

Witnessing to the Joy and Sanctity of Traditional Marriage
A Response to the Gay Community and its Defenders
Bible Study by Rev. Daniel Krueger © March, 2004
LESSON 2 ~ DISPELLING MYTHS ~ BIBLE TWISTING

BIBLE TWISTING
“Leviticus”

There are several myths and distortions in discussing homosexuality that may need to be dispelled before one is able to have a fruitful conversation on the real spiritual issues involved. Some of these myths involve the interpretation of the Bible passages which condemn this activity, and the distortions that even Christians will use to discount these verses.

Jesus once said, (Mark 2:17 NIV) *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* In order for us to rightly diagnose people with God's law there needs to be a clear understanding of what the law says. People will not seek the healing power of the Gospel if the words of the great physician are twisted to tell them they are healthy.

Several books attempting to make homosexuality sound biblical have been written. One such book is "The Church and the Homosexual" by Father John J. McNeill" (Beacon Press: 1976). Another is "What The Bible Really Says About Homosexuality" by Father Daniel Helminiak (Alamo Square Press: 2000). In this section we will examine the texts surrounding homosexuality and how their words are being twisted to alter their meaning.

THE TEXT

Read Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

What activity is condemned in these passages?

What is the penalty for such an act?

THE GAY COMMUNITY RESPONSE

These passages occur within the "Holiness Code" section of Leviticus. The purpose of the code was to enforce purity among the Jews who lived amongst the Canaanite culture. In other words, this code was intended to shape identity, not speak about morality or ethics.

Dietary laws, what one could wear, and a host of other rules were in place to keep the children of Israel unstained from the cultures around them. The two "abomination" texts fall in the Holiness Code and are part of this system of keeping pure from

foreign contamination. The same code condemns eating shellfish (Lev 11:10) and wearing cloths of blended material (Lev 19:19). Clearly, the only interpretation is that Leviticus forbids male-male sex because of cultural and religious implications, and not because of the morality of such acts.

THE BIBLICAL REALITY

These Bible passages are correctly described as part of the "Holiness Code", but being found in this portion of Scripture does not mean that all things forbidden or commanded here are merely a matter of cultural purity. For instance, just prior to the Leviticus 19:19 passage on the wearing of cloth from blended material is perhaps one of the most often quoted passages of Scripture (although most people believe Jesus was the first to say it).

Read Leviticus 19:18

The appearance of this passage within the "Holiness Code" does not discount the moral force of this passage. The question involved in interpreting these passages is "what criteria may be used to separate passages dealing with Jewish ceremonial law from moral law." One standard answer to this question is whether or not the actions are condemned both in the New Testament and Old Testament. Another way of examining this question is to look at the penalties ascribed to the behaviors.

Within this section of Scripture there are a varying number of penalties assigned to specific acts. Certain acts have no clear cut penalty. The text merely states what one should and should not do. In other places various penalties are described. The penalties may be financial, or may mean that some one is put out of the community. Certain acts make one unfit to perform religious acts at the temple. The most severe penalty is death, and is only prescribed for certain transgressions.

- 1) Lev 20:2 ~ giving a child to Molech (that is, offering up a child for sacrifice)
- 2) Lev 20:9 ~ Cursing one's parents
- 3) Lev 20:10 ~ Adultery with another man's wife
- 4) Lev 20:11 ~ Sleeping with your father's wife
- 5) Lev 20:12 ~ Sleeping with your daughter-in-law
- 6) Lev 20:13 ~ A man lying with a man in the same way a man lies with a woman

- 7) Lev 20:15 ~ A man having sexual relations with an animal
- 8) Lev 20:16 ~ A woman having sexual relations with an animal
- 9) Lev 20:27 ~ Being or consulting with mediums or spiritists
- 10) Lev 24:16 ~ Blaspheming the Lord
- 11) Lev 24:17 & 21 ~ Murder
- 12) Lev 27:29 ~ Interfering with one devoted to destruction (these were either the enemies of Israel that God commanded to be destroyed or individuals condemned by the community for grievous offenses)

As may be easily seen from the list of offenses given above, they fall into four general categories. Destruction of human life (1, 11); rebellion against parents (2), rebellion against God (9,10,12), or abandoning the created model of relationships between man and woman (3,4,5,6,7,8). In summarized form all of these classes of sins are identified within the framework of the ten commandments

The ten commandments are usually viewed as the summary of God's moral code. The fifth commandment says that we should not kill. The fourth commandment requires children to honor their father and mother. The sixth commandment forbids adultery, and the first commandment says we shall have no other Gods.

The actions which merit the death penalty in Leviticus do not simply violate ritual purity, but are a violation of the community which God created. Of the death penalty acts, the gay community would be hard pressed to argue that killing children or our fellow man is not a moral offense. Blaspheming God or turning from him to mediums or spiritists is clearly an offense to God. Adultery by sleeping with our father's wife, or daughter-in-law, is clearly destructive of any human community.

While our modern culture may argue that the penalties for these offenses seem severe, it is impossible to say that these are not sins and "moral" offenses. Yet, from this list of death penalty crimes clearly identifiable as "moral offenses" they would exclude one saying that it is not really a sin, but merely constitutes an act of ritual impurity, like wearing a fabric made of two types of cloth or the eating of shellfish.

The Biblical reality is that God viewed homosexual relationships as a rebellion against his design for creation. Divorce is also viewed as a similar rebellion, for it breaks the bonds of the community God designed for us.

Read Genesis 2:22-24 and Mark 10:4-10

What is the basic created design for human relationships?

Does Jesus see creation as the governing model for human relationships today?

While it is accurate to describe the Old Testament prohibitions against homosexuality as part of the "Holiness Code" in Leviticus, this code clearly includes moral prohibitions and admonitions. While our modern culture may disagree with the severity of the death penalty, these specific crimes lie clearly in the area of moral, rather than ritual behavior.

BIBLE TWISTING
"Romans"

THE TEXT

Read Romans 1:18-32

According to verses 18-21, has God given sufficient evidence of himself to eliminate excuses for not knowing him?

In verses 21-23 how does rebellion against God manifest itself in real life?

In verses 24-25 what is the relationship between the truth about God and our sexuality?

In verses 26-27 what actions characterize one who has forgotten God?

In verses 28-31 what additional actions are characteristic of those who have forgotten God?

Would you classify the actions in verses 28-31 as sinful acts or acts of ritual impurity?

According to verse 32 what penalty do all these actions merit?

THE GAY COMMUNITY RESPONSE

There are a multitude of attempts to discount this passage. The following is a sampling, but not necessarily complete, catalog of such attempts.

- 1) The pagan religions that surrounded Israel frequently practiced some form of cult prostitution, usually centered on the theme of

fertility. Paul in this passage is mainly concerned with idolatry, and the homosexual acts committed in the context of idol worship. The proponents of this position then argue that since homosexuality today is not associated with religious observances, this passage does not speak to them.

- 2) Paul is speaking to cultures that rejected the natural knowledge of God available by the eye of reason and turned to worship other, visible, pagan gods. They are led into homosexuality through the worship of pagan gods.

Paul's claim about the origin and significance of homosexual desire does not apply to people who did not reject an earlier belief in God and turn to pagan gods. Therefore, homosexuals who are Christians or Christians who come to realize their homosexuality are not condemned by this passage.

- 3) "Unnatural" (para physin) in these passages does not refer to violation of so-called laws of nature, but rather implies action contradicting one's own nature. It would be "unnatural" (para physin) for a person today with a lesbian or gay sexual orientation to attempt to live a heterosexual lifestyle.
- 4) verse 26 does not refer to female same sex acts but to some kind of heterosexual practices that were considered taboo, unusual or unclean, (contrary to the natural)
- 5) when Paul calls certain passions "degrading" in Romans 1:26, he is not saying they are wrong; he is merely saying that they do not enjoy social approval. In Romans, homosexuality serves merely as an instance of Gentile "uncleanness," judged by Jewish standards. Paul introduces this "uncleanness" precisely to make the point that such matters have no importance in Christ.

THE BIBLICAL REALITY

Several biblical issues are raised in the attempt to reinterpret Romans 1:18-32. One issue is the relationship between sexuality, sexual orientation and our understanding of God. In the Gay community's interpretation of these Bible passages Paul is not directly condemning the homosexual act, but the who, when, or where of the act.

Using their methods of interpretation, Paul's condemnation is for **heterosexuals** who commit the act, or for homosexual who do engage in sex as part of worship of idols, but Paul is not condemning all homosexuals. In confronting this logic it is important to remember the nature of Paul's apostolic ministry.

Paul is the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8; 1 Tim 2:7). It Paul who scolds Peter when he comes to Antioch and refuses to eat with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14). This act, on Peter's part, would "force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs" (Gal 2:14).

Paul is the great advocate of our freedom under the Gospel, and battles against those who would insist that Gentiles must be circumcised. The church in assembly agrees with Paul, and sends a letter to all congregations stating that Gentiles should not be compelled to be circumcised.

Read Acts 15:19-21

What actions must gentiles still comply with when they turn to God?

Eating strangled meat, which would be meat that has not had its blood drained, was not viewed by the early Christians or Jews as Mosaic law, but part of God's covenant with all people of the earth.

Read Genesis 9:1-4

Up until the time of the flood what were people allowed to eat?

What right does God give people after the flood with regard to eating?

What is forbidden to those who would eat meat?

In distinction from the animals, who begin eating their prey while they are still alive, man is supposed to kill before eating. Since this command was given to Noah long before Moses and Israel began, Jews viewed it as binding on all people, and so the early Christian church admonishes Gentile Christians to adopt this practice.

Eating food offered to idols is a subject that Paul addresses clearly in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, and possibly in Romans 14 as well. The issue of eating meat offered to idols was not simply a matter of Jew versus Gentile. Food offered to idols could become an offense to a Jew or Gentile and might cause them to fall because it implied worship of idols.

In the ancient Gentile world it was typical for meat sold in the market to have been offered in sacrifice to some idol. Some people could not disconnect that act of eating such meat from the worship of the idols that preceded it.

Similar debates still continue in our country today, even amongst non-Christians. For instance, in 1970s many individuals would refuse to own stock in companies that did business in South Africa. At that time South Africa was still racially divided.

Merely doing business in that country was viewed by many people as support of apartheid.

There are many religious denominations that condemn all drinking because of the rampant problems of alcoholism. At one time, though never official Missouri Synod doctrine, most Lutheran preachers would condemn dancing outright because of the activity which took place in dance halls.

Not eating food offered to idols was not simply an accommodation to Jewish sensibilities, but as Paul makes the case in Corinthians, it is an accommodation to a weak brother.

The third item mentioned in this letter granting freedom to the Gentiles is the prohibition against sexual immorality. Paul, the champion of freedom for the Gentiles from Jewish ritual, agrees with this inclusion. As we can see from all of Paul's writings, our sexual relationships have a direct bearing on our relationship with God.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

How does God regard our bodies?

Why is sexual immorality condemned?

Read Eph. 5:31-32; Isaiah 54:5; 62:5 Jer. 3:20, 31:32

Why would our sexuality have anything to do with understanding God?

Read 1 Thess 4:1-8

Where does Paul's instruction regarding sexual life styles come from?

Can we separate our sexual life style from our relationship with God?

Scripture very clearly links the institution of marriage between a man and a woman to the relationship of God and his people. This design is God's own creation. Living outside of this design is portrayed by Paul as a rejection of the designer himself whether or not such activity is connected to specific idol worship. Thus, Paul sees homosexuality as an act contrary to nature for it is contrary to God's design.

While Jesus himself does not directly speak about homosexuality, he very clearly makes marriage, a life long committed relationship between a man and a woman, the norm for all sexual relationships.

Read Matthew 19:3-12

According to Jesus, where does the institution of marriage between a man and a woman come from?

Why, according to Jesus, is divorce wrong?

According to verse 12, what options does Jesus offer for those who would live outside of the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman?

Fundamental to the gay community's interpretation of Romans is the idea that homosexuality is the natural state of some people. They say that for a homosexual to act heterosexual is in fact unnatural, and contrary to nature. Therefore, Paul could not possibly be addressing those who are "naturally oriented this way." We will discuss later the "myth" that homosexuality is a natural biological state, but from a biblical perspective such an idea is foreign to the facts of our creation. Paul could not conceive of a male or female as "naturally" homosexual.

The rest of Scripture views celibacy as the only state of marriage between a man and a woman.

Read Hebrews 13:4, 1 Cor 7:1-9

What is Scripture's answer to those who can not control their sexual passions?

To summarize, the early church never viewed sexual issues as a matter of Jewish ritual law, but as a subject which ruled all human behavior. Jesus, on the subject of marriage, saw celibacy as the only alternative to marriage between a man and woman. Jesus bases this rule on the manner in which we were created.

Paul, following the Old Testament language and teaching of Christ, sees marriage between man and woman as our natural created estate. This estate reflects the relationship of God to his people. Any act which violates marriage is portrayed as rejection of God, even when such acts are not associated with religious idolatry.

The gay community tries to escape the condemnation of Scripture by either relegating the relevant passages of Scripture to Jewish ritual law, or by suggesting that it only applies to people who are forced into homosexual acts, or to people who commit such acts in connection with religious idolatry. All the biblical evidence regarding marriage and sexual activity contradicts this point of view.

There are two other significant New Testament verses that relate to this subject.

BIBLE TWISTING

“1 Corinthians & 1 Timothy”

THE TEXT

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10

The NIV (New International Version) contains the terms “male prostitutes and homosexual offenders” in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and “perverts” in 1 Timothy 1:10. The Greek words are “malokos” translated as male prostitute and “arsenokoites” as either “homosexual offender” or “pervert”.

Arsenokoites is a strongly debated word, since it seems that Paul is the first one to use it in Greek literature. There is other evidence that Paul coined up to 179 new terms as he was bringing Christianity to a new audience.

Paul may have coined the term based on its use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The words “arsenos” and “koiten” occur in Lev. 20:13 which addresses homosexuality. “Arsen” means “man” and “koitai” means “beds.” A literal translation would be “man-bedder”.

THE GAY COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The phrase “arsenokoites” is undeniably centered in male sexual activity. The Gay community would contend that it refers to male-prostitution to other males, or male-molestation of children, or males selling themselves to females. Since the activity referred to is either prostitution or molestation of children, it is not the homosexual himself or herself that is being condemned.

THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE

The meaning of the Greek word “Arsenokoites” will remain somewhat debatable. Those who view homosexuality as outside of God’s will can produce good evidence that the word “homosexual” is as good a translation as any for this term. The real issue for us as Christians is not the precise meaning of this word, but understanding the purpose and role for which God created sexual activity.

Did God design sexual activity to take place between a man and a woman, or is God ambivalent to our sexual partners? Is there something unique about the love between a man and woman that is reflective of God’s love for us, or can that reflective love be duplicated in man to man and woman to woman relationships? The emphatic answer of Scripture to these questions is that the design of man and woman is unique. As we shall also see later, this uniqueness is reflected in the way we are biologically and emotionally affected when we abandon this model for love and sexual intimacy.

CONCLUSION

At every turn where sexuality is discussed in Scripture, the Bible condemns the use of sexuality outside of marriage. Marriage is defined both at creation and by Jesus as an institution which exists between a man and woman.

One of the primary functions of marriage is procreation. (Gen 1:22 NIV) “*God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.’*” We also learn from Scripture that the relationship between a man and woman in marriage is designed to help us understand more deeply the committed and sacrificial love that God has for us.

Even without a specific condemnation of homosexuality, no one can produce from Scripture a single passage which would condone any sexual act outside of the estate of man and woman in marriage traditional marriage. There is, however, a belief in our culture today that certain portions of our population do not have the option of enjoying traditional marriage. We are taught that certain people are designed differently by God, and that there is scientific evidence to back up this claim.

In order to dispel these myths our next lesson will focus more on the science and research behind the issue of homosexuality. The purpose of this is not only to dispel certain myths created by our modern culture, but to gain a deeper understanding of what may cause homosexual behavior.

There is great value in understanding the lifestyle and the causes of homosexuality. With this insight we are better equipped to share the gospel in a meaningful way with those people who feel trapped in this life style. In order to effectively share the Gospel we need to know where spirits have been wounded.

If your elbow is scraped it doesn’t help to rub salve on your knee. In the same way, the Gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be targeted to specific wounds in order for its healing power to work. Our next lesson helps us to understand the lifestyle so that we may better target the Gospel.