



Homo-
sexuality

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING HOMOSEXUALITY

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(Romans 1:27)



Both the church and modern culture are divided in their understanding of what homosexuality is, how homosexual people should be treated, and how God views this behavior. When a subject generates such an emotional response, many are tempted to avoid it altogether. However, while controversy for its own sake is a sin, controversy for the sake of the truth is a divine mandate.

WHAT IS HOMOSEXUALITY?

“Homosexuality” refers to a condition and a behavior. The homosexual condition, commonly referred to as an orientation, is one in which a person is sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Any form of sexual activity between members of the same sex is homosexual behavior.

People do not generally choose the homosexual condition. Like many sinful tendencies, it is often deeply ingrained and shows itself early in life. But while the homosexual condition might not be chosen, homosexual behavior is a matter of choice. People choose what to do with their desires.

WHAT CAUSES HOMOSEXUALITY?

Though some studies have suggested that homosexuality is inborn, or genetic, there is no convincing evidence of that. It will almost certainly never be proven that homosexuality is an inborn condition. Yet even if such proof were forthcoming, it would not negate the biblical prohibitions against homosexual behavior. It would, in fact, simply prove what is already known. People are all fallen creatures—physically, spiritually, and emotionally imperfect. An inborn tendency toward a particular sin does not justify the sin; it only reinforces the need for a Savior.

Studies indicate that the homosexual

condition represents a need for intimacy with members of the same sex that has taken on a sexual nature. A faulty relationship with the same sex parent, lack of bonding with peers, or sexual abuse can all be contributing factors. The need that led to this condition is likely legitimate, but fulfillment of that need is being sought in an illegitimate way.

The idea that homosexuality is “demonic,” or caused by demon possession, is also questionable. When the Bible mentions this behavior, it does so in the context of human, carnal temptations. Homosexuality in Scripture is seen as one of the many problems of the flesh—problems that cannot simply be “cast out” as if they were demonic. Instead, they require confession, repentance, and the discipline of a godly life.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE ADDRESS HOMOSEXUALITY?

God’s created intent for sexual expression is confined within the protection of marriage between a man and woman (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4). All forms of sexual activity apart from marriage—adultery and fornication, for example—are as roundly condemned in the Bible as is homosexuality.

In the Old Testament, homosexuality is condemned in both Leviticus 18:22 ■

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20:13 as being an "abomination." In Romans 1:24-27, Paul refers to homosexual attractions between men or women as being an unnatural state resulting from fallen nature; he further condemns homosexual behavior as "vile" and "shameful." In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, he lists sexual practices between members of the same gender along with drunkenness, fornication, and other vices that exclude people from God's kingdom. In 1 Timothy 1:9-11, Paul calls homosexuals "sodomites" and places their sin along with murder, pointing out God's clear condemnation of it.

The good news, however, is that in 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul says of the former homosexuals who had become believers: "Such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Even in Paul's time, God was delivering people from this sin. The idea of someone who has been homosexual living a Christ-centered life is nothing new.

WHAT IF SOMEONE I LOVE IS HOMOSEXUAL?

Generally, there are three types of homosexual people: militant, moderate, and repentant. Militant homosexuals, the minority, have an agenda to normalize homosexuality in modern culture through laws, education, and the media. They are highly visible, leading many to assume that they are the majority. Moderate homosexuals, the actual majority, live their lives as most people do: paying taxes, working, and contributing to society. Their appearance and behavior are not necessarily noticeable. Repentant homosexuals have repented of their homosexual behavior and are seeking to overcome their aberrant sexual desires.

When someone we love is caught up in this sin, we are reminded more than ever

of our own limitations. No matter how deeply we love someone, we cannot force that person to do what is right. God has created free will; we cannot override it, even with someone we love.

We can, however, remind our loved one of two unchangeable truths: God's standards and our love. We must remember that there is a difference between acceptance and approval. We can continue to accept someone we love and, as much as possible, keep our relationship with that person intact. We cannot, however, approve of something that God clearly disapproves of. It is entirely possible to accept a person without approving of everything that person does or believes. God loves His creation, yet disapproves of the sins that the people He loves practice.

To address the issue of homosexuality, then, is to enter deeply into God's experience: loving the person, hating the sin, and remaining steadfast to God's standards. We know that even when our best efforts to persuade the people we love have failed, God's power is still more than able to accomplish His purposes.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of homosexuality include:

- > Genesis 2:18-25; 19:1-29
- > Psalm 81:12
- > 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on homosexuality at Romans 1:18-32 on page 1465. See also the personality profile of the Sodomites on page 29.

cleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,^a wickedness, covet-

ousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving,^a unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

2 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself;

1:29 ^aNU-Text omits *sexual immorality*. **1:31** ^aNU-Text omits *unforgiving*.

KEY PASSAGE



**Homo-
sexuality**

THE WAY OUT

(1:18-32)

There is no way around it—homosexuality is abhorred by God. Some say that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice or a genetic predisposition—and when confronted with this passage in Romans, some say that these words were meant only for the culture of that day. When dealing with the Old Testament passages condemning homosexual activity (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), the same argument is often made. But what is clearly a moral issue in both the Old and New Testaments cannot be relegated to the past as just a cultural law. The Bible condemns homosexual conduct because it goes against God's plan for a natural sexual relationship between a man and a woman in marriage.

As with any sin, the actions of homosexuality can be forgiven, and its powerful temptations can be overcome. God will forgive and accept anyone who desires to be set free from homosexuality. And one believer can accept another one no matter what their background, as they seek to change their lifestyle and live for God.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about homosexuality on pages 1466, 1467. See also the personality profile of the Sodomites on page 29.

SOUL NOTE



Against God's Plan (1:26, 27) Paul says homosexuality is "against nature," against what God planned for sexual relations. God created marriage and sexual relations to be between a man and a woman: "A man shall . . . be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Homosexual acts are called shameful, and those who live that lifestyle will receive "the penalty of their error." Yet God will forgive and strengthen those who turn away from homosexuality and seek to honor Him with their lives. **Topic: Homosexuality**

destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

¹⁵When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. ¹⁷So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

¹⁸Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! ¹⁹Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the moun-

tains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

²⁰See now, this city *is* near enough to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is it not a little one?*) and my soul shall live."

²¹And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. ²²Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. ²⁴Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

19:17 ^aSeptuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *they*

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Homo- sexuality

SODOM'S FEARFUL FATE

(GENESIS 19)

Few places in the world care to vie with Sodom's reputation for immorality. The city was ripe for God's judgment. Perversely empowered by a mob mentality, a gang of Sodomite men demanded that Lot hand over two guests for homosexual rape. Their identity as God's messengers mattered little to the mob, but it sealed the fate of the city.

The deep question is not whether the "sin of Sodom" was violence or sexual perversion, but how both these behaviors became the character of a city. Perversity rarely takes over a single part of life. It appears in multiple forms—poly-perversity.

By the time Abraham and Lot visited Sodom, the city had degenerated into a festering cesspool of sin and immorality. The destruction of the city after Abraham's negotiation with God indicates that there were not even ten righteous souls left within its walls. So God sent his angel messengers to warn Lot and his family and help them escape before destruction rained down on the city.

In spite of efforts by some of today's gay theologians to revise and reinterpret Sodom's story, the clear message of Genesis 19 has always referred to homosexual violence. It is generally thought that the Sodomites also practiced bestiality, sex with children and adolescents, heterosexual rape, and adultery, along with other unspeakable forms of sexual perversion and violence. The severity of their punishment ought not to conceal the horrors of their behavior.

Though both homosexuality and rape are consistently condemned in the Scriptures, they are not isolated from other sexual sins, or sin in general. Whether heterosexual sin or homosexual sin, God calls us to forsake all sexual sin and to know the transforming power of His redeeming and healing grace. To choose otherwise puts us in the company of the citizens of Sodom.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about homosexuality on pages 1466, 1467. See also the key passage note at Romans 1:18–32 on page 1465.

her nakedness. ¹⁶You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. ¹⁷You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness. ¹⁸Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.

¹⁹Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long as she is in her customary impurity. ²⁰Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her. ²¹And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. ²²You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. ²³Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.

²⁴Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. ²⁵For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

²⁶You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you ²⁷(for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), ²⁸lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. ²⁹For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

³⁰Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God."

MORAL AND CEREMONIAL LAWS

19 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall

be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

³Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

⁴Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.

"You shall be holy,
for I the LORD your
God am holy."

LEVITICUS 19:2

SOUL NOTE



A Sin Against God (18:22) This charge against homosexual relations appears in a section including rules against marital infidelity and bestiality. This is one of a number of passages in both testaments that, taken together and interpreted plainly, reveal that homosexual conduct is a great offense to God. It is called "an abomination." The Bible always regards it as a serious violation of God's plan for sexual expression.

Topic: Homosexuality

SOUL NOTE



Honor and Respect (19:3) Respect for parents goes along with respect for God. Even when fully grown, children should honor and respect their parents, even if they haven't always been examples of godly parenting. When a mother and a father show respect for their parents, they set a good example for their children: God highly regards parenthood and its responsibilities. Parents should model their devotion to God through godly respect for their own parents. **Topic: Family Life**