

What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality

One night I was reading the stories of people who had left the church because they thought God hated them simply because they were attracted to the same sex. I was so overcome with emotion that I put the book down, got alone in another room, fell to my knees and wept. The pain of these men and women for whom Jesus died was palpable and heartbreaking.

Could it be that we have been misinterpreting Scripture when it comes to their salvation? Could it be that there is some new understanding of the Bible that would allow us to affirm committed, same-sex relationships?

If not, does that mean that we tell a 15 year-old girl who identifies as lesbian, "If you want to follow Jesus, you'll have to be celibate for the rest of your life, never enjoying the companionship of a spouse and abstaining from sex for life"? Do we tell her, "If you do want to be married, you'll have to find a way to be attracted to men"? Is that the good news of the gospel?

A spate of books, videos, articles and blogs would tell us that, indeed, that is not the gospel and that the good news of Jesus is that you can follow Him and enjoy a committed, homosexual relationship too. And some of the authors of these books, videos, articles and blogs claim to be committed Christians themselves.

How do we sort this out?

It's really not that difficult. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105). It is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb.

4:12-13).

If we will humble ourselves before the Lord, keeping our focus on Jesus and asking the Father to give us His heart for those who identify as LGBT, letting the unequivocal testimony of Scripture guide us, we will find clarity.

So what does the Word of God say about homosexual practice?

Here are five simple truths that will help separate truth from error and biblical revelation from emotion. (For those wanting a more in-depth treatment, please see my newest book, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*)

1) The testimony of Scripture remains unchanged: The Bible forbids homosexual practice.

It's clear that the vast majority of those who have changed their views on what the Bible says about homosexuality and now believe in "gay Christianity" have done so based on either their own same-sex desires and attractions or their interaction with "gay Christians" (or with any gay or lesbian person who challenges their assumptions).

In other words, they have not changed their thinking based on study of the Scriptures alone, since no new textual, archeological, sociological, anthropological or philological discoveries have been made in the last 50 years that would cause us to read any of these biblical texts differently.

Put another way, it is not that we have gained some new insights into what the biblical text means based on the study of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Instead, people's interaction with the LGBT community has caused them to understand the biblical text differently. This means that, rather than interpreting their sexuality through the lens of the Scriptures, they are interpreting the Scriptures through the lens of their sexuality. This is a guaranteed path to deception.

The Word of God, which represents His heart and will for His creation, is absolutely clear on the subject, prohibiting all forms of homosexual practice. This is so clear that a number of leading gay and lesbian theologians acknowledge that they can only justify “gay Christianity” by rejecting the full authority of Scripture.

2) The Bible is a heterosexual book.

Gay theologians often make reference to the so-called “clobber passages” in the Scriptures, by which they mean the main verses the church has used to clobber them over the head with the Bible.

They raise two main arguments against the use of these verses.

First, they claim that the verses have been mistranslated, misinterpreted or misused and so, in reality, these Scriptures do not prohibit monogamous, committed, homosexual relationships. Yet they cannot offer any new evidence to back this claim, since none exists.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, they point out that out of more than 31,000 verses in the Bible, there are between six and eight “clobber passages” consisting of a total of less than 25 verses.

How important can it actually be? And why does the church make such a big deal about something that God’s Word hardly addresses? Isn’t this evidence of homophobic attitudes in the church rather than a careful representation of God’s heart as expressed in His Word?

My friend Larry Tomzcak, an author and cultural commentator, offers a helpful illustration that puts the so-called “clobber passages” in a larger context.

Let’s say you buy a new cookbook featuring healthy dessert recipes, none of which use sugar. In the introduction to the

book, the author explains her reasons for avoiding sugar products, telling you that you will find sumptuous, sweet dessert recipes, but all without sugar. And so, throughout the rest of the book, the word *sugar* is not found a single time.

Would it be right to conclude that avoiding sugar was not important to the author? To the contrary, it was so important that every single recipe in the book makes no mention of sugar.

It is exactly the same when it comes to the Bible and homosexuality.

There are a few, very strong, very clear, references to homosexual practice—every one of them decidedly negative—and then not a single reference to homosexual practice throughout the rest of the Bible. It is not part of God's "recipe" for humanity.

Throughout the Word, the only relationships that were acceptable in God's sight or considered normal for society were heterosexual relationships, and so homosexual practice was either irrelevant (because it had nothing to do with the God-ordained relationships of marriage and family and society) or, if mentioned, explicitly condemned.

To give just one example out of hundreds, when a gay couple reads the Word and they come to Paul's words in Ephesians 5:22, 25, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," they cannot possibly relate to those words the way a heterosexual couple relates to them, since they do not have a true husband-wife relationship.

Yet those are the only kinds of romantic and sexual relationships that God speaks of, and that is the only kind of marriage He recognizes or blesses: a man and woman coming together in a lifetime commitment before Him.

3) Gender complementarity is of foundational importance.

Despite recent attempts to downplay this truth, male-female complementarity is part of God's foundational design.

As we see in Genesis 1-2, it is out of Adam that God forms Eve, the two of them uniquely complementing each other, to the point that when Adam sees his helper and counterpart, he exclaims, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [Hebrew *'ishah*], because she was taken out of Man [*'ish*]" (Gen. 2:23).

As Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham notes, "In ecstasy man bursts into poetry on meeting his perfect helpmeet."

And this is what we cannot miss: It is because the woman was taken out of the man that the very next verse says this: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

Genesis is teaching us that because the woman was taken out of the man, the two are now joined back together as one in marital union, each one uniquely complementing the other. And notice: There's not a word here yet about reproduction or procreation, simply about union (even if procreation is the presupposed outcome).

Only a man and a woman can be joined (rejoined!) together in this way.

A man plus a man or a woman plus a woman cannot possibly share the same union as a man and a woman, since they do not share the essential of fundamental sameness and difference.

To rephrase the famous axiom of John Gray, namely, that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, Mars + Mars or Venus + Venus cannot ever equal Mars + Venus.

And in the words of a man who lived as a homosexual all his

life (he's now past 70) but has recently found the Lord, "Even an atheist can understand the lack of anatomical complementarity and therefore biological purpose in male-to-male or female-to-female sexuality."

4) Jesus knew exactly what was inside people, including their "sexual orientation."

We are told today that biblical authors did not understand sexual orientation and that they had no concept of committed, long-term same-sex relationships. What the biblical authors rejected, we are told, was man-boy relationships, or male prostitution, or homosexual promiscuity.

All these sinful practices were certainly rejected, but biblical authors like Paul were certainly aware of long-term, male-male relationships.

More importantly, Hebrews 4:13 states that "no creature is hidden from [God's] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." And it is this God who inspired the writers of the Scriptures. Are gay theologians willing to say that the Lord Himself didn't understand modern-day, still-evolving concepts like "sexual orientation"?

And are they willing to say that the Lord Jesus, who literally looked into the hearts and souls of human beings—John 2:25 says that He knew what was in man—didn't understand that certain people were "gay"? We're not talking about the writers of Scripture understanding modern science. We're talking about them—including Jesus Himself—understanding human nature.

To everyone who professes to be a gay Christian, I ask you to get alone with God and ask yourself, "Did God create and design me to be with the same-sex or the opposite sex?"

5) The gospel brings good news to homosexual men and women.

Gay theologians tell us that the traditional gospel message is a “bad tree,” bringing forth the bad fruit of depression, apostasy and even suicide among gay men and women.

To the contrary, the message of the gospel brings forgiveness, freedom, hope and deliverance, as countless thousands of ex-gays can attest, by which I mean followers of Jesus who no longer practice homosexuality. Some of them have even become heterosexual, but even those who have not found a change in their sexual desires have found wholeness and satisfaction in the Lord.

In the words of Sam Allberry, a British pastor who is still same-sex attracted but is living a celibate, holy life: “Every Christian is called to costly sacrifice. Denying yourself does not mean tweaking your behavior here and there. It is saying ‘No’ to your deepest sense of who you are, for the sake of Christ. To take up a cross is to declare your life (as you have known it) forfeit. It is laying down your life for the very reason that your life, it turns out, is not yours at all. It belongs to Jesus. He made it. And through His death he has bought it.”

Allberry is frequently asked, “But isn’t it harder for someone who is gay?”

His answer is clear: “The gospel demands everything of all of us. If someone thinks the gospel has somehow slotted into their life quite easily, without causing any major adjustments to their lifestyle or aspirations, it is likely that they have not really started following Jesus at all. And just as the cost is the same for all of us, so too are the blessings.” (For more from Allberry, read *Is God Anti-Gay?*)

To every reader who is same-sex attracted, I encourage you not to define yourself by your desires but to put all your effort into knowing the Lord and finding intimacy with Him one day at a time, not rewriting the Bible to suit your sexual

attractions but casting yourself on God's goodness and mercy. You will find Him to be absolutely trustworthy, totally understanding and more than enough to meet your every need.

Let us, then, not waver in our biblical stance, knowing that is the truth that sets people free (John 8:31-32).

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Watch Michael Brown debate Matthew Vines on what the Bible says about being gay and Christian at