

Homosexuality

and the

Discipline

Social Issues, Part 2 • Homosexuality

A Dose of Reality

- *January 2013* – Nine states (including DC) have legalized same-sex marriage;¹ Rhode Island recognizes same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions; California, which briefly granted same-sex marriages in 2008, now recognizes them on a conditional basis; Nine states prohibit same-sex marriage by statute and 30 prohibit it in their constitutions.
- The *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA), enacted in 1996, prevents the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages and allows each state to refuse recognition of same-sex marriages performed in other states.
- DOMA has been found *unconstitutional* in eight federal courts, including two federal appeals courts. Five of these cases are *pending review* by the Supreme Court.

A Dose of Reality

- During the 21st century, *public support* for legalizing same-sex marriage has grown considerably, and various national polls conducted since 2011 show that a majority of Americans support same-sex marriage.
- On May 9, 2012, Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to publicly declare support for the legalization of same-sex marriage.
- This issue is obviously a popularly discussed topic.²

A Biblical Perspective

- “The Bible is opposed to homosexuality...and every other sin...including mine.” (C. Anderson)
 - * **Genesis 1:27; 2:24** – God’s original (“from the beginning”) design, appealed to by Christ Himself when commenting on marriage in **Matthew 19:4-6**, was one man and one woman united into one flesh. This is a sacred union and He prohibits us from adjusting it (cf. Matthew 9:9-12 – marriage or abstinence).³
 - * **Leviticus 18:22; 20:13** – Homosexuality is forbidden in God’s Law, is called “an abomination,” and was worthy of the death penalty. In Proverbs 6, other abominable sins are listed—pride, lying, schismatic, etc.

A Biblical Perspective

- “The Bible is opposed to homosexuality...and every other sin...including mine.” (C. Anderson)
 - * **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** – Neither the passive nor active participants in homosexuality will inherit the kingdom of God.
 - * **1 Timothy 1:8-11** – Among other sins, homosexuality is contrary to sound teaching and does not accord with the glorious gospel of the blessed God.
 - * **Jude 7** – Sodom and Gomorrah experienced God’s fiery judgment because of their unnatural sexual sins (Genesis 19:1-11) and thus serve as examples.

A Biblical Perspective

- “The Bible is opposed to homosexuality...and every other sin...including mine.” (C. Anderson)
 - * **Romans 1:21-32** – Homosexuality is idolatry.
Three cycles of three steps: (1) vv. 23-24; (2) vv. 25-27; (3) v. 28
 - ➔ *Step 1* - Human beings exchange God for what God has made; we prefer the creature to the Creator.
 - ➔ *Step 2* - God hands us over to what we prefer.
 - ➔ *Step 3* - We act out externally and bodily in our sexual relations a dramatization of the internal, spiritual condition of the fallen human soul, namely, the horrendous exchange of God for man and the images of our power.

A Biblical Perspective

- “The Bible is opposed to homosexuality...and every other sin...including mine.” (C. Anderson)
 - * **Romans 1:26-27** – Homosexuality is unnatural.⁴ It may be exacerbated by one’s physical bent, family background, social upbringing, and personal history, but its roots are in sin (cf. Romans 8:20-23).
 - * **Romans 1:26-27** – Homosexuality is God’s judgment on our sinful idolatry (also consider STDs and AIDS), but so are all sins (vv. 28-32; cf. Matthew 11:23-24).
 - * **Romans 1:21-32; Ephesians 5:31-32** – Homosexuality hijacks the dramatization of God’s relationship to His people.⁵

Homosexuality in Society

- Dealing with this issue politically. There is a balance:
 - 1. Political involvement is necessary.** – As we have seen biblically, homosexuality is a harming sin on a society. So, its normalization in society will “dull the ‘reflexive recoil,’” harm individuals, weaken marriages, and hinder child-rearing, among other consequences. There is “salt and light” wisdom in political involvement regarding this issue.
 - ➔ It must be undertaken in prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-4) and grace (Titus 3:1-7; Colossians 4:5-6).
 - ➔ It must make a clear distinction between the homosexual agenda (which is our enemy) and the homosexual person).⁶

Homosexuality in Society

- Dealing with this issue politically. There is a balance:
 - 1. Political involvement is necessary.**
 - ➔ It must recognize that there is no utopia in a fallen planet.⁷ Some of the most immoral things (e.g., pride) can never be made illegal.
 - ➔ It must recognize that all persons have been created in the image of God and should be accorded human dignity.⁸

Homosexuality in Society

- Dealing with this issue politically. There is a balance:
 - 1. Political involvement is necessary.**
 - 2. Political involvement is not our mission.** – “God has not called us to win elections, but to win souls and hearts and minds; he has not called us to control Congress, but to preach the gospel; he has not called us to be safe, but to tell the truth; he has not called us to avoid conflict, but to love everyone (1 Thessalonians 3:12).”

Homosexuality in Society

- Dealing with this issue politically. There is a balance:
 - 1. Political involvement is necessary.**
 - 2. Political involvement is not our mission.**
 - ➔ Sometimes, what is bad for the nation (i.e., moral decay), may not be bad for the church (i.e., gospel opportunity, clearer distinction between the church and world, purging of nominalism).⁷
 - ➔ We can fulfill our mission in America, even with this sin being legalized (e.g., slavery and emperor worship in Rome).⁹

Homosexuality in the Church

1. What do you do with a Christian who is struggling with homosexuality?

- * Any biological or familial roots of homosexuality do not sanction or excuse homosexual behavior, but they should deepen our compassion and patience for those who are struggling to be free from sexual temptations.
- * Believers who are struggling with this issue should be careful not to label themselves as “homosexual.” Rather, they should say, “I struggle with homosexual desires” (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). That’s a very small—and huge—distinction.¹⁰

Homosexuality in the Church

1. What do you do with a Christian who is struggling with homosexuality?

- * They must recognize that their desires (i.e., “bent”) may not immediately change (cf. Romans 8:21-23, 28).¹¹
- * For them, sanctification includes recognizing and renouncing homosexual behavior as sin, rediscovering healthy friendships with people of the same sex (esp. in groups), embracing a moral sexual lifestyle, growing in the knowledge of and love for God, and in the age to come rising from the dead with a new body free from every sinful impulse. This freedom comes through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit (cf. 2 Peter 1:1-11; Galatians 5:16-26; 6:7-9; Ephesians 6:10-18).

Homosexuality in the Church

1. What do you do with a Christian who is struggling with homosexuality?

- * We must practice Colossians 1:28-29; Galatians 6:1-10; James 5:20; Jude 23 with these brothers and sisters.
- * We must be bold both to say that homosexuality is wrong (in keeping with a good biblical hermeneutic) and to believe that “such were some of you” can still happen regularly (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Homosexuality in the Church

2. What do you do with a professing Christian who is practicing homosexuality?

- * “Holy ostracism” (i.e., personal separation) –
1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15.
- * The goal of that separation is restoration (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; Galatians 6:1).

Homosexuality & the Gospel

- The unbelieving homosexual (and the believer who struggles with this) needs a change of orientation, but not from homosexuality to heterosexuality. He/she needs a reorientation from lies to truth, from the worship of self to the worship of God (Romans 1:21-32), which only Christ can do (John 14:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 9-10).
- The unbelieving homosexual needs to put his/her faith in Christ alone for forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), righteousness (Romans 1:16-17), and life and godliness (Ephesians 2:4-7, 10; Titus 3:4-8; 1 John 2:6).

Homosexuality & the Gospel

- The believing heterosexual needs to merely share the gospel, believing that in its message of Jesus Christ, the “worst” sinner (him...and you) can find cleansing, justification, and sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11). Numerous biblical examples and passages proclaim this (e.g., Rehab, Paul; Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:7, 9)!
- The believing heterosexual needs to befriend unbelieving homosexuals so that he/she can display the love of Christ and speak the grace of Christ (Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11).¹²

Homosexuality & the Gospel

- The believing heterosexual must commit to discipling his/her children regarding biblical manhood and womanhood. Ultimately, the solution to homosexuality (and etc.) in the church is evangelism without and discipleship within.

Endnotes

1. States that have legalized same-sex marriage: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, and Washington.
2. This issue is obviously a very pertinent one for us to consider: In 1998, John Piper wrote, “Yesterday there was conference called ‘Here I Stand’ to address the issue of homosexually active clergymen in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Star Tribune, 10/10/98). On the front page of the Star Tribune there was the story of what appeared to be a hate crime against a homosexual student at the University of Wyoming who was in critical condition after being tied to a fence and beaten. In August, 641 Anglican bishops from around the world gathered for the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England, and voted overwhelmingly to affirm that homosexual practice is ‘incompatible with Scripture.’ Full-page ads were recently taken out in USA Today and the New York Times and the Washington Post showing some 850 former homosexuals who gathered last summer at the Exodus conference and who declared there is power in Christ to be changed. Here in Minnesota, legal cases continually crop up about child custody and adoption of children by homosexual people. And most immediate of all, here in our church there are people who have homosexual desires and many more people among us who have people in their families whom they care about very deeply who consider themselves homosexual. The reality of homosexuality is inescapable today, and this...[should come as no surprise to us]” even as it did not to the biblical writers.

Endnotes

3. Pro-homosexual theologians make much of the fact that Jesus never explicitly condemns homosexuality. Despite overlooking John 21:25 and implicitly denying the authority of Scripture, they wrongly assume that Jesus' silence about homosexuality implies *approval* of homosexuality, as if His silence about incest, child abuse, bestiality, and other sins implies His approval of them.
4. Homosexual scholars most commonly argue that Paul is talking about people whose natural bent was heterosexual but who were forcing themselves to be homosexual—that's what made this unnatural. *The Other Dark Exchange: Homosexuality, Part 1* (<http://bit.ly/XBwRKJ>) considers and textually rebuts these arguments. Quite simply, however, we notice that this kind of logic doesn't work with any of the other sins in verses 29-31 (e.g., we would never say, "murder is okay as long as its not against your nature").

Endnotes

5. “The reason Paul focuses on homosexuality in these verses is because it is the most vivid dramatization in life of the profoundest connection between the disordering of heart-worship and the disordering of our sexual lives.

We learn from Paul in Ephesians 5:31-32 that, from the beginning, manhood and womanhood existed to represent or dramatize God's relation to his people and then Christ's relation to his bride, the church. In this drama, the man represents God or Christ and is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. The woman represents God's people or the church. And sexual union in the covenant of marriage represents pure, undefiled, intense heart-worship. That is, God means for the beauty of worship to be dramatized in the right ordering of our sexual lives.

But instead, we have exchanged the glory of God for images, especially of ourselves. The beauty of heart-worship has been destroyed. Therefore, in judgment, God decrees that this disordering of our relation to him be dramatized in the disordering of our sexual relations with each other. And since the right ordering of our relationship to God in heart-worship was dramatized by heterosexual union in the covenant of marriage, the disordering of our relationship to God is dramatized by the breakdown of that heterosexual union.

Endnotes

Homosexuality is the most vivid form of that breakdown. God and man in covenant worship are represented by male and female in covenant sexual union. Therefore, when man turns from God to images of himself, God hands us over to what we have chosen and dramatizes it by male and female turning to images of themselves for sexual union, namely their own sex. Homosexuality is the judgment of God dramatizing the exchange of the glory of God for images of ourselves. (See the parallel uses of ‘exchange’ in verses 25 and 26.)” (J. Piper).

6. “Those who suggest that Jesus would be happy to be the best man in a gay wedding are creating a god in their own image. So too are those who suggest that Jesus would be protesting the event (or worse, a funeral!) with signs about God hating homosexuals” (C. Anderson).

Endnotes

7. From a 2012 panel with Alistair Begg, Mark Dever, and Voddie Baucham, answering the question, “How are you helping your people think through the issue of homosexuality?”:

Mark mentioned that we must prepare our congregation by making sure that they understand that there is no utopia in a fallen world – i.e., immoral does not equal illegal, and visa versa; moral does not equal legal, and visa versa. Some of the most immoral things (e.g., pride) can never be made illegal. Therefore, the law will have to follow what most people believe for it to function in a fallen world. Alistair piggy-backed on that by alluding to David Well’s observations that when “ought-ness” is removed from a culture (i.e., you ought not do such and such), we end up having a complicated legislated community. Churches don’t need the bigger stick to bring “ought-ness” back; we need to give the gospel – this “characterless” culture gives us an opportunity, not to bring the bigger stick to bear, but to share the gospel. Thus, what is bad for the nation (i.e., moral decay), may not be bad for the church (i.e., gospel opportunity, clearer distinction between the church and world, purging of nominalism).

Mark added that while that is true, homosexuality will lead to misery in our culture which we will all participate in, and it’s too bad that we’ve had to get here for those aforementioned benefits to be known. A flourishing culture is better for the church (even though history shows that the church has not navigated that well, thus resulting in the Christian nominalism we see around us).

Endnotes

8. Therefore, “hateful, fearful, unconcerned harassment of persons with a homosexual orientation should be repudiated. We believe that respect for persons with a homosexual orientation involves honest, reasoned, nonviolent sharing of facts concerning the immorality and liability of homosexual behavior. On the other hand, endorsing behavior which the Bible disapproves endangers persons and dishonors God” (J. Piper).
9. In that 2012 panel, Mark Dever also highlighted that we must decide whether or not we can live in America with this sin – no doubt we have some terrible areas in our culture and it’s getting worse, but we’ve had terrible areas in our culture for years, and God has been overwhelmingly merciful. We shouldn’t talk about this in an apocalyptic sense, and we must decide that we don’t need these benefits to preach the gospel. We must decide that we can preach the gospel from inside a jail.
10. “Just like John Piper is a new creature in Christ, even though he still struggles with the sins of impatience, lust, and pride, Christians who struggle with homosexual desires are not homosexuals. In Christ they are new creatures who struggle with the temptations of homosexuality. And I just want to come along side them and say, ‘Get that as your paradigm, and let's struggle together in chastity and in purity until we're dead’” (J. Piper).

Endnotes

11. “Before I turn away from that question, let me say to those of you who struggle with this that this is not hard for me to empathize with or imagine. I don’t want those of you who are wrestling with this to feel like, ‘O, this is just the worst possible thing imaginable.’ I don’t feel that way. What I feel is simply the need to admit brokenness before the Lord. Set your face to say, ‘My heart is broken, and I am weeping, because for reasons I don’t understand I am broken in my sexuality. I’m broken. I wish I weren’t. I can chose to turn my brokenness into sin...’ See, I don't think it’s sin to be broken. It's the result of sin to be broken. But to just be that way, to feel that way, I don’t think is any more sin than my feeling heterosexual. [My heterosexual sin] is unnatural, it’s broken, but now I have the choice with my heterosexuality to make it sin or to make it holy. A person who wrestles with homosexual temptations and desires has the same choice: to sin with it, or to be chaste and to seek to overcome and to move into something more God-appointed. So don’t hear me isolating it as the worst of all sins. It is part of a brokenness that I share. I think John Piper’s personality is broken. I could give you specifics: they would have to do with anger, self-pity. And I'm just wired to like certain sins a lot. I think it’s partly genetic. I saw it in my grandmother and my mother. I think it’s partly family-based, and it’s just me. I'm broken. So I can choose to let that brokenness govern me and turn it into sins. Or I can choose to say, ‘I'm going to deal with the brokenness I have and try to steer my way through my brokenness to do as much good for others and avoid as much sin as I can’” (J. Piper).

Endnotes

12. “We believe that Christian churches should reach out in love and truth to minister to people touched by homosexuality, and that those who contend Biblically against their own sexual temptation should be patiently assisted in their battle, not ostracized or disdained. However, the more prominent a leadership role or modeling role a person holds in a church or institution of the Conference, the higher will be the expectations for God's ideal of sexual obedience and wholeness. We affirm that both heterosexual and homosexual persons should find help in the church to engage in the Biblical battle against all improper sexual thoughts and behaviors” (J. Piper).

References

1. *Why is Homosexuality Wrong?* – <http://bit.ly/pTUZn4>
2. *Discerning the Will of God Concerning Homosexuality and Marriage* – <http://bit.ly/WnCE5o>
3. *The Other Dark Exchange: Homosexuality, Part 1* – <http://bit.ly/XBwRKJ>
4. *The Other Dark Exchange: Homosexuality, Part 2* – <http://bit.ly/X4CVKi>
5. *Beliefs about Homosexual Behavior and Ministering to Homosexual Persons* – <http://bit.ly/XBB0OD>
6. *How Can We Help Christians Who Are Struggling With Homosexual Desires?* – <http://bit.ly/XBBhRQ>
7. *How Should Christian Friends Respond to a Friend Who Has Entered a Homosexual Relationship and Moved to a Church That Accepts It?* – <http://bit.ly/XBBCUz>
8. *“The Bible is Opposed to Homosexuality...and Every Other Sin...Including Mine.”* – <http://wp.me/p1mGTB-cP>
9. *Exodus International Ministries* – <http://wp.me/1rxHe>
10. *Genesis Counseling* – <http://bit.ly/WnddAQ> or <http://bit.ly/XBEvVp>

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