at a Kathryn Kuhlman crusade--to overcome his homosexual feelings. It is the world's largest liberal Christian church with a primary outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; Affiliated with the United Church of Christ denomination since October 28, 2006 by the denomination's North Texas Association, the church was overwhelmingly accepted as a member, becoming the fourth-largest church in the denomination. It has 52,000 worldwide constituents, 3,500 members and 1,200 weekly attendees.

No, if you take the conservative/evangelical position. I believe that there are Christians who have fallen into sexual immorality (both heterosexual and homosexual) who need to

receive God's forgiveness for sin, just like we all do when we violate God's moral codes. I do not believe you can lose your salvation (if you were truly saved), but I believe we ought to be careful in proclaiming salvation too flippantly. God of course will sort this out.

C. **Did Jesus talk about homosexuality?**

1. Jesus never specifically talked about homosexual behavior but he also never addressed drug usage, incest, wife beating, slavery, civil rights, etc. Jesus doesn't address a lot of things.
2. However, while Jesus did not specifically teach on homosexuality, His establishment of the Genesis passages as the fundamental passages on marriage (even more fundamental than the Law) leaves no doubt as to His view that relationships in marriage are between a man and woman. It is fundamental to our understanding of human sexuality.
 - *"And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'" Matthew 19:4 (NKJV)*
 - *"But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'" Mark 10:6 (NKJV)*

IV. **What are the choices...worldviews?**

- A. **Pro Gay (MCC or Soulforce):** God doesn't condemn homosexuality. Homosexuality as an alternative, normal, natural unchangeable sexual orientation for a minority of humans, which is accepted by God. It is something that a person is not does! It is a God given alternative lifestyle to heterosexuality. It is like being left handed. It is neither a sickness nor a sin.
- B. These prohibitions in Scripture refer to promiscuous homosexuality as opposed to a loving, caring homosexual couple that is in a monogamous relationship. The Bible only condemns ...

1. Heterosexuals who, against their basic nature, engage in same-sex behavior during ritual orgies (Rom. 1:26-27)
2. Male child molesters (I Cor. 6:9-10)
3. Raping of strangers for the purpose of humiliation (Gen. 19)
4. Gay ritual sex in a Pagan temple (Lev.18:22 and 20:13)
5. Humans who have sex with other species/animals (Jude 1:7).

Summary: The biblical authors were referring to homosexual acts performed by persons they assumed were heterosexuals or clearly not referring to loving, monogamous same sex couples.

C. **Conservative Evangelical** God condemns all homosexual *acts* as sin. It is not God given and it is a perversion of God's intended desire.

1. Most would say that there is a difference in having feelings or desires and then acting upon them. Just like some heterosexuals have feelings for other married women, or lust, but don't act on them. There is a difference in thinking about it and acting upon it.
2. Heterosexuality is God's creative intent for humanity, and subsequently homosexual expression is outside of God's will. As such, homosexual attraction and impulses – while not inherently sinful in themselves – are merely one of many human temptations reflective of our fallen nature. Choosing to resolve these tendencies through homosexual behavior, taking on a homosexual identity, and involvement in the homosexual lifestyle is destructive, as it distorts God's intent for the individual and is thus sinful. (From Exodus website)

3. Instead, Christ offers a healing alternative to those with homosexual tendencies. There can be redemption for the homosexual person as the process whereby sin's power is broken, and the individual is freed to know and experience true identity as discovered in Christ and His Church – with the subsequent freedom to grow towards celibacy and/or a greater sense of his or her heterosexuality. (From Exodus website)
4. Exodus bridges the gap between Christians who respond to homosexual men and women with ignorance and fear, and those who uphold homosexuality as a valid, Christ-centered lifestyle. To Exodus, both extremes fail to convey to the homosexual the fullness of redemption found in Christ. (From Exodus website)

V. An Overview of what the Bible Says

A. Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-24 (Created Intent)

²⁷God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²²The LORD God ^[e]fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought

her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

1. Traditional view:

God's intention for human sexual relationships is limited to a heterosexual union between man and woman in marriage.

2. Pro Gay:

Genesis doesn't forbid it... it just doesn't refer to it. This can't be the model for all couples. Many heterosexual couples are childless, or unable to have sexual relations. Are they in sin because they don't conform to the Genesis account?

3. Response:

True it doesn't forbid, but nowhere in scripture does it commend such behavior either. Not once is a homosexual relationship mentioned in anything but negative terms. It is the model of both marriage and sexuality, so much so that God illustrates His relationship to believers as symbolic of that of husband and wife.

B. Gen. 19:4-9 (Destruction of Sodom)

⁴Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; ⁵and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them." ⁶But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, ⁷and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. ⁸"Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹But they said, "Stand

aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.

1. Traditional View:

The Men of Sodom were attempting homosexual contact (maybe even gang rape) with Lot's visitors. Sodom is destroyed because of its wickedness.

2. Pro Gay:

Sodom is destroyed because of in hospitality of its citizens. To know (yada) is appears 943 times in OT and only has a sexual meaning 10 times. The men wanted to know Lot's visitors in a "hospitable" way. The men had no sexual intentions. The real sin of Sodom is described in Ez. 16:49 as religious wickedness and idolatry and destroyed because of its pride. Even if the sin was homosexual rape, that doesn't describe loving homosexual relationships of mutual consent.

3. Response:

This makes no sense in light of Lot's responses, "do not so wickedly"; so he offers his daughters in exchange (v.8)? If I was a social visit why did they threaten Lot and eventually break down the door (v.9)? If they had completely innocent, why was it destroyed? Does get to know them sound like a hospitality invitation? Why does Lot construe their hospitality as wicked (v.7)? Even extra Biblical literature from the Apocrypha, connects Sodom with general homosexual practices. Ezekiel's list can't be considered exhaustive. He lists those that are germane to his main point. Homosexuality was just a part of the reason for its destruction and a significant part (II Peter 2:6-7; Jude7). Even our word sodomy comes from this event in history and is defined as committing sex acts with people of the same sex.

C. Lev. 18:22; 20:13 (Holiness Code)

²² 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.

¹³ 'If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood guiltiness is upon them.

1. **Traditional View:**

Under Levitical law, homosexuality one of the many practices that was punishable by death.

2. **Pro Gay:**

They are part of the Holiness/Levitical codes that are no longer binding on the Christian. The OT condemnation was purely cultural and God is not condemning the practice, but the perversion of it by the neighboring nations. Why are these codes arbitrarily enforced? What about drinking blood of an animal (17:13-14), having intercourse during menstruation (20:18) and eating pork (Deut. 14:8). Why aren't these also condemned?

Second: These passages make no distinction between those born that way (constitutional) vs. Heterosexuals who indulge in deviations from their norms.

Third: These chapters have to do with idolatry not homosexuality. The Hebrew word is associated with ritual uncleanness. The passage wasn't condemning homosexuality per se, only the kind associated with idolatry.

3. **Response:** These prohibitions occur along other sins including incest, bestiality and adultery...which are forbidden in both the OT and NT. These are referenced apart from the so called holiness codes. Though not punishable by death today, there are still laws against incest, adultery, bestiality, etc. The ceremonial laws were punishable with lesser

penalties. For example: intercourse during menstruation was exile and eating pork was a dietary law.

Second: The so called biological or genetic evidence of constitutional homosexuality is still in dispute. All 3 major studies typically quoted have numerous design flaws. This passage clearly condemns the behavior regardless of the origin of the condition. There is not 3rd sex option in scripture.

Third: The word “*toevah*” is translated “abomination” (Prov. 6:16-19. It isn’t limited just to idolatry. If it is only condemned in relation to idolatry, then does that mean that incest, bestiality, child sacrifice and adultery are “ok” as long they aren’t associated with idolatry?

D. Rom. 1:26-27 (Natural and Unnatural)

²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

1. **Traditional View:**

Homosexuality is a symptom of fallen humanity and is unnatural. Paul condemns all homosexual activity, whether it is monogamous or promiscuous.

2. **Pro Gay:**

Paul is not referring to true (born that way) homosexuals, but rather heterosexuals who are involved in homosexual behavior, thus not being true to their nature. Monogamous homosexuality, if practiced by true homosexuals, is not a sin. He could be referring to promiscuous behavior. It is also referring to idolatry.

3. **Response:**

There is not even a hint of wording that distinguishes such behavior. He is simply describing the behavior as unnatural, regardless of who is involved. His word choice involves words specifically used for man (arsenes) and woman (theleias) that emphasize biology. They are used to emphasize gender differences. He is saying it is biologically unnatural, not just to heterosexuals, but everyone. Does that mean that in verses 29-30 fornication, backbiting, deceit are ok as long as the people who commit those sins do them naturally?

Paul could easily have distinguished a kind of homosexual behavior that was acceptable, but didn't. He made distinctions for other ethical activities like meat offered to idols, acceptable grounds for divorce, etc.

In relation to idolatry, homosexuality and the other sins are not just born of idol worship but are symptomatic of a fallen state. No one could say they are legitimate, just as long as they aren't associated with idolatry. Are we to say as long as we are "loving" that we can legitimize the immorality of envy, murder, strife, deceit, etc.?

The obvious intent of the passage is that there is no homosexual activity that is acceptable. Men gave up normal sexual relations, burned with homosexual lust, and so did the women.

E. I Cor. 6:9-10 and I Timothy 1:9-10 (Kingdom of Heaven)

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor ^[a]effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

⁹ realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

1. **Traditional View:**

The word (*arsenkoite*) means homosexual (“them that defile themselves with mankind”). Paul condemns all homosexual behavior without qualification.

Homosexuality is a sin that is symptomatic of those who are unrighteous and are not God seekers. If they persist in such behavior it may mean that they never were truly “saved” to begin with.

2. **Pro Gay:**

The condemnation of homosexuality is no worse than any other sin drunkenness, etc.

First: *Malakoi* means soft or weak (not effeminate) and refers the lax (soft) moral culture of his day.

Second: *Arsenokoita* means men who go to bed. Paul makes up the word and it isn't found anywhere else in Greek literature. The word refers to male prostitute or some immoral man, but not a homosexual man.

Church Fathers didn't see it as a “homosexual passage

3. **Response:**

Paul coins 179 terms in the NT. He gets it from the Greek translation of the Heb. words used in Lev. 18:22 and Lev. 20:13. The word *arsane* refers to male and “koite” means bed or couch (always used in a sexual connotation) as in Heb. 13:4. It has nothing to do with the idea of male prostitute.

Paul says that some of his readers were engaged in some these acts prior to their conversion. They are now free from the bondage of their previous sin which for some included homosexual behavior. The

implication from the Timothy passage is that the righteous man will not be engaged in such activities.

VI. Now What? How do we love the homosexual?

A. Our dilemma

1. Isn't really in understanding what the scripture says, but what we do with what it says. We are tiptoeing on a tightrope of Biblical authority. If we fall to the left we deny the basic teaching of the Bible. If we fall to the right, we risk alienating our homosexual friends and end the discussion and even the relationship. **R. Albert Mohler** writes "Homosexuals are waiting to see if the Christian church has anything more to say after we declare that homosexuality is a sin."
2. I've discovered that when it comes to homosexuality, Christians show great passion in one of two areas. Either they are passionate about extinguishing the pro-gay movement or about expanding God's movement by introducing them to His Son. The former objective has evidenced itself in a preaching approach that, as **James S. Stewart** said, "Creates more heat than light."
3. I want to introduce people to Jesus. Let God sort out their sin. Remember: Jesus' harshest words were saved for those who were religious hypocrites. He consistently engages those far from God with a kind of loving interaction that I could only hope to model. I want to build bridges not barriers. How do we do that?

B. Our delivery: A short list of practical ideas

1. Remember this principle: **It is not enough to be right, you have to be redemptive.**

John Stott, "However strongly we may disapprove of homosexual practices, we have no liberty to dehumanize those who engage in them."

Telling someone they are a sinner without offering hope is like shouting to a drowning man, ‘SWIM, SWIM!’ The message is true, but it’s not helpful.”

2. **Show compassion without compromise.** Their behavior doesn’t change the clear teaching of scripture. Jesus loved a lot o people who didn’t believe what He taught initially.
 - A woman caught in adultery. Note: go and sin no more.
 - A woman at the well...a prostitute
 - A hated tax collector Matthew
 - A religious leader Nicodemus
3. **Speak the truth in love** instead of offending them with truth. Love them.
 - Truth – love = hurt, hatred and condemnation
 - Love – truth = hypocrisy, half truths and compromise
 - Truth + love = honesty, healing and compassion
4. What are you saying that you should not say?
Conversely, what are you not saying that you should say?

Charles Spurgeon, who heard someone say a certain preacher had no more gifts of ministry than an oyster, said “...in my judgment that was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretion in his opening, and knows when to close.”

5. **Move from diagnosis to discussion.**
 - Ask questions about their story.
 - How did you get involved? Why?
 - Are you happy?
 - Do they think about the future
 - Is this lifestyle working for you?
 - How can I pray for you?

6. **Think through your initial response.**

- Don't elevate the discussion by getting angry.
- Preaching "at them" rarely works.
- Love them like you would every other child of yours.
- Don't bring it up all the time.
- If your brother was an alcoholic, drug using, unemployed drifter, what would you do?

7. **Care for them in tangible ways**

- Feed them but don't underwrite their lifestyle.
- Invite them over to your house
- Go out to dinner
- If they have contracted aids, and can no longer care for themselves, sit with them.

8. Don't play the blame game with your spouse. If your child is gay, don't beat each other verbally.

9. Educate yourself. Read books. See list below.

C. Our decision:

1. Never give up!
2. But you may need to release them to the Lord.
3. "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 46:10

For Further Reading:

- ✓ Chambers, Alan. *God's Grace and the Homosexual Next Door*, Harvest House, 2006
- ✓ Dallas, Joe. *A Strong Delusion*. Harvest House, 1996
- ✓ Paulk, John and Anne. *Love Won Out*, Tyndale, 1999
- ✓ Schmierer, Don. *An Ounce of Prevention*. Word Publishing. 1998.
- ✓ Worthen, Anita and Davies, Bob. *Someone I Love is Gay*, IVP, 1996.

Web sites:

www.exodusinternational.org
www.exodusglobalalliance.org
www.newhope123.org
www.narth.com

John Erwin ... Sr. Pastor ... Moorpark Evangelical Free Church