

A Study Of Moral Issues: Homosexuality

Introduction. The Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015 that same-sex marriage was legal in all 50 states. This was a major shift in American policy, initially established on a state-by-state basis, expanding from 1 state in 2004 to 36 states in 2015. This also represented a major shift in American society.

Legalization of same-sex marriage is now supported by most religious groups according to a study released on May 1, 2018 by the Public Religion Research Institute. The study furthermore found that 61% of Americans now support same-sex marriage. Only 31% oppose it. Alabama is now the only state where a majority of residents say they oppose same-sex marriage.

As uncomfortable as we may be with a growing acceptance of sin, the Bible still makes a declaration about this conduct, and we need to know what it says about homosexuality and transgenderism.

I. Homosexuality Through The Ages

- A. Homosexuality was a grievous sin in the days of the patriarchs.
 1. In Genesis 19:24-28, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is described. Peter and Jude explain that this unique judgment on these two cities was to serve as an example (2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7).
 2. Why was Sodom and Gomorrah chosen to be an example of God's ultimate judgment on the ungodly? What were they doing that made them so different from other ungodly cities at that time (Genesis 18:20)?
 3. What was their "sin" that was "very grievous" (Genesis 19:4-5)? Note first of all that "all the people" from the city are seeking to participate in whatever the "sin" is (Genesis 19:5).
 4. The word "know" as used here is often a euphemism for sexual relations (cp. Genesis 4:1, 17). Lot's reaction to this crowd certainly suggests that is how he understood the crowd's request (vv. 6-7). In fact, he was willing to suffer personal loss rather than allow it to happen to his guests (v. 8).
 5. Lot's amazing offer of his two daughters at least confirms that he understood the crowd's intentions were sexual in nature. But notice also that Lot explains that his original hospitality to these two strangers (cp. Genesis 19:1-3) was precisely to protect from the sort of homosexual rape the crowd was intent on inflicting.
 6. The crowd's in v. 9 is somewhat similar to many today who say to those who would dare point out sinful conduct: "Who are you to judge?" People haven't really changed much. What such people fail to realize, is that when you point out what the Bible says about certain conduct, you are not judging them, it is the Bible that is judging them. In return, they themselves are trying to avoid the condemnation of the message of God by condemning the messenger.
- B. Homosexuality was a capital crime under the Law of Moses.
 1. I am grateful that we are no longer under the Law of Moses, with its extremely harsh punishments (though under the New Covenant much harsher punishments for similar crimes unrepented of are simply delayed until the judgment (cp. Hebrews 10:26-31).

2. However, the Law was good (Romans 7:12; 15:4; 1 Timothy 1:8). So what can we learn from the Law about God's view of homosexual conduct?
 3. Leviticus 18:22 calls homosexuality "an abomination" to the Lord. Can it be any clearer? Together with bestiality (v. 23), it was one of the sins that justified God in giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites, for the previous occupants were guilty of such sins (vv. 24-25). Also, the Israelites were warned that if they engaged in the same kind of sins, they too would be "vomited out" of the land (vv. 26-30).
 4. According to the New Testament we are not under the Law of Moses, but while the Law was in effect, without question homosexuality was clearly a grave offense, even worthy of death! (Leviticus 20:13).
- C. The New Testament clearly condemns homosexuality.
1. Paul mentioned homosexuality when he wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).
 - a) In this passage, Paul uses two terms that are translated as "homosexuals" and "sodomites." The first term, translated "homosexuals" ("effeminate" in the KJV) is *malakos*, and is defined as: "effeminate, of a catamite, a male who submits his body to unnatural lewdness" (Thayer).
 - b) The word translated as "sodomites" ("abusers of themselves with mankind" in the KJV) is *arsenokoitai*, and is defined as "one who lies with a male as with a female, a sodomite" (Thayer).
 - c) Paul's warning not to be deceived is very appropriate even today, for some homosexual theologians would have us believe that Paul was only condemning male prostitution. Whereas the first word (*malakos*) does properly speak of a male prostitute, the second word (*arsenokoitai*) describes any sort of homosexual conduct. Despite such efforts to twist the scriptures, the Bible is clear that those who continue to engage in homosexuality will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 2. The most well-known passage which deals with the sin of homosexual conduct is Roman 1:18-28. In it, Paul discusses the wrath of God which is directed toward those who do not honor God.
 - a) The righteous indignation of God is directed toward those who reject the clear evidence of God's existence and power as revealed in nature, and if religious at all, make God over into an image of their own choosing. Whereas today we are too "sophisticated" to fall for thinking that God is like a graven image, there is always the tendency to "recreate God in our own image," so that He thinks like us and acts like us.
 - b) Rather than bringing about the final judgment, or striking them down with a bolt out of the sky, God has expressed His righteous indignation by "giving them up" to moral uncleanness. In other words, those who are not willing to honor God as God are simply allowed to degenerate into moral decay.
 - c) Romans 1:26 contains a strong allusion to lesbianism, where women cease to appreciate that their bodies are naturally designed physically for sex with men and for procreation, and who think of "our bodies, ourselves" solely as instruments of "vile passions" for one another.

- d) In similar fashion, many of those men who have been “given up” by God to uncleanness eventually leave the “natural use of the woman” and turn to other men to fulfill their lustful desires (Romans 1:27-28).
- e) Three times in this section we find the expression “God gave them up (over)” (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). When people choose to reject God, or to recreate Him in their own image, God “gives them up” to go their own way. Unrestrained by God, they move into increasing levels of immorality. For some, it involves heterosexual immorality, such as pre-marital sex or adultery. For others, it includes homosexuality and lesbianism.
- f) Homosexuality is something that God has deemed unnatural. For something to be “unnatural,” it means it is contrary to nature itself. Homosexual relations are the exact opposite of what God intended the marriage relationship to look like. This is the exact opposite of what many will try and argue with homosexuality. Society wants us to think that homosexuality is something natural and to be celebrated. God says that it is unnatural, shameless, and sinful.

II. What Does Our Culture Now Think Of The Body?

- A. Over the last 50 years, American Christians have watched as our society has fashioned a brave new order for itself. This has occurred in three phases:
 - 1. Phase one of the transformation of men and women was feminism and the sexual revolution transforming the American home. Many men have lost any sense of responsibility for their family. They are tuned out, passive, and self-focused. Many women feel great tension between their career and home. They are told by secular lifestyle gurus to pursue perfect “work/life” balance, but it is hard to find. Increasingly, the sexes are in competition.
 - 2. Phase two is the spread of the homosexual movement. Led by celebrities in the 1980s, the homosexual movement built off of the momentum of the feminist push and the sexual revolution. Men and women, it assumed, were not different in any meaningful way so romantic love was not subject to any shape or design. It was just a feeling. As such, it had no duties, no covenantal dimensions, and no enduring commitment. In phase one, gender roles were recast. In phase two, romantic love was recast.
 - 3. Now, in phase three, the body itself is recast. Transgender ideology is grounded in the idea that the body is not an essential part of our being (a viewpoint known as essentialism). Our gender identity is fluid, a social construct that can change. Our identity does not necessarily match our body.
 - a) In such instances, many “transgender” people opt for reconstructive surgery so their identity fits with their body.
 - b) But no person is just a surgery away from becoming the opposite gender. Whatever surgeons may do will never change a person’s DNA. Nor is genetic makeup changed by taking hormones (Jeremiah 13:23). On being taken captive, Daniel may have been made a eunuch (Daniel 1:7), but if so, he was still a man. The Ethiopian officer baptized by Philip in Acts 8 was a eunuch, but he was still a man. Gender is more than anatomy and hormones, and surgically altering anatomy does not change gender.

- c) Transgender surgeries fix nothing; they only mask and exacerbate deeper psychological problems. Personal stories that tell of the regret, unhappiness, and suicide experienced by those who undergo such surgery will only increase as time passes.
- B. The new way to approach the body is to see it as a means of self-expression rather than as the creation of the divine mind and a means of glorifying God. It should be clear to Christians that this latest phase of our culture's shift away from the biblical worldview is a major one. We are witnessing the undoing of the most basic realities of God's created order.

III. What Causes Homosexuality?

- A. We know man is born upright (Genesis 8:21; Psalm 58:3; Isaiah 7:15-16; Jeremiah 3:25; Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 19:14; Romans 3:12), so what causes homosexuality and gender confusion?
- B. Nature or nurture.
 - 1. Is homosexuality the result of one's genetics (nature)?
 - a) Many say, "God made me this way."
 - (1) There has been no definitive study proving homosexuality is genetic.
 - (2) News stories often fail to mention the bias of the studies.
 - b) God gave all of us reproductive organs.
 - (1) He made them physically for heterosexual relationships.
 - (2) Homosexual tendencies thus imply psychological issues.
 - 2. A study of identical twins proves that genetics alone do not account for gender preference.
 - a) Dr. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University examined 110 pairs of identical twins who had been separated at birth and raised in different environments.
 - b) He found that if one twin was gay there was a 52% chance the other was also. Of course, identical twins are genetically alike.
 - (1) If homosexuality was genetic, they would have the same gender preference.
 - (2) That 48% were not gay confirms genetics alone does not cause homosexuality.
 - (3) Nature alone does not explain homosexuality.
- C. Simple or complex.
 - 1. If homosexuality is not solely nature, is it solely nurture?
 - a) Many assume it is solely environmental (nurture).
 - b) Or that it is a simple choice of one's behavior.
 - 2. The evidence suggests a complex combination of factors.
 - a) Some genetic factors, for example:
 - (1) A melancholy temperament is often a common factor.
 - (2) This may cause one to be more predisposed to homosexuality.
 - (3) It is just like other temperaments that make some more prone to anger or alcoholism.
 - b) Some environmental factors, for example:
 - (1) Lack of healthy parental relationships (absent father, smother mother).

- (2) Early exposure to improper sexual activity, especially when one is insecure about their sexual identity.
- (3) An intense desire for acceptance or attention/notoriety.
- (4) An effort to stake out their own personal, and to them, special identity.
- (5) A sincerely confused self-image and self-expectation.
- (6) A form of rebellion in order to gain some measure of control over his or her own person.
- (7) Parental abuse and neglect to teach, demonstrate, and require proper roles and responsibilities within the family structure.
- c) The genetic and environmental factors can often be quite diverse.
 - (1) This leads to various expressions of homosexuality (active, passive).
 - (2) But this does not always lead to homosexual tendencies or behavior.
 - (3) So nurture alone does not explain homosexuality.
- 3. Sinful behavior is not always a simple choice, especially once one becomes enslaved to sin (cp. John 8:34). We who understand sin's power should certainly be sympathetic toward others.

IV. What Is A Biblical Response?

- A. To share the truth of the gospel.
 - 1. We hold fast to the truth that is in Jesus (Ephesians 4:20-24).
 - 2. We teach sound doctrine, according to the gospel (1 Timothy 1:8-11).
- B. To display the love of the gospel.
 - 1. We have the duty to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
 - 2. This affects how we approach those enslaved in sin (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
- C. To offer the hope of the gospel.
 - 1. It gives cleansing, sanctification, and justification (1 Corinthians 6:11).
 - 2. The fruit of the Spirit overcomes the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-25).

Conclusion. God's basic principles of righteousness have remained constant throughout Bible history. Homosexuality has been identified as a "grievous sin" in the times of the patriarchs, an "abomination" in the Law of Moses, and "vile affections" in the New Testament.

The scriptural gospel makes sense of our humanity. It restores our dignity. It calls us to be men and women who see our body as a gift, a vessel by which we may give glory to our Maker and Redeemer. If we do not teach our children about gender and sexuality, rest assured that our unbiblical culture will be eager to indoctrinate them.

God's word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89-91); it does not change by the year or the decade. The truth of the Bible is just as binding and relevant now as it was then. If the earth exists in another 1,000 years, men and women will be bound by the same laws. Mankind will never outgrow the Bible. It will always contain all of the truth that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).