

How I Know David and Jonathan Weren't Gay

A few weeks ago when I addressed the topic of homosexuality, a reader posted a comment on our forum suggesting that the biblical King David and his friend Jonathan were gay lovers. After a few other readers questioned this interpretation, another reader repeated the claim. "The Bible is clear that David and Jonathan were physical, sexual, gay male homosexual lovers," this person wrote authoritatively—without citing a chapter and verse.

Most evangelical Christians would drop their jaws in bewilderment if confronted with such an odd theory. Even people with minimal knowledge of the Old Testament know that (1) David was married to Jonathan's sister, Michal—and he had a few other wives, and (2) David's biggest blunder was his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba—a woman he saw bathing on a rooftop. God was not happy about David's lust or with his decision to have Bathsheba's husband killed so he could hide his sin.

It is illogical to read homosexuality into the story of David and Jonathan because neither Jewish nor early Christian tradition ever endorses sex outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage. If you read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, you will never see a depiction of a gay relationship, ever. Nor will you see homosexuality affirmed. You cannot get around the fact that the Bible says gay sex is flat-out wrong.

But that doesn't mean people won't try to change the meaning of Scripture. "Theologians" from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds have written books claiming that various Bible characters were gay. They have suggested that Ruth and Naomi were lesbian lovers; that the Roman centurion in Matthew 8 had a gay relationship with his servant; and that the disciple

John had a homoerotic relationship with Jesus.

Gay-affirming theologians also have pounced on the story of David and Jonathan. They point to David's words in 2 Samuel 1:26 when he eulogized Jonathan and Saul: "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women" (NASB).

So how do we interpret this verse? We need to keep these points in mind:

1. Old Testament morality has not changed. Our culture today is redefining sexuality. We've made killing babies a right, we celebrate fornication and we're on a mad dash to legitimize gay marriage. But with all the bending, twisting and legal redefining, we cannot change what was written in the Bible thousands of years ago. It's silly to make the Bible imply something it never said. And it's laughable to suggest that David, the author of many of the psalms—and the biblical figure who best represents a true worshipper of the one true God—would be recast as being in a gay relationship.

Conservative Jews in our country agree. The Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), the nation's largest body of Orthodox Jews, recently reaffirmed their commitment to Old Testament morality. The RCA recently stated, "The Torah and Jewish tradition, in the clearest of terms, prohibit the practice of homosexuality. Same-sex unions are against both the letter and the spirit of Jewish law, which sanctions only the union of a man and a woman in matrimony." Jewish priests in the time of David and Jonathan held the same view.

2. David and Jonathan had a model friendship. Scripture says Jonathan loved David "as himself" (1 Sam. 18:3). Jonathan's love was selfless and heroic. Even though he was in line to be the next king of Israel, he recognized David would step into that role—and Jonathan not only celebrated his friend as the

rightful king but also protected him from his father's spear-throwing tantrums.

Jonathan's love was not lust. It was the ultimate in sacrifice. He laid down his rights so his friend could be promoted. He opposed his father's self-willed ambition and instead affirmed that David should be the true king. Jonathan showed us all how to be a true friend. David's comment that his friend's love was "more wonderful than the love of women" was not sexual; he was praising Jonathan's loyalty and brotherly devotion.

3. We should encourage healthy male friendships instead of sexualizing them. In our fatherless culture, men are starved for affirmation and encouragement. God wired men to need close friends, but few of us are willing to build those kinds of relationships because of insecurity, inferiority or pride. Many guys are lonely, isolated and afraid to admit they need help. Some may even struggle with sexual confusion, yet they could find healing through a combination of the Holy Spirit's power and healthy male bonding. The church today should do everything possible to encourage male friendships.

It is incredibly perverse—not to mention blasphemous—to suggest that anything sexual was going on between David and Jonathan. Yet I suspect that leaders in the gay-affirming church movement will continue to come up with more bizarre examples of Scripture-twisting in order to promote their agenda. We can't allow them to hijack the purity of the gospel.

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