

4 Sins That Are Also Okay If You Ignore Leviticus on Homosexuality

Have you ever played the Leviticus game?

Many supporters of homosexuality—even professing Christians—enjoy a round of the Leviticus game from time to time.

How do you play?

Player 1 begins with Leviticus 18:22, which says, “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable” (ESV).

Sadly, this verse has been deemed a “clobber passage” because of how some have used it to hurt LGBTs, whether intentionally or unintentionally. God’s Law is a light that leads us to repentance and, with the help of God’s miraculous transformation of our lives through Christ, true holiness in everything we do. Its intended use is to instill godly conviction leading to hope, change and a hatred for the sin in our lives—not to “clobber” anyone.

But if you want to continue playing the game, find as many crazy-sounding laws in the book of Leviticus as you can. The object of the game is to show that modern Christians should reject all of those laws, including the ones about homosexuality.

The Leviticus game may be easy and fun, but it has problems. It doesn’t treat Leviticus like a real book of law—meant to be read in-context, interpreted in light of the rest of the Bible—containing a variety of commandments, some meant for Israel’s Levitical priesthood only, others not.

So which category does Leviticus 18, one chapter that condemns homosexuality, fall into?

Friends, indulge me in an exercise in parody as I myself play a round of the Leviticus game.

What else is okay if we throw out Leviticus 18?

1. Incest

Probably the biggest chunk of Leviticus 18 deals with incest in all its various forms. If you dismiss these verses along with verse 22 on homosexuality, then you'd be permitted to have sexual relations with...

- Close relatives (v. 6)
- Parents (v. 7)
- Stepparents (v. 8)
- Siblings (v. 9)
- Half-siblings (v. 11)
- Stepsiblings (v. 9)
- Grandchildren (v. 10)
- Aunts and uncles (v. 12-14)
- Children-in-law (v. 15)
- Your sibling's spouse (v. 16)
- A woman and her children or grandchildren (v. 17)
- Your spouse's sibling (v. 18)

That's enough to make anyone's stomach turn. But if we want to be consistent, we have to keep playing the game.

2. Adultery

Verse 20 says, "Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her." It's rather straightforward.

"Neighbor" here doesn't just mean your next-door neighbor, but your fellow man. Jesus used the same kind of expression when he quoted the very next chapter, Leviticus 19, saying "You

shall love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 18).

3. Child Sacrifice

"You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 18:21).

Molech worship was an especially heinous religion in the ancient Near East where parents were to lay their infant children upon the burning-hot arms of the bull-headed idol in sacrifice to the false god.

A Jewish rabbinical commentary from the 12th century described the barbaric ritual as follows:

...they heated him [Molech] from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.

Like the rest of the commands in this chapter, this didn't just apply to Israel, but to everyone, including the indigenous Molech-worshipping Canaanites who lives alongside the Israelites in the land (see v. 26). According to the chapter, it was the Canaanites' own involvement in all these sins listed here that got them expelled from the land and conquered by Israel in the first place.

4. Bestiality

"And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion" (v. 23).

Scripture strictly forbids any form of sexual relation with an animal.

Clearly Leviticus 18 is not just about the nation of Israel. God tells the people, "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled" (v. 24). In other words, these are all sins for *everybody*, not just Israelites.

This Isn't a Game

Enough of the Leviticus game for now, because I can already hear a profound question coming: Is homosexuality "equal" with these other sins?

It depends on the sin. We all have hurts, temptations and natural sources of weakness. God knows us inside and out. He knows all our stories. But His holiness is of chief concern to Him.

Do we dare equate homosexuality with these other sins listed in Leviticus 18? The bottom line is, as the Apostle James wrote, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:8-11).

In other words, the same God who declared incest and adultery sinful also put homosexuality in the same category, knowing full well the struggles that all sorts of humans face. Humans judge themselves and each other on a curve, but God sees all as equal and totally exposed before Him. The same God who came loving, sacrificing and serving in the human form of Jesus Christ is the same God who gave those righteous commands in the Old Testament.

The problem with the selective-obedience "Leviticus game" isn't just that it pits Scripture against itself, but that it unjustly divides the character of God.

What is *truly* profound is that in James 2, where we learn that

all sins are equally violations of God's character, the point is that *any* attempt to earn God's approval through good, moral rule-following is utterly futile.

This is important, because even non-Christian LGBTs are playing a "Leviticus game" of their own, trusting that God will accept them because they obey some "important" commands (by being an overall decent person) while failing at others.

There *is* a law of liberty, where we are freed from fearful rule-following and liberated to love and please a holy God. But we don't get to live that way by editing God's standards; we get that way by repenting of our sins and letting God empower us to live for Him. True freedom—obeying God's laws willfully instead of spitefully—only come once we've changed our minds about our sin and trusted Christ's sacrifice to pay our punishment.

No one is immune to temptations. But please, friend, get right with God by turning from sin and trusting Christ, no matter who you are.

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