

Homosexuality and Same-Sex Attraction

May 5th, 2019

Intro:

Homosexuality is increasingly in the news and political debate

Beauty and the Beast remake

Chip and Joanna Gaines of Fixer Upper under fire in the fall for attending a church that teaches marriage is between a man and woman

World Vision changing and then reversing its policy on homosexuality

Same-sex marriage map – changes since 1990

<http://gregstoll.dyndns.org/marriagemap/>

Many states have declared same-sex marriage illegal in the constitution, many have overthrown and legalized.

Legalization of gay marriage in many states

Passage of marriage amendments in many states

National laws now passed legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide. Al Mohler argues that the battle for marriage has been lost. We are not in a negotiated surrender.

Mozilla Firefox pressured to fire their newly promoted CEO (as of March 24th, 2014). One site, OkCupid.com, has a message to firefox users on their homepage.

“Those who seek to deny love and instead enforce misery, shame, and frustration are our enemies, and we wish them nothing but failure.”

College student at another university denied RA position at his undergrad school because of his views on homosexuality

Recent years

Overthrow of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Apple removing the app for Exodus International from the app store

Methodist group in New Jersey sued for not allowing same sex marriages at property they owned

Christian doctors sued for not performing in vitro fertilization on a lesbian couple, even though they referred the clients to another doctor who was willing to perform the procedure.

Catholic charities in Massachusetts left the adoption service rather than be forced to adopt children out to homosexual couples

Seems like it will be the main avenue in which persecution and pressure will be placed on Christians in America.

So what should we believe and how should we respond to homosexuality and homosexuals?

1. What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Remember that Christian Ethics is prescriptive – it deals with what we ought to do, not merely what people do do – and it rests on the authority of the Bible.

Some argue, as John J. McNeill does, “Nowhere in the Scripture is there a clear condemnation of a loving sexual relationship between two gay persons.”¹⁴

Feinberg, John S. / Feinberg, Paul D. (2010-11-03). *Ethics for a Brave New World*, Second Edition (p. 311). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

They claim that the Word has been misinterpreted, that it has not been looked at through the correct cultural lens, etc.

Clarifying the Biblical view won’t convince or even matter to most people. However, it takes away the argument that the Bible is fine with homosexuality.

a. Genesis 19:1-11 – Sodom and Gomorrah

i. Traditional interpretation

1. Sodom and Gomorrah were judged for their rampant homosexual sin that culminated in the attempted gang rape of the angelic visitors.

ii. Alternative interpretations

1. Violation of the hospitality code

a. Support

- i. This demand to meet the angelic visitors grew out of Lot’s serious breach of hospitality rules. Lot was a resident alien, a sojourner. In return for protection by the city, he had certain obligations, some of which pertained to visitors. This incident arose in regard to those obligations.
- ii. Argued that *yada* should not be translated with a sexual component.
- iii. **Ezekiel 16:48-50** ⁴⁸ "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ "Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw *it*.

b. Doesn’t fit with the contextual use of *yada*

- i. The sexual understanding of *yāda’* in Gen 19:5 is supported by its use in the immediate context of the Sodom story (v. 8). In verse 8 the same verb has to mean “to have sexual relations with,” for it makes no sense to say Lot’s daughters weren’t acquainted with any men.

c. Doesn’t explain Lot’s actions

- i. In addition, if all the men of Sodom wanted was to investigate the visitors’ credentials, Lot’s offer of his daughters for sexual pleasure makes no sense. Why didn’t Lot just introduce his guests and demonstrate their good intentions?

d. Doesn’t align with Jude’s commentary on Sodom and Gomorrah

- i. **Jude 1:7** just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

2. Idolatry not homosexuality

a. Support

- i. **Deuteronomy 29:23** ²³ 'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.'
- ii. **Deuteronomy 29:24-25** ²⁴ "All the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' ²⁵ "Then *men* will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.'
- iii. **Deuteronomy 32:21, 32** 'They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. . . ³² "For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, And from the fields of Gomorrah;

- b. They were guilty of idolatry, but that doesn't mean that they weren't guilty of homosexuality.
- c. Other OT passages point to the idolatry of Sodom and Gomorrah, but that is not in the context of Genesis 19.

3. Homosexual gang rape

a. Support

- i. The men of the city clearly did try to forcibly sexually attack the visitors.

b. No indication that it would have been permissible if consensual

- i. Nowhere does the text even slightly hint that what the men of Sodom wanted to do would be permissible if only Lot's guests had consented. Moreover, this interpretation doesn't account for the fact that God's judgment fell upon two entire cities. Was homosexual rape a common practice and thus it brought this divine judgment? It could have been, but that isn't stated in the text.
- ii. The men of Sodom had taken Lot's daughters and had raped them, would there have been no judgment because they weren't the same sex as the rapists? If not, then we arrive at the strange idea that God really hates homosexual rape and will utterly destroy those who practice it, but he is less displeased by heterosexual rape.
- iii. Others argue it is an issue of objectification and power.

- 1. Judged for offering his daughter as replacements, showing his low view of women.

- iii. Clearest interpretation is that they were judged for prevalent homosexual activity that culminated in attempted rape of these angelic beings.

b. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13 – OT Law

- i. **Leviticus 18:22** 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.
- ii. **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.
 - 1. The Holiness Code contains God's demands for ordering the life of his covenant people Israel. This ordering purposed to set Israel apart from the immoral and idolatrous practices of her neighbors so that she might be fit to worship the true and living God (cf. Lev 18:3).
 - 2. Both parties involved are to be put to death – not an issue of rape.
- iii. Alternative interpretations
 - 1. Cultural prohibitions because of an association with pagan worship
 - a. Some want to make these cultural prohibitions because of homosexuality's association with pagan worship.
 - b. In the Leviticus Code incest, adultery, child sacrifice, bestiality, spiritism, and the cursing of one's parents are all prohibited. Only one act condemned in the Code had cultic or symbolic significance—child sacrifice—and it is condemned whether associated with religious worship or not. Child sacrifice was practiced in pagan religious rites, but it was wrong on two counts—in itself, and because of its association with idolatry.
 - 2. Not binding today because we are no longer under the law
 - a. Some argue that OT not binding on people today.
 - b. Just like the prohibitions against shellfish, mixed fibers in clothing, and others don't apply so this doesn't apply.
 - c. But NT repeats the same commands.

c. Romans 1:26-27 – Exchanging natural for unnatural

- i. **Romans 1:26-27** 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.
 - 1. Context – having bought into a lie about God's nature, they bought into a lie about their behavior and engaged in immorality, specifically homosexuality, but not limited to homosexuality.
- ii. Alternative interpretations and responses
 - 1. Only condemning homosexual behavior by those who are not "naturally" gay

- a. “unnatural” – heterosexuals engaging in homosexual acts but Paul didn’t know some people are born with that desire naturally so he condemned all homosexual behavior.
 - b. Anachronistic imposing of a later belief on the NT.
 - i. “What is not acceptable is to impose on it an interpretation that you admit Paul couldn’t possibly have intended and then claim that Paul isn’t really condemning homosexual behavior in this passage.” Feinberg
 - c. Paul links it to the rejection of God’s truth, not going against personal desires.
- 2. Idolatry not homosexuality that is the problem
 - a. Idolatry led to their homosexuality but the passage doesn’t say that idolatry is the only problem.
 - b. i.e. idolatry leads to coveting but that doesn’t mean coveting is only wrong because it is idolatrous. If you could covet in a non-idolatrous way it would still be wrong.
 - c. Rosario Butterfield, “Homosexuality isn’t causal, its consequential. From God’s point of view, homosexuality is an identity-rooted ethical outworking of a worldview transgression inherited by all through original sin.”
 - d. 1:18 – God’s wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness – also v. 26 says it is degrading passions and v. 27 says indecent acts
- 3. Problem is lust (v. 27) not sexual activity that grows out of love and devotion.
 - a. “First, in view of what we noted about how many partners male homosexuals typically have, promiscuity seems to be a usual part of male homosexuality. And it is highly dubious that those who are sexually promiscuous with hundreds of partners (as the figures show) act out of love, devotion, and commitment to all of them! Hence, even if one accepts the Balch/Fredrickson interpretation, current homosexual practices fall under Paul’s condemnation for all the lust they involve.” Feinberg

d. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – Inheriting the Kingdom

- i. **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.
- ii. Alternative interpretations
 - 1. These sexual sins aren’t really singled out as especially wicked and if we take this list seriously then no one would enter the kingdom of God since we all violate at least one of the categories.
 - a. Problem is that it does clearly show up as a sin, along with the others.

- b. Fails to see the point of the passage – we are washed, sanctified, and justified from this sin! Romans 6-7 show that we still struggle even with forgiven sin, but we need to be marked by repentance.
- 2. The terms refer to pederasty and prostitution, not mere homosexuality in general.
 - a. But the specificity doesn't fit with the general terms in the rest of the list
 - b. There is a specific greek word that describes pederasty (a young man who allows himself to be used in a homosexual sexual relationship), but he didn't use that word. He used a more general word.
- iii. In classical Greek, *malakos* (effeminate) is used of boys and men who allow themselves to be used homosexually and of those who play the part of the passive partner in homosexual intercourse.
- iv. In a list that includes the general term for sexual immorality (*pornos*) and other sins that are non-sexual in nature.
- v. Hope for change – such “were” some of you . . .
- vi. 1 Timothy 1:8-11 is similar – *arsenokoitai* and *pornos* for homosexuals in general and all sexual sin

e. Genesis 1-2

- i. Roots sexual relations in the unique relationship between man and woman as husband and wife, repeatedly referred to by Jesus (Matt. 19:4-6) and Paul (Ephesians 5:31)

2. What about studies that show that homosexuality is genetic and/or biological?

Is there a biological cause of homosexuality?

Beginning in 1993 National Institute of Health indicated that they might be onto a “gay gene” that made homosexuality genetically determined.

Goes in line with many homosexuals who say they would never have chosen such a difficult lifestyle so it must be genetic or biological, not an issue of choice.

- a. Are there brain differences?
 - i. One study by LeVay and another by Swaab and Hofman - Structure that is believed to control some hormonal and biological functions
 - ii. Seemed to show a distinction between the brains of homosexual men and heterosexual men –
 - 1. however the sample size was very small (only 10 homosexual men),
 - 2. the control group compared to was unclear,
 - a. May or may not have been heterosexual
 - 3. and other factors could be involved (all the homosexual men in the study had AIDS),
 - a. most of the “unclear” control group also had aids
 - 4. unclear whether sexual behavior was the cause or result.
 - iii. The structure has not been proven to have any bearing on sexual behavior at all

- iv. LeVay (lead researcher in the study) "It's important to stress what I didn't find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain. . . . Since I looked at adult brains, we don't know if the differences I found were there at birth or if they appeared later." (Feinberg)
- b. What do identical twin studies show?
 - i. Only a 30% correspondence rate at most and other studies put it more like 7% (both homosexual) and clearly other life factors would be at play for both of them. Correspondence was about the same for non-twin siblings, indicating environment plays a significant role.
 - ii. Furthermore, concordance rates for adopted siblings who share no genetic information are 2 ½ times higher than the general population, indicating an environmental contribution.
- c. Are there genetic markers associated with homosexuality?
 - i. Early genetic researchers in the 1990's claimed to have found a genetic marker corresponding to homosexual orientation.
 - ii. April 23, 2009 edition of *Science* refutes these claims.
 - 1. Clinical neurologists George Rice and George Ebers of Canada's University of Western Ontario failed to find a link between male homosexuality and chromosomal region Xq28, a link which had been claimed by other researchers. The Canadian results were supported by work at the University of Chicago which, according to *Science* "does not provide strong support for a linkage." Rice stated that the cumulative evidence "would suggest that if there is a linkage it's so weak that it's not important."
 - 2. <http://www.albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/then-again-maybe-not-the-gay-gene-theory-takes-a-hit/>
- d. What if a genetic or biological link is found?
 - i. Could be a result of the fall in Genesis 3 in which our bodies were clearly effected (Romans 8:19-23)
 - ii. Predisposition would require someone to act on their desires, no more than if we discovered a predisposition to sexual promiscuity among some heterosexuals would require them to act on it. The Bible still expects monogamy.

3. What should a Christian who experiences Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) do?

- a. Partially adapted from Sam Allberry's *Is God Anti-gay?*
- b. Pray
 - i. We can talk to God about any confusion and distress we might be feeling
 - ii. We can talk to God about our temptations
 - iii. We can also talk to God about our sins
 - 1. Even if there are a number of ways that a person has given in to homosexual temptation in thoughts or actions, they are not unforgiveable sins. Christ died for these as well and 1 John 1:9 applies.
- c. Think about feelings of SSA the right way.

- i. They do not disqualify you
 - 1. Great opportunity to remind yourself of the gospel
- ii. They do not define you
 - 1. They don't represent the sum total of your identity. Your identity is in Christ.
- iii. Seek the support of others.
 - 1. Talking with others can be very hard.
 - 2. We are called to carry each other's burdens (Gal 6:2)
- iv. Can God change your sexual desire? Should you expect that?
 - 1. Allberry helpfully emphasizes that, yes, God can and will make all things right in the new creation.
 - 2. In this life, He may or may not change a person's desires. Some have experienced this, others have continued to struggle.
- d. Just like any believer, follow Christ in obedience trusting Him to give you the resources to do so.
 - i. Don't isolate yourself. Form deep, lasting, trusting, and vulnerable relationships with other believers.
 - ii. Recognize that temptation isn't the same thing as sin.
 - iii. Recognize that temptation may come and go at stronger and weaker levels, but commit to walk in obedience even when tempted.

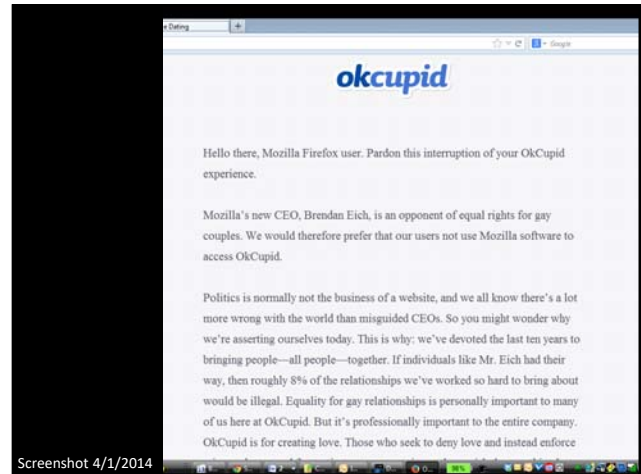
4. How should we respond?

- a. Remember: If it's sin, there's hope.
 - i. No hope if it's a condition that are born with. But the gospel gives hope for all sin.
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 6:11** 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.
- b. Christians struggling with same-sex attraction need loving help not rejection.
 - i. Get over our fear, disbelief that God can work in their lives, superiority (our sins are listed in 1 Cor. 6 as well)
 - ii. They often feel lonely, misunderstood, rejected, marginalized.
 - iii. They need to be embraced in the body life where they can experience community, love, and relationships.
 - 1. Specifically asking singles, whether you know they experience SSA or not, to join a small group.
- c. Learn from those who experience same-sex attraction but are living in obedience to Christ.
 - i. Sam Allberry
 - ii. Rosario Butterfield
 - iii. Christopher Yuan

- iv. Note – can't give a blanket endorsement of everything they have written or said on the topic.
But the things I have heard from them or read from them, have been helpful.
- d. Speak with **grace** and **truth**.
 - i. **John 1:16-17** For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
 - ii. No place for Christians to physically and verbally attack homosexuals
 - 1. i.e. friend in college making a joke about beating up a gay guy
 - iii. Avoid using the term "gay" as demeaning.
 - iv. These things shut doors and operate out of pride, not loving concern.

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