

## **Homosexuality, Marriage, & The Bible I**

Various Scriptures by Dr. Joe Lum

1. Brief Sampling of Homosexuality's Impact
2. Biblical Portrait of Marriage
3. Biblical Perspective of Homosexuality
  - a. Arguments & Answers to Common Objections
  - b. Appropriate Responses to our Culture's

If you've been watching the news, you are certainly aware that the recent issue of homosexual marriage has been front and center. It has been a political issue here in Washington State but more recently, it has been brought to the forefront by our nation's leaders. The issue is not just a cultural or societal issue. It's a *Biblical* issue and as such, today, I'd like to begin with (1) a very brief *historical* snapshot or sampling of homosexuality's impact both nationally and internationally, (2) address some of the key issues regarding homosexuality, and (3) give you a Biblical portrait of God's intention for Marriage and the Biblical portrayal of Homosexuality. That is a lot to cover and certainly some may find fault in that there will be much left unaddressed. However, the purpose and intention is to give a bird's eye or macroscopic view of these issues in the brief time we have.

### **1. Brief Sampling of Homosexuality's Impact**

Homosexuality is not something that is new or recent. In fact, the subject of homosexuality is addressed in the Bible and it extends all the way back to the time of Abraham's nephew, Lot, in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 – and I'm sure even earlier. Not only is homosexuality addressed in Genesis, but we find that the subject reoccurs a number of times in the Bible including the books of Leviticus, Judges 19, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 9, 1 Timothy, etc....

By the time Paul mentions the subject in 1 Corinthians (mid-50's AD), homosexuality was a part of Greek and Roman culture. It was said that Socrates and Plato were homosexuals as well as 14 of the first 15 Roman governors. [“The extramarital intercourse permitted husbands included homosexual relationships, which were not only allowed but sometimes considered noble \(Plato \*Symposium\* 178c–180a; Xenophon \*Memorabilia\* ii.6. 28–39\).<sup>1</sup>](#) Throughout history, homosexuality has occurred in various cultures and peoples – not just in America and not just in recent decades. Just as the Bible was written over 1500 years and over that period of time there are a number of references to the sin of homosexuality, we should not be surprised that it is an ongoing issue.

When we fast forward to modern times, there has been an *intentional* wave of change in the past number of decades in our culture and world that has seemingly continues to spiral downward faster and faster as homosexual proponents and activists have impacted our culture

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002), 431.

and our country domestically and internationally as noted by professor Michael Grisanti in The Master's Seminary Journal (Fall 2008, *Cultural and Medical Myths about Homosexuality*, 19/175–202). He outlined the following ways in which our culture has succumbed to the homosexual agenda.

### *How Homosexual Activists Have Changed our Culture*

**VOCABULARY CHANGES:** One of the ways that a cultural change has taken place has been through the expanded use of the TERMS used, one of them being the term: HOMOPHOBIA.

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines it as: *an intense aversion to homosexuality and homosexuals.*<sup>2</sup> The term, however, has been used by different people in different contexts in a much broader sense to characterize those who disagree or have different convictions. When they do, the usage of the term slaps down opponents in a very negative way and can have a gagging effect, just as the effect of being called a 'racist' or a 'sexist' might, or in Christian circles being called a "legalist" or "cultist" might. After all, no one wants to be called a name that has prejudicial, political, or poses negative connotations. People who are involved with the issues of homosexuality such as in counseling or public office are in the crosshairs and they can easily be the target of a term "homophobe" that explodes like a dye pack in a wad of cash. Those who are proponents of homosexuality may easily use the label against others in order to subdue them into silence.

Twisting terms has been used to cast a negative light on those who oppose homosexuality. For example, [Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation \(GLAAD\) calls the state of Indiana's efforts to institute a strict anti-gay marriage law as an "anti-marriage equality movement."](#)<sup>3</sup> Not only have we seen a change in vocabulary, but there have been changes in counseling as well.

**SECULAR COUNSELING CHANGES:** Benedict Carey of the New York Times in an article entitled "[Psychiatrist's journey to apology on gay 'cure'](#)" written just last Friday says, "[In the late 1990s as today, the psychiatric establishment considered the therapy to be a nonstarter. Few therapists thought of homosexuality as a disorder. It wasn't always so. Up into the 1970s, the field's diagnostic manual classified homosexuality as an illness, calling it a "sociopathic personality disturbance." Many therapists offered treatment, including Freudian analysts who dominated the field at the time.](#)"<sup>4</sup> In other words, secular therapists once saw homosexuality as abnormal and could be treated through counseling. Today, to suggest that they could change through counseling is not acceptable.

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<sup>2</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>"Indiana's Anti-Marriage Equality Movement Halted," Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (January 26, 2008), [http://www.glaad.org/media/stw\\_detail.php?id=4197](http://www.glaad.org/media/stw_detail.php?id=4197) (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47476378/ns/health-mental\\_health/#.T7awN8Wi2So](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47476378/ns/health-mental_health/#.T7awN8Wi2So)

**LEGISLATIVE CHANGES:** Inroads have been made politically and legislatively as well. For example, in 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 777 into law that prohibits public school teachers from giving any instruction that same-sex marriages or a homosexual lifestyle are wrong AND instruction that supports marriage between a man and a woman as the only legitimate or the best arrangement for a family or for the raising of children – could be considered as illegal and discriminatory – unless it is a private religious school or in a home school context.<sup>5</sup>

The current debate over gay-marriage became legal when Massachusetts became the first state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples in 2004. Marriage licenses are granted by six states: Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, plus Washington, D.C. and Oregon's Coquille and Washington state's Suquamish Indian tribes. It's interesting to note that previous legalization has been achieved *through court rulings and legislative action but not through voter referendums* until now. These examples are merely a sample of the many governmental changes that have occurred.

Not only have there been changing tides in our vocabulary, counseling, and in our government, but there have been changes in many mainline churches as well.

**CHURCH CHANGES:** When the Emerging Church movement (a post-modern philosophical approach that propagates the idea of “uncertainty”) swept into the church it clouded the issue. The movement propagates the idea that you cannot know many things for certain (attacking the doctrine of the perspicuity or ‘clarity’ of scripture) and in that uncertainty, there is humility. Dogmatic assertions are viewed as prideful. Brian McLaren, one of the key leaders of the movement, wrote in Christianity today,

“Frankly, many of us don’t know what we should think about homosexuality. We’ve heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say “it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us.” That alienates us from both the liberals and conservatives who seem to know exactly what we should think.

If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships, we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex. We aren’t sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn.”<sup>6</sup>

In other words – it’s all unclear. Already, however, in the US, many moderate and liberal Protestant churches either already ordain openly gay or lesbian clergy or are in the processes of

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<sup>5</sup> Roy Hansen, Jr., “SB 777— An Analysis,” Private & Home Educators of California (February 4, 2008), [http://www.pheofca.org/SB\\_777080124.pdf](http://www.pheofca.org/SB_777080124.pdf) (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>6</sup> Brian McLaren, “Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question: Finding a Pastoral Response,” *Out of Ur: Following God’s Call in a New World—Leadership Journal Blog* (January 23, 2006), [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archive/s/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_o.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archive/s/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html) (accessed 9/3/2008).

discussing it. The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) in 2009, ELC in Canada in July 2011, the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church of the USA have approved rules to ordain openly gay or lesbian clergy.

Not only have there been cultural inroads in our vocabulary, counseling, government, and the church, but similar changes have occurred **internationally**.

### *International Inroads*

Canada's Bill C-250 (May 2004) declares "homophobia" as illegal and "Passages of the Bible condemning homosexuality, in Leviticus and Romans, have been declared akin to "hate literature" by a judge in Saskatchewan."<sup>7</sup>

Under Sweden's law against hate speech Ake Green, a Pentecostal Christian pastor, was put in prison for one month. Though it was overturned and he was acquitted in 2005 and acquitted again by the Supreme court in Sweden, it simply exemplifies that it's not just an issue here in the USA. In fact the article entitled "Cultural and Medical Myths about Homosexuality" (TMSJ, Fall 2008) notes:

### **The expansion of gay rights in the European Union (February 2006)**

"Leaders in the European Union (EU) have passed a resolution stating that "homophobia" is a social evil and an irrational fear of homosexuals. The "Homophobia in Europe" resolution compares homophobia to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism" and calls for its criminalization. The leader of this effort is Franco Frattini, the justice minister of the EU. He stated: "Homophobia is a violation of human rights and we are watching member states on this issue and reporting on cases in which our efforts have been unsuccessful." The resolution warns that any refusal to grant homosexuals same-sex marriage status will be considered a crime of homophobia."<sup>8</sup>

From this very brief sampling, homosexual advocates have advanced their causes on various fronts. It is an agenda that has been advanced in schools, churches, local governments, public policies, and laws both nationally and internationally. Add to that, mainstream media – from movies, to talk show hosts, to TV programs that promote, support, and advocate homosexuality as an *acceptable* lifestyle and you have a tsunami of cultural change...and it's NOT for the glory of God.

Why should we be concerned? Because it's not merely isolated to a 'secular' or 'social' issue. As I've mentioned, this mentality has spilled over into the church and affected Bible commentators, pastors, denominations, and congregations.

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<sup>7</sup> "European Union Seeks To Expand Gay Rights, Penalize Dissenting Viewpoints," *National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality* (February 3, 2006), <http://www.nARTH.com/docs/criminalize.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>8</sup> "European Union Seeks To Expand Gay Rights, Penalize Dissenting Viewpoints" (February 3, 2006), *National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality*, <http://www.nARTH.com/docs/criminalize.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

Irv Busenitz, in his article (TMS Journal, Fall 2008) entitled, *Marriage and Homosexuality: Toward a Biblical Understanding*, notes a pastor who writes: “In his article, “Liberating Gay Theology,” Rev. Jeffery Dennis writes that gays and lesbians do not need counseling, healing, or understanding. Rather, the Scriptures need to be redefined according to social norms. He contends, “Gays and lesbians are here to transform the church.... We need a gay God, a God who would lead us toward a more affirming, harmonious, creative, socially conscious, and spiritually profound life.... We need a gay Spirit, a Spirit which would retain the particularity of individuals in the global village, not to be reviled but to be cherished. This Spirit’s goal would not be unity but a “unity in diversity,” not the wedding feast of the Lamb but the festival of Cain and Abel, the archetypal brothers, bringing their first fruits together to God.”<sup>9</sup>

It’s also noted that it wasn’t some backroom basement publisher – it was published by Intervarsity Press.

What is the homosexual agenda and what are their basic beliefs? Professor Rick Holland notes in a TMS Journal article,

“Over twenty years ago Randy Alcorn in his book, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, summarized the homosexual movement’s basic beliefs. These tenets remain the same and are gaining more acceptance in public opinion.

1. Homosexuality is an inborn nature—not an illness, not a choice, and not subject to change by an act of the will, psychological therapy, or religious experience.
2. Homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality, it just happens to occur less frequently. It is not an undesirable condition except for its social stigma, which is the result of misguided or hateful homophobics.
3. Homosexuals constitute a legitimate minority as blacks or Chicanos. Homosexual rights are just as valid as women’s rights.
4. Homosexuals have made essential contributions to the development of Western culture. (Homosexual literature is often filled with references to famous homosexual artists, musicians, poets, and statesmen.)
5. Homosexuals should openly acknowledge their condition—“come out of the closet”—and live their desired lifestyle. They should be proud, not ashamed to pursue homosexual relationships<sup>10</sup>

These ideas, as we will see, are antithetical and contrary to the Word of God. But the drumbeat continues as a significant number of homosexuals profess to be Christians, that God accepts their lifestyle, and in fact, created them to be that way.

Moreover, proponents have sought to redefine marriage as a part of their agenda from what is taught in public school to promotion through legal channels.

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffery P. Dennis, “Liberating Gay Theology,” *The Other Side* (September-October 1993):7-58. Also cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005), and the March 2, 2007 blog by R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Is Your Baby Gay? What If You Could Know? What If You Could Do Something About It?” online at <http://www.albertmohler.com/blog>, accessed 8/30/2007.

<sup>10</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution: Recovering Our Sexual Sanity* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985) 136-37.

Irv Busenitz notes (TMJ, Fall 2008), "...in certain strongholds of liberal and antinomian thought, kindergarten and first-grade teachers are carefully instructed that a family is a "unit of two or more persons, related either by birth or by choice, who may or may not live together, who try to meet each other's needs and share common goals and interests."<sup>11</sup> In 1997, then-President Bill Clinton, speaking at a "Hate Crimes" conference at George Washington University, exhorted schools across America to design and institute pro-homosexual diversity programs "to teach [children] a different way."<sup>12</sup>

"George Dent, writing in *The Journal of Law and Politics*, says that once same-sex marriage is affirmed, then other forms of "marriage" will quickly be affirmed as well, such as polygamy, endogamy (the marriage of blood relatives) and child marriage. In fact, the policy guide of the American Civil Liberties Union calls for the legalization of polygamy, stating, "The ACLU believes that criminal and civil laws prohibiting or penalizing the practice of plural marriage violate constitutional protections for freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion, and privacy for personal relationships among consenting adults."<sup>13</sup>

Furthering the point that there is an agenda to redefine marriage, Michael Kinsley of the *Washington Post* writes, "The solution is to end the institution of government monopoly on marriage. And yes, if three people want to get married..., let 'em. If you and your government are implicated, what do you care?" ("Abolish Marriage: Let's Really Get Government Out of Our Bedrooms," *Washington Post* (July 3, 2004):A 23).

That is the hope of some in the movement (though perhaps not all) – that no one will care nor will anyone do anything – and to allow people to marry one, two, or more people, men, women, children, close relatives, animals, it doesn't matter what sort of perversion people want, they should be permitted to not only do whatever they want, but to also teach your children that it's none of their business and anyone who speaks out against it in public would be considered a bigoted homophobe and could someday be charged with a hate crime. Redefining marriage is a part of the agenda.

It is obvious, many inroads have been made by homosexual advocates and the issue is not merely about whether or not gays should be allowed to marry. This seismic shift has caused ripple effects that have touched many churches and individuals and the thinking of the masses particularly the younger generation. So it's important to have a Biblical mindset when it comes to these issues. As 2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us: "**We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...**"

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<sup>11</sup> Alan Sears and Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003) 52.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Bedard, "Clinton Urges School Diversity Training," *Washington Times* (Nov 11, 1997):A1, quoted in "Family News From Dr. James Dobson," *Newsletter* (June 1998):3.

<sup>13</sup> Erwin Lutzer, *The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage* (Chicago: Moody, 2004) 29.

Now that we've taken a brief look at the history, inroads, and agenda of the homosexual movement, we want to look at God's perspective. What does the Bible say about marriage?

## 2. Biblical Portrait of Marriage

When we look at what marriage *is* as well as its *purposes*, it's essential that we look at how God defines marriage. Any other definition and purpose of marriage based upon *societal* norms, or *cultural* acceptance, or *legal* definitions, is doomed to cultural changes as well as moral and social failure. Arguing *ONLY* on the basis of *cultural tradition* or *potential consequences* – as important as those are – will never compare to the intentions and directives given by God in His divine and enduring Word.

**FIRST - Procreation:** Our portrait of marriage is given in the opening pages of the Bible in the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all that it contained. He created man in Genesis 1:27-28, “<sup>27</sup> God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

This creative act happened BEFORE the fall in Genesis 3 when sin polluted all of creation and provides for us the divine perspective and intention of God. The purpose is found in Genesis 1:28: **Be fruitful and multiply**. The command was for procreation. Adam and Eve were directed to procreate and in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is always considered a blessing to procreate. That's not the only purpose of marriage, but certainly, that was a part of God's design and purposes. Even in the animal kingdom, when Noah was commanded to load the ark in Genesis 7, God said, “<sup>2</sup> You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, **a male and his female**; and of the animals that are not clean two, **a male and his female**; <sup>3</sup> also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, **male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth**. <sup>4</sup> For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.” <sup>5</sup> Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him. <sup>6</sup> Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. <sup>7</sup> Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. <sup>8</sup> Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, <sup>9</sup> **there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah**.

God's intention for people as well as for the animal kingdom was for procreation. Again, this is not the only purpose of marriage and it does not mean that people who cannot have children are not in the will of God, but it does show God's original purpose and plan for Adam and Eve to be fulfilled for mankind.

**SECOND – Heterosexual and monogamous:** God's portrait of marriage is that it be heterosexual and monogamous. We observe from Genesis, that in the creation, God created *one man* and *one woman*. He did not create another man, a group of people, or a child for Adam. God created one woman for one man. After the fall, man perverted God's purposes through

polygamy, bigamy, concubines, divorce, as well as homosexuality, fornication, and all kinds of immorality. But since the creation, it was always one man for one woman. The idea of a one-woman man is reiterated in the Pastoral Epistles in regard to those who would aspire to be an Elder in the Church. The leaders of the church were to be one-women men or the “Husband of one wife.” It doesn’t say, the “husband of one partner” or “the husband of one person” or “the husband who is fully committed to someone else.” It says, “the husband of one wife.”

That idea is further supported in the giving of the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 10 commandments in Exodus 20. It was to “Honor your father and mother” not “Honor your fathers” or your “two mothers” or your “Parents.” God’s command is that everyone is to show honor to their father and their mother – which of course has implications in the arena of whether or not homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children.

**THIRD – Analogy to Christ & Church:** God’s portrait of marriage between a man and a woman is used as an analogy between Christ and His church in Ephesians 5:25, “**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.**” In fact, in Ephesians 5:31, Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24, **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** Once again, there is the reference to “father and mother” and man and wife. Christ is not marrying Himself nor is the church married to herself. The Biblical portrait of marriage is between one man and one woman, analogous to Christ and His church.

**Conclusion:** *Same-sex marriage is **not** a part of God’s design for marriage nor has it ever been even before the fall.* Holland notes, “**After a survey of the church’s traditional position on homosexuality from the church fathers to the modern church, Richard Lovelace concludes, “Until recently, the public posture of all sectors of the church toward homosexuality, even including liberal Protestantism, has rarely diverged from the traditional, negative stance. Homosexuals have been (at least theoretically) welcome in the church if they are repentant and sexually inactive, but active homosexuality has been regarded either as sin or, at the least, as a contagious illness”** (Richard F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality: How Should Christians Respond?* [Eugene, Ore.: Resource Publications, 2002 ] 29). – (Footnote, p. 221, TMSJ, Fall 2008)

It is important to understand the times in which we live. We live in a country and culture whose morality has been rapidly *devolving*. What was once unacceptable and unthinkable just 50 years ago (whether it be co-habitation, pornography, fornication, or homosexuality), became debatable and today is now more normative than ever. From the public policy to educational institutions, the moral anchors of our society have continued to erode and sin has increased.

**Application:** Let me encourage you to pray that God would cause us to understand the times in which we live...to love the Word of God...to teach His Word to our children...and to take a stand for righteousness in whatever venue God has called you to. We’ve seen: A Brief Sampling of Homosexuality’s Impact, Biblical Portrait of Marriage, and next week, we will look

specifically at a Biblical Perspective of Homosexuality, Arguments & Answers to Common Objections, Appropriate Responses to our Culture