

# Biblical Solutions to Life Issues

## Topic 20 – Homosexuality & Gender Issues

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### Introduction

Over the past several decades, homosexuality has become something of a civil rights group, fighting for their lifestyle's legal condoning. By and large, it has been declassified as a sin. Even among "Christian" churches, homosexuality has become an acceptable way of life. In an article featured in Christianity Today, 85% of Christians and 67% of non-Christians said they thought homosexuality to be wrong. In 2010 59% of Christians and 31% of non-Christians said they thought it was wrong.<sup>1</sup> This dramatic shift in public opinion regarding homosexuality has had widespread social ramifications that are still unfolding today. Most Christians who now support homosexuality have done so to not be viewed as judgmental. So in order to be "nice," many Christians have stopped viewing homosexuality as a sin. If we as Christians truly love and care about lost sinners, we need to share the truth with them about their sin, whether that is homosexuality or pride, so that they can repent and believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is crucial to understand what the Bible teaches about homosexuality so that we can continue to engage our culture with eternal truth rather than being swayed by constantly changing public opinion.

### What the Bible says about Homosexuality

God's word says relatively little about the topic of homosexuality, and this is naturally one of the selling points of many who claim that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality. However, in the handful of passages dealing with homosexuality, it is clear that God views it as sin.

When God created mankind in the Garden of Eden, he created one man and one woman. Many have jokingly said, "God created Adam and *Eve*, not Adam and *Steve*." While this statement is intended to be humorous, it presents a noteworthy point. When God creates or establishes something, that is then the known intent for that object or institution. Altering what God has established is a dangerous and often sinful thing to do. Cornelius Plantinga in *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, holds this to be the true definition of sin. Anything that is contrary to how God intended something or someone to be is sin. This state of intended purpose for all things he calls *Shalom*.<sup>2</sup>

The first direct mention of homosexuality in the Bible appears in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. This should be a sure sign that homosexuality is not simply a wisdom issue about which believers should all have their own conviction. Genesis 18 and 19 record the events leading up to and carried out by God in his destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The two angels who had visited Abraham were sent to Sodom to warn Lot and his family to leave because, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and **their sin is exceedingly grave**" (Genesis 18:20). The narrative continues and explains what that grave sin was. When the men of Sodom saw that Lot had visitors staying the night with him they, "surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may **have relations with them.**'" (Genesis 19:4-5)

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<sup>1</sup> Tobin Grant and Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "How Evangelicals Have Shifted in Public Opinion on Same-Sex Marriage," *Christianity Today*, May 5, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew for "peace"

The sin that was exceedingly grave in Sodom was their widespread and all-encompassing lifestyle of homosexuality. Notice it says that all the men, of all ages, and from all different parts of the city came to demand homosexual intercourse with the angels. This being the first mention of homosexuality in the Bible, it is clear that God believes it to be sin. So much so, that God “rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground” (Genesis 19:24-25). Clearly, God’s view of homosexual activity from the beginning is that it is sin worthy of his righteous wrath.

This introduction to homosexuality sets the precedent for other passages about the topic. Later in the Mosaic Law, homosexuality was condemned along with other “abominations,” and the punishment for homosexual acts was death. One of the major themes of the list of abominations and detestable acts listed in Leviticus is that these were wicked acts the pagan Canaanites practiced. God wanted His people to be set apart for his purposes and to stand out from the world, and not being involved in homosexual acts was one of the ways He commanded His people to do this.

You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an **abomination**. . . . 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. (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13)

Interestingly, the time passed between Abraham (destruction of Sodom occurred in 2026 BC) and Moses (giving of the Law occurred in 1445 BC) was approximately 581 years, yet God’s treatment of the sin of homosexuality remained unchanged. Without question God dealt with homosexuality as a sin in Old Testament times.

As we draw closer to our present time, homosexuality gets more attention in the New Testament. The Greco-Roman world in which the authors of the New Testament wrote was full of various kinds of homosexuality. Once again the pagans around God’s people practiced sinful acts from which God wanted His people to abstain. In the Greek world, which greatly influenced the Roman world, homosexuality was as common as heterosexuality. The most common form of homosexuality was pederasty, whereby young boys served as sex slaves of older men. This was most common in the military. In the city-state of Sparta, it was engrained in their military training, called the *agoge* system. Homosexuality was such a part of their lives that when men married women customarily in their mid-twenties (after many years of serving as a sex slave of an “mentor” in the barracks), their wife would shave her head and they would consummate their marriage in complete darkness so as to make that experience as identical as possible to their previous homosexual lifestyle. Over time, it was hoped they would transition into a heterosexual relationship that would produce offspring for the cause of Sparta. Once the Greeks had been taken over by the Romans, the situation changed little. Fourteen of the first fifteen Roman emperors practiced homosexuality. Consequently, when the New Testament writers spoke to the subject of homosexuality, they were living in a world very similar and many ways worse than the world in which we live today.<sup>3</sup>

God poured out His wrath on those who practiced homosexuality in very graphic and immediate ways in the Old Testament, but the wrath of God has been poured out on homosexuals in this era

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<sup>3</sup> Some contest that Jesus never spoke to the issue of homosexuality and did not condemn it, therefore it cannot be wrong. That is true that He never condemned it, but He also never condoned it. Additionally Jesus was speaking to a Jewish crowd and in a Jewish area where homosexuality was not a widespread sin issue. Homosexuality appears more in Paul’s writings because he wrote to churches that were in Gentile areas where homosexuality was a large issue.

much differently: *He has given them over to their depravity*. Paul explained this judgment in his letter to the Roman church. In Romans chapter one Paul says the following:

**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ... [They] **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God** for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Romans 1:18, 19, 23)

Mankind's sinfulness exchanged the glory of God for idols of all kinds and Paul remarks that the wrath of God is revealed against them. In the next verse Paul details how God's wrath has been revealed by giving them over to the lusts of their hearts.

Therefore **God gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ... For this reason **God gave them over** to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 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. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper... (Romans 1:24, 26-28).

Today we see the impact of this judgment. Homosexuality is a destructive sin and this is evidenced in the spread of AIDS. The homosexual lifestyle is not the same as a heterosexual lifestyle with just a different orientation. There is an insatiable lust that accompanies homosexuality. Average homosexual in 1992 had 500 different sexual partners annually. Homosexuals in San Francisco spend an average of three nights a week at the city's bathhouses, and each visit includes ten to thirty different sexual encounters.<sup>4</sup> As staggering as these statistics are, they make sense of the widespread destructiveness of AIDS among the homosexual community. God having given them over to their wickedness has resulted in this devastating epidemic.

Additionally, with insatiable lust comes the potential for outbursts of anger and violence. This is very characteristic of the homosexual community as well. A non-Christian doctor who performed over 60,000 autopsies recorded his observations concerning homicides linked to homosexual violence. He wrote that he and his assistants could identify whether or not a victim had been murdered by a homosexual within ten seconds of observation. The key characteristic was multiple stabbings, gun-shot wounds, or beating after the victim had expired. He noted the unique rage that accompanied a murder carried out by a homosexual. These horrific homicides typically occurred when there was jealousy between homosexuals.

When God has given someone over to their sin, they go to extremes to protect that sin in their lives, and they pursue it voraciously. This is true in our society today, and it was true in Sodom thousands of years ago. After the angels had blinded the men who were trying to rape them, the blinded men "wearied themselves trying to find the doorway" (Genesis 19:11). Typically, someone would be so stunned and distraught over the fact that they had become blind that they would bemoan their blindness and give up the pursuit that caused their blindness. However, it was not so with the men of Sodom.

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, "Homosexuality and the Bible: Part 1", September 6, 1992.

Paul did not just deal with homosexuality in writing to the Roman church. He also addressed it with the Corinthian church and in his personal letters to Timothy.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to not take one another to court where unbelievers judge their cases, for “the saints will judge the world...[and] angels” (1 Cor. 6:2). He tells them that it would be better to be wronged or defrauded than to be judged in a court of law by non-believers. Then he asks the rhetorical question that should bring their perspective to the eternal kingdom mindset.

Or do you not know that **the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?** (1 Corinthians 6:9a)

Hence, his point is as follows: Why would you put yourself under the authority of non-believers to settle your squabbles when you yourselves will judge the world and angels in eternity? You should be able to settle disputes amongst yourselves, or at the very worst be willing to suffer a wrong committed against you rather than take your case to a secular court. Paul then launches into describing what kind of people run these worldly court systems and will not inherit the kingdom of God. It is in this list that Paul mentions the “effeminate and homosexuals.”

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate, nor homosexuals**, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9b-10)

These two terms (effeminate and homosexual) refer to two different types of homosexuals.

1. μαλακός – “malakos” – The effeminate are those who allow themselves to be used for homosexual pleasure. The word literally means “soft, soft to the touch” and refers metaphorically to a male who submits his body to unnatural lewdness. This was common in that society because there were young men who sought to make money by making themselves prostitutes for homosexual men.
2. ἀρσενοκοίτης – “arsenokoites” – Homosexuals are those who pursue these homosexual relationships. The word refers to one who has intercourse with a male as with a female.

Paul then reminds the Corinthian church of a humbling reality:

**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. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

They were no better than these people who would not inherit the kingdom of God, and the Corinthian church was full of people who had been rescued from lifestyles of sin and immorality. The only difference between them and these non-believers is that they had been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God. Salvation and a changed lifestyle are the only difference between those who will and will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is important to bear in mind when dealing with homosexuals. Homosexuality is not an unredeemable sin. No sin is unredeemable in our day and age. No matter how steeped someone is in a lifestyle of sin (e.g., homosexuality), the blood of Christ and the grace of God are more than powerful enough to redeem the most wicked of souls.

The last direct mention of homosexuality in the New Testament is from Paul's first letter to his son in the faith, Timothy. In this letter, Paul urged Timothy early on to instruct certain men at Ephesus not to teach strange doctrines. Apparently there were men in the Ephesian church who were teaching things that were simply "fruitless discussion" in addition to myths (i.e., regarding the OT) and endless genealogies that gave way to "mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith" (1 Tim. 1:3-6). These men who were teaching worthlessly called themselves teachers of the Law. Paul, in response, says that the Law is good if it is used lawfully (1 Tim. 1:8), but also that the Law was made for the unrighteous. Paul then gives a list of people who would be considered unrighteous, ungodly, sinners, unholy, and profane. In that list appear homosexuals.

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and **homosexuals** and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is **contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God**, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

Not only does Paul tell Timothy that homosexuals are unrighteous, he also says that their lifestyle is contrary to the sound teaching of the gospel of God.

There should be no confusion after examining this passage in 1 Timothy and the other passages aforementioned as to what God thinks about homosexuality. It is a sin. However, our culture today has made every effort to convince people (quite successfully) that homosexuality cannot be a sin because it is simply a sexual orientation, and not a choice.

### **Choice or Orientation?**

In a scientific article for *The Telegraph*, Sarah Knapton interviewed several scientists who have undertaken the task of finding homosexuality being linked to DNA. According to her findings, "Homosexuality is only partly genetic with sexuality mostly based on environmental and social factors, scientists believe. A study found that, while gay men shared similar genetic make-up, it only accounted for 40 per cent of the chance of a man being homosexual."<sup>5</sup>

Many of the scientists she interviewed made comments that confuse someone seeking a black-and-white answer to the question of whether homosexuality is a lifestyle choice or a sexual orientation. "Dr. Alan Sanders, associate Professor of Psychiatry at Northwestern University...said that it was an 'oversimplification' to suggest there was a 'gay gene.'" He went on to say, "We don't think genetics is the whole story. It's not. We have a gene that contributes to homosexuality but you could say it is linked to heterosexuality. It is the variation." It is astounding to make the claim that homosexuality is genetic with that kind of uncertainty.

Another doctor, Dr. Bailey (also at Northwestern University), said "environmental factors [i.e., anything that is not in our DNA at birth] were likely to have the biggest impact on homosexuality." His remarks make complete sense when considering the hesitance of our culture to blame an individual for anything. From children's misbehavior in schools to serial killers' vicious rampages, society refuses to admit that someone could choose to do something morally wrong.

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Knapton, "Being homosexual is only partly due to gay gene, research finds," *The Telegraph*, February 13, 2014.

In conclusion, Knapton writes, “The thing that’s consistent across all of them [i.e., studies about homosexuality] is that they all point to sexual orientation being something fundamental to a person rather than the lifestyle choice some opponents of equality suggest. ... Interestingly no similar genes have been discovered which influence female sexuality.”<sup>6</sup> Our culture and society want so badly for science to approve of their immorality, that inconclusive studies like these become the foundation for people’s beliefs.

In truth, all people are born with particular inclinations. Some people are more inclined to get angry, be lazy, become anxious, or have sexual feelings towards someone of the same sex. These inclinations are a result of the fall, and are problems we as fallen mankind have to deal with biblically. If someone is more inclined genetically and due to external influences to become angry, this does not excuse them from the fact that anger is a sin. The homosexual is not excused either.

### **Biblical Principles Related to Gender Issues**

Recently in our culture, we have seen what can be called a “gender crisis.” For a variety of reasons, people have begun to question whether or not we should make distinctions between male and female. Additionally biological and anatomical differences are not legitimate factors in determining whether an individual is male or female. This issue has brought confusion to schools and families and to the whole network of relationships that make up society. Once again, the Bible is clear regarding this issue as it is with so many others.

Definitions in this field:

*Transgender:* denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender

*Transsexual:* a person who emotionally and psychologically feels that they belong to the opposite sex (AKA “hermaphrodite, intersex”)

*Transvestite:* a person, typically a man, who derives pleasure from dressing in clothes appropriate to the opposite sex (AKA “drag queen, cross-dresser”)

The first place God addresses gender in human history is when he created Adam and Eve. He created them with anatomical distinctions meant to be able to procreate and function physiologically how He intended.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created them. (Gen 1:27)

Fundamentally, transgender people reject God’s design for their life and how He created them. David wrote a Psalm in which he praised God for His omniscience. As a part of this song of praise highlighting the all-knowing aspect of God’s character is David reflection on how God created him.

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Knapton, “Being homosexual is only partly due to gay gene, research finds,” *The Telegraph*, February 13, 2014.

book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (Psa 139:13-17)

Instead of praising God for how He has created them, transsexuals praise their sinful urges and feelings. They become so convinced that their Creator has made a mistake, that they are willing to have surgery to outwardly change their gender.

Most transgender groups are confused about or refuse altogether not their physiology, but the social definitions and emphases put on individuals to be either “male” or “female.” It is important to note that when society explains masculinity or femininity contrarily to the Word of God, Christians have the responsibility to reject that explanation and pressure, and to conform to what God’s Word says about their gender. For example, when society says that men are to be “macho” and domineering, Christian men should reject that pressure and live sensibly (Titus 2:2, 6), humbly (Mic. 6:8), and to prefer the interests of others (Phil. 2:1-11). When society says that women should flaunt their bodies as a form of manipulation, instead Christian women should consider their bodies as the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) and should dress modestly, absent from the motivation to draw attention to their bodies (1 Tim. 2:9).

Heather Ann Clements, former head of the theology department at Azusa Pacific University (APU), has become Heath Adam Ackley, and claims that “it empowered him to love God and others more.”<sup>7</sup> She came out as a trans-gender individual in a sermon espousing what she believes are the biblical supports for her lifestyle. She used Genesis 2:22, Matthew 19:12, and Galatians 3:28 to support her views. According to Clements/Ackley, Genesis 2:22 is the first time there is a distinction between male and female in the Bible.

The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had teak from the man, and brought her to the man. (Gen 2:22)

Unfortunately for Clements/Ackley, the Bible clearly lays out male and female distinctions before Genesis 2:22.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He create him; **male and female** He created them. (Gen 1:27)

Clements/Ackley also uses Matthew 19:12 to justify her decision to change genders. She believes that the people who are “eunuchs from birth” refers those who internally experience the opposite gender identity though outwardly they are the other.

“For there are **eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb**; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.” (Matt. 19:12)

There exists no consensus as to what Jesus was referring when He said this, but it seems likely that this is not those confused about their gender. Rather it refers to those who were born with some physiological deformity that would make them physically unable to participate in the normal

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<sup>7</sup> Tyler O’Neil, “What Does the Bible Say About Trans-Gender Identity?,” *Christian Post*, September 26, 2013.

physical unity and intimacy of a marriage. This seems to be the best conclusion, in my opinion, based on the fact that the context is marriage and celibacy.

Lastly, Clements/Ackley uses Galatians 3:28 for support, claiming that man and woman have been incomplete since God separated them in Genesis. She believes that in Christ both become complete by transcending gender itself.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is **neither male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ. (Gal 3:28)

However, this verse is in the context of unity in Christ regardless of physical differences. This does not support a transgender position. Rather it teaches that God accepts women just as much as He accepts men into His kingdom. That teaching needed to be conveyed due to the lowly status of women in that day and age.

In the Old Testament those who had been made eunuchs were barred from participating in the assembly at the temple to worship the Lord (Deut 23:1). Isaiah prophesied about a future time when Gentiles would be invited into the nation of Israel to become some of God's people. Among those Gentiles were foreigners (generally) and eunuchs (specifically). Isaiah prophesied hope for those who had been made eunuchs in their previous cultures.

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from His people." Neither let the **eunuch** say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." For this says the Lord, "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, to them **I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial**, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them **an everlasting name which will not be cut off**." (Is. 56:3-5)

If these eunuchs were obedient to the Lord's commands and pleased Him, they would be blessed in eternity since this passage most likely refers to the Millennial Kingdom. Their legacy would be an everlasting one. Isaiah uses a play on words to convey that although they had been physically cut off, their legacy would not. Again we see that this sin is not unredeemable, just as homosexuality is not unredeemable.

### **Real Life Scenarios**

*Yourself:* You find yourself un-attracted to those of the opposite gender although you have many friends who are the opposite gender. Occasionally, you wonder "Why have you made me this way, God?" since you feel as though you relate so much more easily with those of the opposite gender. When you spend time with those of the same gender, you feel uncomfortable and out of place. Your non-Christian friends and co-workers have suggested getting a sex-change, and at first you were resistant to the idea. Recently though you have considered it a little more.

- A. On what truths should you dwell?
- B. How might you go about getting help and opening up to others about this?

*Someone Else:* A close friend of yours who claims to be a believer has recently confided in you that they are gay/lesbian. They beg you not to abandon them because of this choice they've made.

- A. How should you respond?
- B. What should you do to help them long-term?

## **Conclusion**

The Bible clearly explains homosexuality as a sin, and God has created us as either male or female. His design from the beginning was and still is perfect. As our culture changes and shifts as often as it does, we need to remember the truths of God's Word and let Him be the anchor for our morality. As we encounter those who struggle with or have given into homosexuality or gender confusion, we need to remember that they are struggling with sins just like those with which we struggle daily.

