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# Homosexuality and the Bible: Telling the Truth

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Homosexuality is now the most controversial issue of debate in American culture - and it is likely to stay that way for a long time. Once famously described as "the love that dares not speak its name," homosexuality is now openly discussed and debated throughout American society.

Behind this discussion is an agenda, pushed and promoted by activists, who seek legitimization and social sanction for homosexual acts, relationships, and lifestyles. The push is on for homosexual "marriage," the removal of all structures and laws considered oppressive to homosexuals, and the recognition of homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, and others as "erotic minorities" deserving of special legal protection. The movement to normalize homosexuality won a huge victory last year when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case *Lawrence v. Texas*. In that momentous decision, a majority of justices struck down the Texas sodomy laws as unconstitutional, declaring that individuals have a basic right to define their own existence and sexual lifestyle without government interference. As Justice Antonin Scalia noted, this means the effective end of all morals legislation.

The larger culture is now bombarded with messages and images designed to portray homosexuality as a normal lifestyle. Homoerotic themes are so common in the mainstream media that many citizens have virtually lost the capacity to be shocked. Gay characters abound on television and in film, and story lines supporting sexual "tolerance" and diversity now appear in programming for children. Cable television's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" represents the symbolic rise of gay culture in the nation's mainstream.

Homophobic?

These days, anyone who would oppose homosexuality as a fully valid lifestyle is depicted as a narrow-minded bigot and described as "homophobic." Anyone who suggests that heterosexual marriage is the only acceptable and legitimate arena of sexual activity is lambasted as out-dated, oppressive, and outrageously out of step with modern culture. Opponents of same-sex marriage are disparaged as intolerant, judgmental, and fundamentalist. Defenders of marriage are truly on the defensive—and the homosexual advocates know it.

The Church has not been an outsider to these debates. As the issue of homosexual legitimization has gained public prominence and moved forward, some churches and denominations have joined the movement—even becoming advocates of homosexuality—while a few stand steadfastly opposed to compromise on the issue. In the middle are churches and denominations unable or unwilling to declare a clear conviction on homosexuality. Issues of homosexual ordination and marriage are regularly debated in the assemblies of several denominations—and many congregations, and the issue may eventually blow those denominations apart.

This debate is itself nothing less than a revolutionary development. Any fair-minded observer of American culture and the American churches must note the incredible speed with which this issue has been driven into the cultural mainstream. The challenge for the believing church now comes down to this: Do we have a distinctive message in the midst of this moral confusion?

Our answer must be Yes. The Christian church must have a distinctive message to speak to the issue of homosexuality, because the Bible has a distinctive message. Faithfulness to Holy Scripture demands that the Church hold to the biblical witness. Anything less is a road to theological oblivion.

The affirmation of biblical authority is thus central to the Church's consideration of this issue—or any issue. The Bible is the Word of God in written form, inerrant and infallible, inspired by the Holy Spirit and “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” [2 Timothy 3:16]. This is the critical watershed: Those churches that reject the authority of Scripture will eventually succumb to cultural pressure and accommodate their understanding of homosexuality to the spirit of the age. Those churches that affirm, confess, and acknowledge the full authority of the Bible have no choice in this matter—we must speak a word of compassionate truth. And that compassionate truth is this: Homosexual acts are expressly and unconditionally forbidden by God through His Word, and such acts are an abomination to the Lord by His own declaration. These are strong words, but they are the Bible's words.

The late Elizabeth Achtemeier, for many years an influential professor at Richmond's Union Theological Seminary, stated the case clearly: “The clearest teaching of Scripture is that God intended sexual intercourse to be limited to the marriage relationship of one man and one woman.” The clearest teaching of Scripture? That this is so should be apparent to all who look to the Bible for guidance on this issue.

#### Now a Mixed Message

This assessment of the Bible's content would have been completely uncontroversial throughout the last nineteen centuries of the Christian church. Only in recent years have some biblical scholars come forward to claim that the Bible presents a mixed message—or a very different message—on homosexuality.

The homosexual agenda is pushed by activists who are totally committed to the cause of making homosexuality a sanctioned and recognized form of sexual activity—and the basis for legitimate marriages and family relationships. Every obstacle that stands in the way of progress toward this agenda must be removed, and Scripture stands as the most formidable obstacle to that agenda.

We should not be surprised therefore that apologists for the homosexual agenda have arisen even within the world of biblical scholarship. Biblical scholars are themselves a very mixed group, with some defending the authority of Scripture and others bent on deconstructing the biblical text. The battle lines on this issue are immediately apparent. Those who deny the truthfulness, inspiration, and authority of the Bible, in the main, will eventually argue that Scripture sanctions homosexuality—or at least argue that the biblical passages forbidding homosexual acts are confused, misinterpreted, or irrelevant.

To accomplish this requires feats of exotic biblical interpretation worthy of the most agile circus contortionist. Several decades ago, the late J. Gresham Machen remarked, “The Bible, with a complete abandonment of all scientific historical method, and of all common sense, is made to say the exact opposite of what it means; no Gnostic, no medieval monk with his fourfold sense of Scripture, ever produced more absurd Biblical interpretation than can be heard every Sunday in the pulpits of New York.” Dr. Machen was referring to the misuse and misapplication of Scripture that he saw as a mark of the infusion of a pagan spirit within the church. Even greater absurdity than that observed by Machen is now evident among those determined to make the Bible sanction homosexuality.

Biblical Christianity is the final wall of resistance to the homosexual agenda. In the end, that resistance comes down to the Bible itself. Those working tirelessly for the normalization of homosexuality know that the Bible's clear and unambiguous opposition to all forms of homosexual behavior must be neutralized if they are to be fully successful. Their efforts to this end deserve our closest attention.

