

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

92 What Does the Bible Teach About Homosexuality?

Scripture: Genesis 18:20-21, 19:1, 4-5; II Peter 2:6; Leviticus 18:22, 30, 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17-18; Judges 19:22-23; I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; Ezekiel 16:49; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:9-10

INTRODUCTION

The Bible does address itself to the subject of human sexuality. The subject is viewed from both a procreative and pleasurable standpoint. (Genesis 2:18; Song of Solomon 7:7-12; Proverbs 5:18-19) The Scriptures also speak to the issue of homosexuality. There are ten books in the Bible, six in the Old Testament and four in the New, which afford us information concerning God's view on this subject. I have listed these passages above. Our approach to the subject will be Biblical rather than political or clinical.

Homosexuals use the term "coming out." It describes the step a homosexual takes when an open declaration is made concerning the fact that this is a chosen and preferred lifestyle. The openness which marks the movement today can be traced to the year 1969 when police in New York City closed a homosexual bar in Greenwich Village and were met with strong and violent resistance in the process. Another significant step had to do with picture of Sergeant Leonard Matlovich on the cover of Time magazine, the September 8, 1975 issue. The picture appeared with the open confession, "I am a homosexual." These incidents characterize the radicalization of a movement which hitherto had been content with a posture which kept sexual preference hidden.

Before we proceed to examine the passages of Scripture I have noted it would be helpful to define certain terms. A fair description might be taken from Trends Magazine, a publication of the United Presbyterian Church, which considers homosexuality to be neither unscriptural nor unnatural, i.e. the practice of homosexuality. The following definitions were given in the July, 1973 issue: **Homosexual:** Having a preference for intimate relations with persons of the same sex. **Heterosexual:** Having a preference for intimate relations with persons of the opposite sex. **Gay:** Being free from shame, guilt, misgivings, or regret over being a homosexual. **Straight:** Not deviating from the general norm

or the prescribed pattern. **Homophobia:** The fear that one might be homosexual. (Trends, Program Agency of the United Presbyterian Church, July/August, 1973, pg 6) Another relative term might be fornication which is the illicit sexual relationship outside of marriage. The general understanding here has been that at least one of the persons involved is not married. In the strict sense of the word homosexuality should not be thought of as being as a heterosexual activity such as adultery, harlotry and fornication because no intercourse takes place and no births result from it. (**Ethics: Alternatives And Issues;** Norman Geisler, Zondervan, pg. 203) One last word is the word **lesbian** which is homosexuality between females.

These things having been said, let us go on to attempt a Christian approach to homosexuality. The gay invasion is a phenomenon which is being felt around the world. Its thrust is to make this alternate lifestyle legitimate and acceptable.

Three considerations should concern the evangelical Christian in the face of the spreading homosexual myth. Because gay theology is growing in stature and sophistication we would want to be familiar with the positions which are taken in an attempt to make homosexuality scripturally acceptable. We would want to be aware of the dedication which attends the movement. We would want to bring to this issue an attitude which is redemptive rather than hostile and un-Christ like. With these things in mind consider the following observations with me.

I. A NUMBER OF CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTE TO HOMOSEXUALITY:

I mentioned earlier that our approach would not be clinical. By that I mean that little attention will be given to the sociology, biology and psychology of this deviation. I only mention the matter of contributing factors because Christians often oversimplify when it comes to conduct which is abnormal. I am certain that many Christians would simply assume that homosexuality is the result of sin. There is much truth in that assumption, but it is also true that there is sufficient evidence that psychic predisposition does exist. Many theories have been advanced. Some researchers still hold that the malady is genetically caused or that it is a matter of glandular deficiency. Many feel that the condition is the result of abnormal personality development.

To be sure, the propensity is there. The Christian would introduce yet another cause by saying that homosexuality is caused by the deliberate selection of a gay lifestyle. The cultivation and development of homosexuality in oneself or others

goes beyond the area of sickness and enters the area of sin. The issue is genetical rather than theological. Homosexual propensity may be a sickness, though not by biological heredity, but homosexual practice and promotion is not illness or derangement, it is a chosen lifestyle. This is the result of rejecting God in one's life. It is not, according to Scripture, surprising that in an apostate society men and women turn to different kinds of sexual behavior. (Romans 1:24-27) For a further discussion of the causes of homosexuality the reader is referred to the **Encyclopedia of Psychological Problems** written by Clyde M. Narramore and published by Zondervan, pg. 112-116.

II. HOMOSEXUALITY IS FORBIDDEN IN SCRIPTURE:

In the past, the issue of homosexuality was considered to be summarily condemned by Scripture. For this reason conservative denominations have always strongly resisted any acceptance of this conduct. The gay movement of today poses an entirely new challenge. Gay theology seeks to biblically normalize homosexuality. Its teaching is that the church for two thousand years has been completely mistaken in its view of sexual ethics. What we have is a movement which rejects the accepted **exegesis** of a large number of Scripture passages. The word means to draw out of or from a passage its meanings. **Eisegesis** is the method by which the scholar reads into the passage his particular point of view. The question is whether homosexual theology indulges in exegesis or eisegesis in the defense of their behavior. Let us now turn to the Scriptures themselves and seek to understand their meaning.

Actually, the first line of reasoning put forth by gay theologians in reference to Old Testament passages concerns the survival of the nation of Israel. Their feeling is that the practice of homosexuality would eventually reduce the size of the nation and that is the reason God prohibited it. The issue was a pragmatic one rather than moral one, it was concerned with practical values. Inasmuch as we are not concerned with increasing the population, the prohibitions do not apply today. This is the reasoning, but it is an eisegetic conclusion. It brings to the Scripture thinking which is drawn from the silence of Scripture. If God was, in point of fact, interested in increasing the population of Israel we would find teaching to that effect elsewhere in the Old Testament. There is none. The restriction God levies is moral and is based upon His holiness, not the numerical strength of His people. Secondly, the seventh commandment prohibits sexual relationships outside of marriage. If people were allowed to mate at will the population would certainly be increased. This was not God's interest and the

seventh commandment stands to affirm this truth. Lastly, it is interesting that this position admits that homosexuality is prohibited by Scripture. The burden then becomes one of proving that the teaching is not transcultural.

Another inferential argument which is popular among gay theologians has to do with certain relationships mentioned in the Bible. Seven can be counted and thought to be homosexual in nature. The example of Ruth and Naomi comes from Ruth 2:22-23, and is interpreted as a lesbian relationship. The fact is that Naomi appeared to have a normal relationship with her husband and gave birth to two sons. Ruth had two husbands with the passing of time and from the text we have no reason to believe it was other than a heterosexual relationship. There is an interesting comment in Enroth and Jamison's **The Gay Church** published by Erdman's, pg. 55, "if we persist in reading types of sexual relationships into every relationship, it would be necessary to describe Naomi as being heterosexual who became homosexual and then bisexual." There is no end to what can be read into a passage.

The most popular relationship gay Bible teachers put forth is that of Jonathan and David. (I Samuel 18:1, 3-4; 19:2; II Samuel 1:26) The mistake here is to assume that all relationships are sexual. These men shared a deep love for one another (philia), it was a genuine friendship, without there being anything sexual about it. If it had been otherwise we may assume it would not have gone unnoticed. God is hard on His heroes. I will just make mention of other examples and you may wish to explore the passages. Paul and Timothy are thought to have had a homosexual relationship. (II Timothy 1:4; Romans 16:6; Acts 20:37) The same is true of Cain and Abel. (Genesis 4:7) It is suggested that the centurion in Matthew 8:5-13 was gay. Two relationships concern Jesus. One concerns Lazarus and the reference is taken from writing outside Scripture. The other arises from the bodily contact Jesus had with the apostle John. (John 13:23) The sexual overtones brought to these passages are a further example of eisegetic interpretation and unfortunately contribute to the fallacy that you can make the Bible say anything you want it to say.

Now, before finally coming to the verses I mentioned earlier, there are two additional issues important to gay Bible students. They remind us that the four Gospels and Jesus are silent on the subject of homosexuality. The reason is there was no need to mention it. The Old Testament teaching was accepted and homosexuality was simply not tolerated. Had Jesus been a homosexual as mentioned earlier, He would have been discredited immediately. The Jews were

very anti-homosexual. There is no reason to conclude that nothing is wrong with homosexuality because Jesus never said there was. We assume that proper interpretation of Scripture should not be based on silence.

Sometimes homosexuality is presented as being acceptable by reason of the broad implications of love. Because God is love it is felt that any expression of love is proper. Overlooked is the fact that love is both moral and ethical. True love will seek the welfare of its object. God prohibits homosexuality because in His wisdom, not necessarily ours, He created man both male and female. He reasoned that this was to be the natural order and would best fulfill human beings. We do an injustice to what God has structured when we introduce another order under the guise of love when it was God's love which gave no suggestion that such was necessary or for our happiness and wellbeing.

These defenses have been made by the proponents of gay theology. I have included them under the consideration that Scripture forbids homosexuality. Let us now examine the various Old and New Testament passages:

1. Genesis 18:20-21; 19:1, 4-5:

The contention here is that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for inhospitality, not homosexuality. Gay exegetes suggest the Hebrew word translated "know" (*yadha*) could mean "get acquainted with." If this is true the Sodomites only wanted to get acquainted with Lot's guests. The fact is that the word "know" is a common euphemism for sexual relations. The word "*yadha*" is used to describe sexual relations between Adam and his wife. (Genesis 4:1) The context is also important here. Lot offered his daughters, feeling the men of Sodom wanted to know the visitors in the same way his daughters could be known. We also note the men were willing to break down the door and injure Lot in order to be hospitable and shake hands with his guests. The late chief rabbi of the British Empire, Dr. J. H. Hertz, an authority on the Hebrew text, comments lucidly on the basic Judeo-Christian interpretation of the passage in his commentary on Sodom and Gomorrah in the words, "Emphasis is here laid on the fact that the inhabitants were all addicted to unnatural depravity." We may note also Jude's confirmation in the New Testament, "*Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*" (v.7) We know of only one example in all history where God singled out and destroyed

two cities because of a particular displeasure to Himself. It would require a stretch of the imagination to believe that reason was inhospitality.

2. **Leviticus 18:22, 30; 20:13:**

This passage is cited with the thinking that no Christian opposing homosexuality would recommend the death penalty for practicing homosexuals. Therefore, the whole passage is not relevant to the current scene. The answer is that there are other prohibitions in the Levitical code no one would think of requiring today because they have been superseded by the New Covenant. Many of the things which applied under the old covenant, particularly ceremonial purity and dietary instructions, have not been carried over into the new. However, the penalty for homosexuality was death, the penalty for disobeying other instructions was to be declared ceremonially unclean. There was a significant qualitative distinction between the moral commands and the dietary and ceremonial instructions. God's moral teaching is changeless.

The New Testament also condemns homosexuality while it relegates punishment to the hands of God rather than man. Paul declares that homosexuals shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. (I Corinthians 6:9-10) It is also suggested that this passage applies to God's special ministers, to priests, those set apart from the common man. The reasoning is that acts of homosexuality are therefore allowable for most of the people. The answer to this is found in the context. The first two verses of Leviticus 18 and verse 23 inform us the instruction is for all the people and we cannot believe that people other than priests were allowed to have relations with animals. Also, verse 20 is a clear prohibition for all the people. These verses taken from Leviticus, a book called the **spiritual statute book** of Israel, speak of the holiness of God and give practical instructions to the people of God.

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