

Homosexuality, Marriage, & The Bible, Part II

Various Scriptures by Dr. Joe Lum

1. A Biblical Perspective of Homosexuality
2. Biblically Ministering to Homosexuals

Introduction: Last week, we looked at a *sampling* of various inroads that advocates of Homosexuality have gained in the areas of language, changes in counseling, public policies, schools, nationally and internationally, and even the church. We also looked at the Biblical portrait of God’s intention for marriage – that it would be between one man and one woman. And I want to re-emphasize that it’s not just a political issue or a social issue. It’s a Biblical issue that’s important for us to understand, be informed, and be equipped to communicate to others God’s intention for marriage.

Some believe that they are inoculated from the issue and effects. After all, they may reason, why not let them do whatever they want to do – as long as it doesn’t affect me. But it’s not isolated to gay marriage or gay rights. In many ways it affect everyone. This issue, for example, affects your children who are in schools where they may see gay-themed books or are read books like “What can you do with two Mommies” or “My mommy is a boy” or “A fire engine for Ruthie” and you may never know what your children are hearing, learning, and being exposed to from other children. It affects your older students who are confronted with this issue – even if you send them to a “Christian college”. Just last Thursday, an article was on the front page of MSNBC.com entitled:

Underground gay group emerges, shaking evangelical Christian college

LA MIRADA, Calif. -- On the same day President Obama became the first U.S. president to come out in support of same-sex marriage, a group of students announced the presence of the "Biola Queer Underground" at this small evangelical university, touching off a highly-charged debate about Christianity and homosexuality.

The group launched a website and posted flyers around the Biola University campus May 9 with the following message: "We want to bring to light the presence of the LGBTQ community at Biola. Despite what some may assume, there are Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, and Queers at Biola. We are Biola's students, alumni, employees, and fellow followers of Christ. We want to be treated with equality and respected as another facet of Biola's diversity."

Biola has a code of standards that includes prohibitions on sex outside of marriage and same-sex relationships: Sex is "designed by God to be expressed solely within a marriage between a husband and wife," according to Biola's student handbook...¹

It’s imperative for parents to clearly and consistently teach their children the Word of God – and not merely “take them to church” and expect that one hour for one week is sufficient. There is the personal responsibility to teach your children the Word of God.

¹ <http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/24/11833663-underground-gay-group-emerges-shaking-evangelical-christian-college?lite>, accessed 5/24/2012

The issue is a very pertinent issue to our day and age as there has been a greater and greater acceptance in our culture of those who have a homosexual lifestyle. There is an assertive effort by some homosexual advocates to change our entire culture and how we view homosexuality. Professor Alex Montoya of The Master's Seminary notes: "What Christians in American need to know is that the homosexual community has an organized agenda to change the moral fabric of American society. This organized effort has been well document[ed] by David Kupelian in his *The Marketing of Evil*, an expose of Marshal Kirk and Hunter Madision's book, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear And Hatred of Gays in the '90's*. A more recent book is *The Agenda: The Homosexual Plan to Change America* by Rev. Louis P. Sheldon...In "The Overhauling of Straight America," Kirk and Pill offer these five strategies:

- Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible
- Portray gays as victims, not as aggressive challengers
- Give protectors a just cause
- Make gays look good
- Make the victimizers look bad."²

It is an effort to change our perspective of homosexuality and, as polls suggest, it has changed quite a bit in the past two decades. Our world changes, our culture changes, our society changes, but the Word of God and God's truth never changes. Today, I'd like to present some of the key texts that address the subject of homosexuality and mention some of the misinterpretations given by advocates of homosexuality in order to support their viewpoint. It's not my intention to present an apologetic or explain in detail the reasons behind their misinterpretations, you can go online or read books for more in-depth studies. But I do want to let you know what their misinterpretations are so that you are not surprised when homosexual advocates promote some alternative explanation for the clear passages of the Bible.

Secondly, I'd like to suggest some thoughts when it comes to ministering to those who are homosexuals. How can we, as Christians, respond to those who are homosexual.

Definition: Before we look at specific texts, it was brought to my attention last week that it might be helpful to distinguish whether a person is homosexual because of their "lifestyle or practice" or because of their "inclinations or orientation." It's important to understand issues in Biblical terms with a Biblical framework. And the perspective that I take is the perspective I believe the Bible makes which is *a homosexual is one who "engages in, practices, or lives in the lifestyle of one who is homosexual either in their outward life and / or inward heart actions."* In other words, one's "inclination" or "orientation" (as the world would define it) is an indication of their "degree of temptation" – that they are more *tempted* to engage in that sin. Just like an alcoholic may be more 'inclined' and have a strong draw towards hard liquor and desire to get drunk, an alcoholic can resist that temptation and not become involved in drunkenness.

² Cited in She Idon, *The Agenda* 48.

It's important to understand that the Bible distinguishes a "temptation" on the one hand, and "sin" on the other hand. James 1:13-15 says, ¹³ "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

And it's important to note that God is just as concerned with what fills the heart as He is with outward actions. In Mathew 5:27-29, ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Simply because someone may not *engage* in immorality *outwardly*, it does not make it right *if their heart and mind dwells on sin inwardly*.

When someone gives *into* their temptation it is sinful – whether it is stealing, coveting, or immorality and if one does it inwardly in their heart, it is also sinful.

So, rather than using the world's psychological labels, it is more helpful to define things Biblically. Someone is a homosexual who "*engages in, practices, or lives in the lifestyle of one who is homosexual either in their outward life and / or inward heart actions.*" A person is not characterized by their *temptation* (i.e. their inclinations) but rather by their inward or outward actions.

When Martin Luther was talking about impure thoughts, he said, "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

Some think that they can indulge in sinful thoughts and be innocent, but as 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us, "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart."

Now, I'd like to present some of the key Biblical texts related to homosexuality in the Bible and inform you of some of the misinterpretations that have been given by advocates of homosexuality.

1. A Biblical Perspective of Homosexuality

a. Genesis 19:1-11

v. 5, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."

The Hebrew word "relations" can have a range of meanings from "to know" in the general sense such as *to have information* or *understand someone*...all the way "*to have sexual relations with.*" Now, it is *not* the idea that the men in Sodom simply wanted to make friends with these angels and socialize. There's really no dispute that the men of the city had sinful

intentions. In fact, Lot knew their intentions as well and he foolishly offers his two daughters to them and says that they have had no ‘relations’ with another man – same word. Furthermore, Lot says, “do not act wickedly” (v. 7). He *knew* that their intentions were wicked. The sin of Sodom became known in our language as “sodomy.”

In fact, their sinful desires were so strong and their homosexual desire so dominating that *even after they were blinded*...v. 11 tells us, “¹¹They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, **both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.**

That is shocking – the drive of their sexual desires, even after being blinded drove them to grope for the doorway! They didn’t run off screaming that they were blind, but they *continued* to look for the doorway until they were weary!

According to homosexual advocates, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah doesn’t relate to their immorality, it refers to the sin of “**inhospitality**” OR another interpretation is that the men of the city were suspicious of the angels that Lot protected and wanted to humiliate them through sexual abuse. In either case, advocates of homosexuality believe that this was not a condemnation of homosexuality in general. But 2 Peter 2:6-8 tells us, “⁶ **and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;** ⁷ **and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men** ⁸ (for by what he saw and heard *that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds*),

“Unprincipled” in the NASB refers to “lack of morals” or is translated “lawless” or “wicked” men. In other words, *ungodly people* ought to take note of Sodom and Gomorrah (not because they were inhospitable), but because they were led by their own sensual conduct and their wickedness as immoral men. For their homosexual sin, God destroyed them.

b. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13

Other key passages are found in Leviticus.

Leviticus 18:22, “**You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.**”

Leviticus 20:13, “**If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.**”

In the Mosaic law, homosexuality is clearly condemned as an abomination and worthy of death in the OT. Homosexual advocates say, however, this has to do with *temple prostitution* and not long-term committed homosexual relationships. They get that misinterpretation, not from the plain reading of scripture, but from cultural sources and they read that back into the text. There’s nothing in the text that suggests that’s the case though – that Moses had in mind ‘temple prostitution.’

Advocates of homosexuality will also suggest that King David and Saul’s son Jonathan were more than just good friends...they believe the two of them had a gay relationship. I’m not

going to take the time to go into their misinterpretations, but suffice it to say once again advocates will read things *into* the text and will convolute a godly friendship reading sexual overtones into the Biblical text.

c. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

In the NT, another clear passage is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “**Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**”

Take note that there is a *clear warning* here at the very beginning of this list: “**Do not be deceived!**” There will be those that want to convince you or some teaching that you come across that will tempt you to think that people such as found in 1 Corinthians 6 will be saved. Don’t be fooled into thinking that all of these people whose lifestyle is reflective and characterized by sin will have eternal life and inherit the kingdom of God! You *cannot* be a practicing fornicator, one of lives a life of drunkenness, or a thief, or serial adulterer and be saved. Nor can anyone say, “Well, I really don’t know...you know, who am I to judge a promiscuous fornicator as to whether or not they are saved?” While that may sound diplomatic and inoffensive, the preface is clear – don’t be deceived. *None* of them will be saved!

How do homosexuals get around this passage? They take “effeminate” to refer to those who are ‘morally weak, vain, fearful and self-indulgent people’. They also take the term ‘homosexual’, in their view, to refer to one who is *abusive or forceful in their relationship*. In other words the homosexual advocate would say that it is not *what* they do, but *how they practice it*. Once again, they read into the text a nuance that is simply not there! If that were the case, then why would it apply only to homosexuals and not to heterosexuals? There are many more abusive heterosexuals than homosexuals. Would they not also be listed then?

It would be like saying “swindling someone is fine as long as *they never know* they’re being taken” or “just don’t get *too* drunk.” There’s nothing in the text that says, it’s wrong when an action is *extreme*. It’s sinful whether it is extreme or not. So, do not be deceived!

d. Romans 1:18ff

One of the key passages, however, is Romans 1 which we read this morning. There’s a progression of the rejection of God from the suppression of the truth (v. 18), to not honoring him (v. 21), to idolatry in worshipping animals (v. 23) and other created things. God gave people over to impurity (v. 24) and then to degrading passions (v. 26). What happened? “**for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**”

One of the major reasons homosexuals use to justify their lifestyle is that, for them, *it's not a choice* – rather, *it's natural* for them to feel the way they do. They may say, “Well, it's natural to me. God made me gay and this is how I've always felt. Ever since I was young, I always knew I was different.” That is not uncommon to hear. However, simply because someone *feels* that it's ‘*natural*’ to them, doesn't mean that it's right nor does it make it right.

If we followed that line of thinking which says, “That's how I was born” or “This is what feels most natural to me” or “I'm inclined that way so it must be okay because God created me that way” – we'd really ALL be self-justified to be and do whatever we want to be based upon how we *feel*. Someone could then say, “Well, I'm born selfish”, “It's natural for me to be proud”, or “I've always stolen things from a very young age” so it must be acceptable because that's how God made me. Or a drunk driver being pulled over by a cop and then saying to the officer, “You can't give me a ticket nor can you impose your self-righteous moral laws upon me because I was naturally predisposed to alcohol from birth through my alcoholic parents – and here's the science behind it!” What do you think that cop will do? Write a ticket!

Our *feelings, inclinations, or tendencies* **do not** determine what is right from what is wrong. What is the standard of right from wrong? The Word of God.

You hear a similar line of reasoning from people who commit adultery. They say, “How can something that *feels* right be so wrong?” Or, “It's okay for me to cheat on my spouse because God wouldn't want me to be unhappy in a marriage I don't like!”

Why is it wrong? It's not a matter of how you *feel*, it's a matter of what God *says*.

Do you know what God's concerned about? He's concerned about your HOLINESS and through HOLINESS, you will have true and lasting JOY.

It's the Bible that tells us what is natural and unnatural, not our FEELINGS. Homosexuality is *unnatural* according to the Bible. This is so very important to answering those who argue along the lines of how they *feel* or what their *tendencies* are or how they were *born* as the basis of right and wrong.

The question is: How do people *respond* to their ‘tendencies’ or their ‘temptations’ to act out their homosexual desires either in their heart or through their actions? **THEY CHOOSE.** People **CHOOSE** to sin. They choose to dwell on lustful thoughts, they choose to have homosexual relationships, they choose their lifestyle....

It's not an excuse to say, “It's how I was born,” “It's my personality,” or “It is how I am” as if that makes it **RIGHT**.

Everyone has different areas in their lives in which they are tempted. Everyone has weaknesses that they may be more susceptible to – some to anger, some to covet, some to love money, some to gluttony, some to drunkenness, and others to homosexual behavior. What tempts one person may not tempt another person. **BUT** when we give into temptation, we have made a **CHOICE**, and that **CHOICE** is to **CHOOSE** to **SIN** against God. That is why homosexuality, defined as behavior, is a **CHOICE** to sin against God. A thief is a thief, not because he is *tempted* to steal, but because he *chooses to covet* and *chooses to steal*.

In Romans 1, the passage testified very clearly that homosexuality is a sin and is a part of God's judgment of abandonment. The point of Romans 1:18ff is that if people persistently reject and abandon God, God leaves them to their own devices.

In the Psalm 81:11-12, ¹¹“But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me. ¹²“So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.”

In Romans, God gave them over in an indirect sense by simply *withdrawing His restraining hand*. In another direct sense, God *gave them over to judgment*. Mankind, because of the “*lusts of their hearts*” goes deeper into sin and depravity.

That depravity is illustrated in degrading passions, ²⁶“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

The Bible very clearly states that homosexuality is a sin. It is not natural but is the result of God giving people over to their own sinful degrading passions.

Understanding that this lifestyle is a sin, how are we to minister to them? What do we do when someone comes to us or “comes out of the closet?” What do we do when our children ask us about it? Here are some practical suggestions.

2. Biblically Ministering to Homosexuals

1. **Respond with LOVE and RESPECT:** Very rarely does someone respond well to yelling, screaming, and hateful abusive language; nor does it help to avoid interacting with them at all. Love & respect doesn't mean that we agree with or affirm their lifestyle, but as I mentioned last week, as Christians, simply because we may disagree does not mean that we cannot show them love and respect. It's important as Christians to understand that Biblical love is different than the world's view of love. Our culture's view of love is self-centered immoral love as is often portrayed in the media. Worldly love seeks what it can get and tolerates everything – good and evil, moral and immoral, and worldly love embraces compromise. But *Biblical love wants the BEST for someone else and the very best for someone else is that they might embrace and follow God for His glory*. When Biblical love sees someone walking into oncoming traffic or sees someone with a terminal illness that they do not know about, Biblical love impels someone to tell them the truth and to redirect their lives so that it will be abundantly blessed by God. Biblical love speaks the truth because it's motivated by godly love. It doesn't look at others as the enemy, but as someone who is lost and caught up in sin. Biblical love responds with the desire to help them see God's way.

2. **Be Clear that Homosexuality and Lesbianism is a SIN:** Our culture and society wants to redefine it and make it acceptable. Polls, especially among the younger generation, see it as more normative and not as unnatural. The problem is that if people do not realize that it is sinful, there will not be any need to change. If people think that God is fine with it and they are fine with it, then they will continue to live in sin, be lost, not filled with true joy, and separated from God. In fact, many of the “labels” our society uses redefines many issues people struggle with as “illnesses” or “personality traits” or “psychological differences,” or non-issues. Therefore, people simply need to ‘accept themselves’, ‘forgive themselves,’ they blame others, or take drugs. Whatever it is, contemporary and even much Christian counseling doesn’t call sinful things as sinful. When they don’t identify sin, there is no call to repentance, forgiveness, and consequently, no freedom and fullness of the Holy Spirit. So, be clear that it is SIN. Why? Because we *love them and want God’s best for their lives*.
3. For ourselves, **humbly remember that we were once ex-sinners as well.** In 1 Corinthians 6, there is a long list of sinners who would not inherit the kingdom of God and at the end, the apostle Paul says to the church in v. 11, “**Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**” The church was filled with ex-adulterers, ex-thieves, ex-effeminate, ex-homosexuals, etc...and we were all ex-sinners as well. But by the grace of God, we were saved – nothing to boast about, nothing to be proud about, nothing to our own credit. We still sin, but now, we have the power to live victoriously in Christ. And when we remember that, we will have more compassion and humility.
4. If they are a professing believer *struggling with the temptation of homosexuality*, help them **to see their identity as a Christian** and not be defined by the temptations they face. One of the problems we face is that often we see ourselves and define ourselves by the problems we face. “Oh, I’m a worry-wart,” “Oh, I’m an obsessive compulsive” or whatever other label we choose to adopt which then becomes the dominating thought that defines us. But if we see ourselves and Christians, as children of God indwelt by the Spirit of God, who have been blessed with the Word of God, who have access to God and the POWER of the Holy Spirit of God within us, THEN we begin to see our lives change. The book of Ephesians is all about who we are in Jesus Christ. Too many Christians live as poor beggars when we have been given the wealth and power of Christ who can change our lives.
5. Encourage them with **Biblical Hope**. As with many other sins, there is guilt and discouragement. But just as much as the Word of God clearly and strongly says that it’s sinful, there is also the powerful message of Hope. For those who come to God believing that God loves them and sent His Son to die on the cross for their sins who was raised to life after three days in the grave, if they come to God in repentance of sin knowing there’s nothing they could ever do to gain eternal life, God offers to them that free gift of salvation.

When someone is saved, it doesn't mean that the temptations will all disappear; but it does mean that God has given to them the resources necessary to overcome those temptations and tendencies over time. They can find victory – not by trying harder on their own, but by reliance on God. With God, there is always hope and there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). There is true hope.

6. **Pray for them:** Sexual immorality, in its many forms, often has a grip upon the heart unlike other sins. It's telling that of all the sins that man commits, it is homosexuality and lesbianism that Paul writes about in God "giving them over" to in Romans 1. But just as "God gave them over", God can give grace and retrain them from further sin. It seems to me that a lot of Christians spend a lot of time opposing homosexuals, but little time praying for them. I'm not saying that opposing them is wrong, but it will ultimately be the power of God that will change people, and we need to pray. I've read stories and testimonies and where many who are engaged in a homosexual lifestyle are hurting people. And it's no wonder when they've turned away from God, there is always pain. But God can heal, restore, and make holy once again, just as He has done for all of us.

Show them love and respect, be clear that it is sinful, humbly understand we are sinners as well, help them to see their identity in Christ, share with them the hope that is in Christ, and lastly, pray for them.

Conclusion: In his book *Washed and Waiting*, Wesley Hill shares about his struggle with same-sex attraction and his desire to obey Christ and remain celibate. He writes about a time when he felt the world was caving in around him:

"I had been living in Minneapolis for only a few months, and I felt burdened—physically so, at times—by loneliness, confusion, and fear. During a brief visit to Wheaton, Illinois ... I arranged to meet with my good friend Chris, and on a cold winter afternoon I told him how I was feeling and asked for his help.

Out of all the things Chris said to me in response to that day, one sticks out. With compassion in his voice, he said, "Imagine yourself standing in the presence of God, looking down from heaven on the earthly life you're about to be born into, and God says to you, 'Wes, I'm going to send you into the world for sixty or seventy or eighty years. It will be hard. In fact, it will be more painful and confusing and distressing than you can now imagine. You will have a thorn in your flesh, a homosexual orientation that is the result of your entering a world that sin and death have broken, and you may wrestle with it all your life. But I will be with you. I will be watching every step you take, guiding you by my Spirit, supplying you with grace sufficient for each day. And at the end of your journey, you will see my face again, and the joy we share then will be born out of the agonies you faithfully endured by the power I gave you. And no one will take that joy ... away from you.'"

"Wesley," Chris said, looking in me in the eye, "Would you say yes to the journey if you had had that conversation with God?" I nodded "But you *have* had it, in a sense. God *is* the author of your story. He is watching, supplying you with his Spirit moment by moment. And he will raise your body from the dead to live with him and all the great company of the redeemed forever Can you keep walking the lonely road if you remember he's looking on and delights to help you persevere?"

Wesley Hill comments: "Your struggle isn't a mindless, unobserved string of random disappointments, I heard Chris say It *will* be worth it. The joy then will be worth the struggle now. In the end, I think that is how I am learning to live faithfully [as a celibate person who struggles with same-sex attraction]."

Wesley Hill, Washed and Waiting (Zondervan, 2010), pp. 78-79

With God there is always hope if we understand that the route to that hope is repentance from sin and a turning in faith and trust in Christ with the love and encouragement of those who are willing to speak truth into the lives of all who struggle with homosexuality.