

PLUS: How the Gay Church Misinterprets the Scriptures

Gay churches teach that homosexuality is equal to heterosexuality in God's eyes. How do they arrive at their unorthodox conclusions?

* The Creation account (see Gen. 1 and 2). Pro-gay theologians argue that nowhere in the creation account is homosexuality forbidden and that Adam and Eve are not a model for all modern-day couples, even heterosexual couples. They propose that the story's central theme is simply that God is the great Creator and that He deemed His creation "good."

The weakness of this argument is that it is based on silence. There are a number of sexual issues the author of Genesis does not address, but his silence does not necessarily condone them. In truth, the passage provides God's model for human sexuality. It clearly reveals that heterosexual marriage is the biblical standard.

* The sins of Sodom (see Gen. 19). Gay churches teach that Sodom was destroyed because of violence, such as the attempted mob rape of Lot's guests, not homosexuality in general. They argue that the real sins of the city are detailed in Ezekiel 16:49, which lists Sodom's sins as pride, idleness and neglecting the poor but fails to mention homosexuality. After all, if homosexuality were a sin, wouldn't it be on the list?

However, Ezekiel 16:50 says that Sodom “committed abomination,” and 2 Peter 2:6-8 refers to the city’s destruction as it relates to the judgment of those who walk “in the lust of uncleanness” (v. 10, NKJV). In addition, Jude 7 states that the residents of Sodom gave themselves over to sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust.

* Old Testament law. Leviticus 18:22 is straightforward: “‘You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.’” The penalty for breaking this Old Testament law, according to Leviticus 20:13, was death. But the gay church claims that this “moral code” of Moses’ day is outdated and does not apply today.

They argue that there are many rules in the Levitical code that no longer apply. In addition, they say the Hebrew word for abomination, *toevah*, is usually associated with idolatry or pagan worship practices involving sex and thus does not refer to homosexuality as we know it today.

The truth is that *toevah* sometimes is used in passages that have nothing to do with idolatry, such as in Proverbs 6:16. And Leviticus 18 forbids not only homosexuality, but also other sexual sins such as adultery, incest and bestiality, all of which are prohibited in the New Testament as well. It is true that Old Testament ceremonial laws do not apply to believers today, since Jesus fulfilled the law—but God’s moral law has never changed.

* Unnatural affections (see Rom. 1:26-27). Gay churches generally accept one of two explanations for this passage: (1) that Paul was referring not to homosexuals, but to heterosexuals who “changed their nature,” or turned away from what was natural to them, to pursue the same sex; or (2) that

Paul was referring to perverted sexual practices connected to idolatry, not to homosexuality itself.

But those arguments read too much into the passage. There is no proof whatsoever that Paul was referring to a person's sexual orientation as opposed to his behavior. In fact, in verse 27 he uses phrases such as "burned in their lust for one another" and "committing what is shameful" to clearly describe sinful acts.

And though it is true that a key theme in Romans 1 is idolatry—and that homosexual acts were sometimes associated with idolatrous worship in Paul's day—it does not follow that homosexuality is OK simply because it is now separated from pagan worship. Along with homosexuality, Paul lists many other sins in this chapter—including deceit, envy, fornication and murder—yet we would never say that if those were separate from idolatry they would suddenly be acceptable.

* New Testament prohibition (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10). Gay churches teach that the word Paul used in these passages for homosexual—arsenokoite—is a word he coined. If he had meant to address homosexuality, he would have used a word in common usage. They say arsenokoite refers to the customers of male prostitutes, the prostitutes themselves or married men who hired young boys for sex—a practice not uncommon in Rome.

It is true that Paul coined arsenokoite. But that does not illegitimize its meaning. He formed the word using two Greek words: arsane, which refers to "male" and is derived from the Greek translation of the Levitical passages, and koite, which means "bed" and is used in a sexual connotation. Paul is speaking of men in bed together, in a sexual sense.

—Bill Shepson

How Should We Respond?

Here's how you can respond to homosexuals and the gay church movement in a loving and Christlike manner.

Members of the gay church movement are not our enemies. Although they have fallen for the strong delusion of pro-gay theology, they say they claim Christ as their own. How we confront the movement and handle the issue is crucial.

Dos:

- * Know your pastor's and denomination's official position. If you are not sure what it is, write the denomination's headquarters to request a copy of the position statement. Ask your pastor for ideas on combatting pro-gay theology in your denomination, if that is an issue, and offer to participate in the process. Discuss developing a counseling ministry or support group in your church.

- * Invite speakers to address your church. There is a great need for education on the subject of homosexuality. If you do not know anyone in your area who teaches on it, contact Exodus International for a referral.

- * Stick to verifiable facts. When confronting the issue in a discussion, statements such as "The Bible says..." or "Studies have shown..." are verifiable and tough to argue against. Read books on the subject, and brush up on current programs and studies. Understand the arguments of the gay church movement, and be sure you can articulate a response.

* Admit error. Don't blindly defend everything Christians have done in the past. We have made mistakes, and if we refuse to admit them, we cannot expect gays or society to take us seriously.

* Stay flexible when discussing theories but adamant when discussing the Bible. What the Bible says is absolute, but theories are all subject to question. We can't be certain, for example, what makes people homosexual (theory), but we can be certain it is wrong (Scripture).

* Show Christlike love. By our lack of love, we have contributed to the growth and strength of the gay movement. When a gay person is brought out of delusion, who is waiting for him? Is the church a father to the prodigal, celebrating his return? Or are we better represented by the self-righteous older brother?

Don'ts:

* Do not attack people's character. Some Christians seem bent on "proving" that homosexuals are neurotic, sex-obsessed or hateful. I personally knew many lesbians and gay men who were responsible, likable, hardworking people. Keep the issues straight. The character of the person is not in question. The person's behavior is.

* Do not stereotype people. Extremists can be found in any group, Christian and non-Christian alike. To point out the extreme factions of the gay rights movement and hold them up as the norm is just as cheap and manipulative as picking out the "pro-lifers" who shoot abortionists and saying they are representative of the whole pro-life movement. We need to

avoid such games.

* Do not use clichés. Clichés are grating and weaken the argument of the person using them. They make one sound as though he or she is relying on sayings rather than sound reasoning. Here are a few clichés to avoid:

1. “Gay lifestyle.” There is no such thing. Homosexuals live their lives in many ways, just as heterosexual people do. Some are promiscuous; some are not. Some are moderate; some are conservative. Using this cliché will cast doubt on any other statements you make.

2. “Love the sinner but hate the sin.” This is an appropriate recommendation, but we need to find another way to communicate it. This cliché is so overused and overly simplistic that it is sure to get a laugh.

3. “If you are gay, that’s your choice.” No one chooses to have homosexual feelings. People do choose, however, to act on their homosexual desires. Make the distinction and keep it clear.

4. “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” Avoid using this statement.

It sounds sarcastic, as if the speaker is mocking homosexuals. Sarcasm is rude and never wins an argument.

–Joe Dallas

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