



COUNSELLING THE SIN OF HOMOSEXUALITY

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Introduction The view of homosexuality today in the world and the church:

- The church should be a place "where a [practicing] homosexual person can feel at home and accepted."
- One-partner homosexuality is not sin; it is a perfectly acceptable lifestyle in the eyes of God.
- "Sexuality in all varieties [including homosexuality] is a gift from God."

Definition

Homosexuality refers to *thoughts or actions motivated by a definite sexual attraction toward the same sex. This attraction often, but not always, leads to sexual acts with members of the same sex.*ⁱ

Note: This syllabus will use the term *homosexual* to refer to both male and female homosexuals.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Genesis 1 & 2 – God's Design

Genesis 1:27 two creational categories: male and female

Purposes:

1) procreation (Gen 1:28)

Reproduction can *only* be advanced by male/female relationship.

2) companionship and sexual intimacy (Gen 2:18, 24)

A desire for emotional and physical intimacy is also only to be fulfilled in male/female marriage (2:18, 24). "*For this reason* a man shall leave father and mother, and be joined to his wife." Marriage to a female partner in v. 24 is the God-designed place for a man to fulfil the companionship desire of v. 18. Neither animals nor another man were

suitable for fulfilling the God-created desire of v. 18. For a man, only a woman is a helper suitable for that level of emotional/sexual intimacy.

Summary: God created the human race male and female for the purpose of *reproduction* and *intimate* emotional and sexual *companionship*.

Conclusions:

- Desire for emotional and physical intimacy is a gift from God (v. 18). God clearly stated that that desire is to be fulfilled in a male/female marriage relationship (v. 24).
- The male/female marriage of Genesis 2:24 is a principle intended for the whole human race. Adam had no father or mother; therefore, this instruction is universal.
- Jesus confirmed in Matthew 19:4-5 that marriage is a God-created, inherently male/female institution.
- Genesis 1-2 tell us why Paul said in Romans 1:26 that homosexual behaviour is *unnatural*. Homosexuality obliterates the God-created categories within the human race, just as much as sexual acts with animals obliterate those categories.

Leviticus 18:22 – God's view of homosexuality in the OT Law

Establishing the context:

Leviticus 18:1-3. God's people were not to accept or tolerate the practices of the people around them, especially in regard to sexual relations: incest (v. 6-18), sexual relations during menstruation (19), adultery (20), homosexuality (22), bestiality (23).

This answers the idea that we should accept homosexuality in the church because it has become acceptable in our modern culture. God judges the culture's moral standards; the culture does not determine God's.

Exegesis:

18:22 A literal translation:

You shall not go to bed with a man as you go to bed with a woman.

God's created order of *male and female* as taught in Genesis 1-2 is the driving issue behind this command.

The homosexual proponents' response:

Western Cape Synod paper (1999): "Scholars indicate that these texts do not refer to homosexuality in general, but to [homosexual] prostitution practised in idol temples." The basis for their conclusion is the fact that the word *abomination* at the end of v. 22 is often associated with pagan idolatry.

Abomination (to'ebah) meant to be *loathsome* or *horrid*. Does it refer to temple prostitution only?

Response:

- 1) Lev 18:26-30. *All* the sexual sins mentioned in this chapter were abominations to God. Therefore, to be consistent, one would have to argue that if God condemned homosexuality only when it was associated with the worship of idols at pagan temples, then one must also conclude that incest, adultery, and bestiality are loathsome to God *only* if they are done at the idol temple. One must conclude that incest, adultery, and bestiality in a "committed, one-partner relationship" were perfectly acceptable. In other words, the homosexual advocates' argument cannot be applied consistently.
- 2) While the word *abomination* was used often of idolatry, it was also used of many other sins: transvestite behaviour (Deut 22:5); deceitful business practices (Deut 25:13-16); Prov 3:32; 11:1); pride, lying, and violent crime (Prov 6:16; 12:22). Are lying and tricky business condemnable only if associated with pagan idolatry? Are "committed, one-partner" lying and violent crime acceptable?
- 3) The driving issue behind Leviticus 18:22 is clearly God's design for male-female sexual companionship in Genesis 1 & 2.

Conclusion:

The use of the word *abomination* to describe homosexuality does not mean that God's Law condemned only homosexual temple prostitution.

Other OT verses of significance:

Leviticus 20:13

Key issue: maleness and femaleness

Under the Mosaic Law, homosexual relationships were punishable by death. No exception is made for faithful, one-partner relationships. In fact, the Bible

never distinguishes between one-partner homosexuality and multiple-partner homosexuality. It condemns all homosexuality categorically.

Deuteronomy 22:5

God's view of transvestites

Romans 1:26-27 New Testament confirmation

Question: Did God change His view of homosexuality from the OT to the NT?

Exegesis:

Rom 1:18 God's wrath against truth-suppressers

How do sinners suppress the truth?

1. Rom 1:23-25 They violate the Creator/creature order of creation.
2. Rom 1:26-27 They violate the male/female order of creation.

Conclusions:

- God condemns homosexuality in both the OT and the NT.
- Homosexuality is not condemned merely when it is connected with idolatry. In fact, it is a divine punishment from God for idolatry.
- There is no such thing as a "non-practising homosexual." The phrase *degrading passions* means that homosexual *thoughts* and *desires* are just as God-condemned as actual homosexual *actions* are (just as with heterosexual lust: Matt 5:28).
- Homosexuality is *unnatural* (v. 26): it is just as much a perversion of God's created order as men worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.
- Homosexuality is not a "gift" from God; it is a *degrading passion* (v. 26).
- The approval of homosexuality is a clear sign that a society is suppressing God's truth and experiencing God's wrath for that suppression.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Homosexual advocates' position: The words *effeminate* and *homosexuals* in this text do not refer to homosexual behaviour.

Exegesis:

1) The word *effeminate* meant "soft," and was commonly used in the NT era of the partner who took the female role (the papyri, Philo of Alexandria).ⁱⁱ

2) The word *homosexuals* was a compound word combining the word *male* and *bed* or *intercourse* (*arsen + koita*).ⁱⁱⁱ Its meaning is clearly established by the fact that those two words were used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT used by Jesus and the apostles) in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. When he spoke of *male bed partners*, Paul was using the normal NT-era word for homosexuals.

Conclusion: In spite of assertions to the contrary, there is no question that 1 Corinthians 6:9 refers to homosexual behaviour.

Homosexual advocates:

Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6 only refers to temple prostitution, not committed, one-partner homosexuality.

Response:

All forms of homosexuality were common in the NT world, and the NT never made a distinction between them. Male, female, multiple-partner, or one-partner homosexuality were all condemned *categorically*. The idea of a category of "acceptable" homosexuality is biblically indefensible.

Conclusions:

- It is easy to be deceived regarding whether an unrepentant homosexual will inherit God's kingdom (v. 9).
- Homosexuality is not an acceptable behaviour that should be tolerated in the church. It is a behaviour completely at odds with God's kingdom.
- Homosexuals can change. Christ and the Spirit's washing, sanctifying, and justifying work had radically changed members of the Corinthian congregation. They had been, *but no longer were* homosexuals in either desire or action (11).

IS A PERSON BORN A HOMOSEXUAL OR IS HOMOSEXUALITY A CHOICE?

Three studies used to assert that homosexuality is physically determined.

1. Simon Levay's brain measurements (1991)

While studying the brains of 40 cadavers (19 homosexuals; 16 heterosexuals), Levay found that a certain part of the brains in many of the homosexual men (the hypothalamus) was smaller than that of the heterosexual men. Does this mean that homosexuality is physiologically determined? No.

- Levay (himself a homosexual) has admitted in print that his results prove nothing.^{iv}
- The hypothalamus' role in sexuality is not known.^v
- No research was done to determine the actual sexual habits of the subjects.^{vi}
- Many of the subjects died of AIDS, and there is no knowledge of how their sickness may have affected their hypothalamuses.^{vii}
- Three of the self-proclaimed homosexuals *did not* have smaller hypothalamuses.
- Even if there is a relationship between the size of one's hypothalamus and homosexuality, there is no way of determining if these men's homosexuality was the cause or the effect of that size difference (which came first, the chicken or the egg?). Portions of the brain do change size in response to behaviour.^{viii}

2. Bailey and Pillard's identical twins studies (1991)

Baily and Pillard found that if one identical twin was homosexual, then 50% of the time, the other one was as well.^{ix} Is this proof that homosexuality is genetic?

- Since identical twins share the same genes, if homosexuality is genetically determined 100% of the other twins should have been homosexual.
- No other studies of this type have come anywhere close to the 50% rate of Baily and Pillard; therefore, it is clear that there is no genetic determination of homosexuality.

3. Gene research (ongoing)

- No "homosexual" gene has yet been discovered in spite of intensive efforts.

Conclusion: Those who believe that homosexuality is physiologically determined believe so in spite of a complete lack of evidence. When homosexuals feel they

"have to be homosexual" they aren't experiencing genetic determinism; they are experiencing what Romans 6:16 calls being a slave to sin.

BIBLICAL DATA:

Is a person born a homosexual or is homosexuality a choice?

The theology of sin

Rebellion against God's plan for sex is pre-programmed into sinners by the Fall. *How* one rebels (whether as a heterosexual or as a homosexual) is a choice based on preference and availability. Only the fact that we will rebel is pre-programmed.

James 1:13-14

Sin is a choice driven by strong desires that by God's grace can be refused and changed.

One is no more born a homosexual than one is born a murderer or an adulterer. We are born anti-God pleasure seekers, and some seek that pleasure in homosexuality.

The fact that someone has homosexual thoughts does not mean that he is required to dwell on and live out those thoughts. Instead, he should immediately acknowledge that those thoughts are loathsome to God, reject them, and replace them with thanks for God's plan for sexual intimacy—male/female marriage.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Because homosexuality is a sin-choice, homosexuality is not an unchangeable condition.

The cross holds within it the power for victory over any sin, including homosexuality: "Such *were* some of you..." Homosexuality is not a life-long, inescapable condition. It is a tragic rebellion against God's creational order that can be changed by Jesus Christ through repentance, forgiveness, and the indwelling Spirit.

Conclusion:

One is not born a homosexual anymore than one is born an adulterer. We must adopt God's view of homosexuality: it is a sin-choice that can be overcome by salvation and Holy Spirit-renewed thinking.

Question:

Besides teaching that homosexual thoughts and actions are sin, what can a church do on the positive side to diminish temptation toward homosexual sin?

- Emphasise biblical manhood and womanhood. From the pulpit and in conversation, clearly distinguish the roles of men and women. Take every opportunity to present maleness and femaleness and their distinct roles and characteristics as beautiful and noble. A biblically based admiration for God's plan for maleness and femaleness will help inoculate children against homosexuality.
- Exemplify biblical maleness and femaleness in practice in the home and the church. Children's views of sexuality and manhood and womanhood are developed both by teaching and by seeing it lived out in good relationships.
- Encourage people who struggle with this issue to develop good and godly relationships with spiritually mature men and women. These stable, biblically sound relationships will help one tempted by homosexuality learn how to have good relationships with both men or women, and will reduce their temptation move toward homosexuality.

HOW SHOULD YOU COUNSEL A PERSON INVOLVED IN HOMOSEXUAL SIN?

Options:

Tolerance: Accept a homosexual person's lifestyle, leaving him or her enslaved to sin and under the wrath of God.

Intolerance: Treat homosexuals with haughty self-righteousness, contempt, and fear.

Loving intolerance: Show the love of Christ, but firmly call homosexuals to forsake their sin. This is the same approach a Christian should take with any person's sin.

John 4:16-19 Jesus' example of handling sexual sin – loving intolerance

1 Cor 6:9-11 evangelism of the unsaved

Matt 18:15ff discipline/restoration in the church

Loving Intolerance

Loving intolerance combines *compassion*, *conviction*, and *instruction*.

1. Compassion

We extend compassion because homosexuality is a life-dominating sin.

One study has shown that the average homosexual male has 100 *different* partners a year (in other words, the idea of one-partner homosexuality is basically a myth).

The reason homosexuals fight so aggressively to have their sin acknowledged as normal is because of the intensity of the guilt they feel for pursuing their perversion.

2. Conviction

With *unbelievers*: We respond to unbelieving homosexuals by imitating Jesus' approach to the immorality-ridden woman at the well: preach the gospel with a gracious but firm intolerance of sexual sin (John 4:15-18; 1 Thess 4:3).

With professing *believers*: If the person is a professing believer, follow Matthew 18:15-17 to draw them to repentance.

With both professing believers and with unbelievers, repentance and forgiveness offer genuine hope. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can truly say, "Such *were* some of you..."

3. Instruction

In perception, homosexuality is a unique sin both because of its dominant nature and its loathsome character. But in reality, homosexuality is just like every other sin. It is dealt with by salvation and by God's put off, be renewed, put on plan for overcoming *all* sin (Eph 4:22-24).

Salvation

- Full forgiveness is available through Jesus Christ.

Put off

- 2 Corinthians 10:5. Repentant homosexuals must be taught to capture and put out of their mind reoccurring homosexual thoughts or fantasies.

- They must be taught that having a homosexual thought does not "make" you a homosexual. You don't have to be your worst thought or live your worst desire.
- Repentant homosexuals must be taught how to break off associations with homosexual acquaintances in order to avoid further homosexual acts (1 Peter 4:2-4; Prov 5:8; 1 Cor 15:33).
- Romans 13:14. How to make no provision for fleshly lusts by immediately and completely avoiding places or materials that encourage homosexual thinking or activity: reading material, magazines, tv, movies, homosexual clubs, the gym, etc.
- How to put off homosexual "habits": effeminate personal mannerisms, styles of dress associated with a homosexual lifestyle.

Put on

- *Understand and joyfully accept* God's plan for sexual fulfillment as taught in Gen 2:18, 24. An evil view of sexual fulfillment is overcome and replaced by a good view of sexual fulfillment (Rom 12:21).
- How to reverse homosexual patterns of thinking by consciously thanking God for His male/female marriage plan for emotional and sexual intimacy.
- repentant homosexuals must be taught orderly sleep habits: much homosexual activity is done late at night.
- Must be taught to respond to stress, disappointment, or failure by trusting God rather than immediately seeking sexual release to deal with their low emotional state.
- Repentant homosexuals must be taught to reverse homosexual patterns of thinking by pursuing godly, normal relationships with Christian men and women.
- How to become involved in the local church to encourage overall spiritual maturity and growth.

Endnotes

ⁱ Edward T. Welch, *Blame It on the Brain*, (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1998), 151 f. 1. This definition is adapted from Welch's.

ⁱⁱ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 243-44.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 244.

^{iv} David Gelman, Donna Foote, Todd Barrett, and Mary Talbot, "Born or bred?" in *Newsweek*, February 24, 1992, and Simon LeVay, "A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure Between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men," *Science* 253 (1991): 10034-37, as quoted in Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*, 166.

^v Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*, 166.

^{vi} Gelman, *Newsweek*, 50.

^{vii} Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*, 165-67.

^{viii} Gelman, *Newsweek*, 50.

^{ix} Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*, 157