

Is Homosexuality a Sin?

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Some who would refer to themselves as “Christians” take the position that Homosexuality is not a sin. However, what does the Bible have to say on this issue?

What does the Bible Say?

Some passages to consider:

Homosexual behavior is classed along with adultery as “wicked” behavior which will keep a person from being part of the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9 “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders...” (NIV)

Homosexual behavior is classed along with other sexual sins as things which are against the law of God:

1 Timothy 1:9-10 “...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 {10} and immoral men and homosexuals...” (NASB)

This condemnation of homosexual behavior is likewise condemned in the Old Testament as well.

Leviticus 18:22 “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” (NASB)

What is Condemned?

The condemnation is thus always about the behavior. In our modern times, some consider themselves “homosexuals” – not meaning one who “practices homosexual behavior”, but as one “having a sexual orientation” (from www.dictionary.com).

It is important to note that it is not the temptation toward homosexual behavior that is condemned, but the homosexual behavior that is condemned. Men are born with a propensity to sin (Rom. 5:12), but this is not considered by God as a valid “excuse” for men to indulge themselves in sinful behavior. We are to put off the sinful nature and to be controlled by God’s laws as these passages demonstrate:

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men... (NIV)

Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires... (NIV)

Romans 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (NIV)

Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;...

Can Homosexuals be included in God’s Kingdom?

This must be answered by first defining what is meant by the term homosexual. Two definitions most often given are

- “n. someone who practices homosexuality” (Wordnet, Princeton University).
- “n. Of, relating to, or having a sexual orientation to persons of the same sex.” (American Heritage Dictionary)

With regard to someone who “practices homosexuality”, the Bible teaching is clear (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim 1:9-10) that such cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

With regard to someone who has a “sexual orientation” to persons of the same sex, but does not practice homosexual behavior (i.e. sexual behavior between two men or two women – Leviticus 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim 1:9-10), the answer is the same as that given to one who has the temptation to practice adultery or fornication – but abstains from doing so – those who are willing to live according to the teachings of the Spirit of God are accepted of God.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ... (NIV)

Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;... (NIV)

Why do some say that Homosexuality is not a sin?

The arguments dealt with below are taken from an article published on the web and written by Greg Smith, Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church, Sydney, Australia.

Greg Smith wrote:

“Nowhere in the Bible is the idea of persons being homosexual addressed. The statements are, without exception, directed to certain homosexual acts. Early writers had no understanding of homosexuality as a psycho-sexual orientation. That truth is a relatively recent discovery. The Biblical authors were referring to homosexual acts performed by persons they assumed were heterosexuals.”

This argument is an argument about language usage. The Bible does not “label” or “categorize” people as to “sexual orientation”. It does however categorize people according to how they behave. There are those who allow themselves to be “controlled” by their sinful desires ...

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ... (NIV)

... and there are those who allow God’s words to rule in their lives.

Romans 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (NIV)

The “psycho-sexual” (of or relating to the mental and emotional aspects of sexuality) “truth” is that all immoral sexual behavior is rooted in the mental and emotional state of man (homosexual or heterosexual) – and that is no excuse for behavior. God calls us to a simple choice of life or of death, and we act based on what choice we have made:

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,...

The Sodom Story

Greg Smith wrote:

A chief text for condemnation of homosexuality has been the Sodom story. This story has often been interpreted as showing God's abhorrence of homosexuality.

...

There are several problems with the traditional interpretation of this passage. Whether or not the intent of the men of Sodom was sexual, the inhospitality and injustice coming from the mob and generally characterizing the community were 'the sin of Sodom'. ... If, indeed, the men were homosexuals, then why would Lot offer them his daughters? What is threatened here is rape. The significant point then is that all rape is considered horrible by God. The story deserves another reading by all of us.

Here is the text under consideration:

Genesis 19:4-5 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." (NIV)

The Angels in this story are on a mission – to destroy Sodom – that is why they have come to town: "...we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."

The "sin" of Sodom is not specified in the few short verses of chapter 19. In chapter 18, God says "{20} ... The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous {21} that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." The testimony of Lot is that homosexual practice was "wickedness" as he states in 19:6 "Don't do this wicked thing". But what was it that was "wicked"? Was it homosexual behavior? – yes (Leviticus 18:22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. (KJV))?

It may have involved other iniquity as well, but an iniquity was the homosexual practice itself. The argument to categorize this sin as "rape" is an attempt to avoid the truth that homosexual behavior is condemned. Yes, the men of Sodom were attempting to practice homosexual rape. What made it wrong? The rape? – Yes! The homosexual practice? – Yes! Both are condemned. It is true that homosexual practice is not "singled-out" as the "one sin" that Sodom is condemned for – but it was singled out to be recorded as the "example" of Sodom's wickedness which the angels witnessed as part of their investigation. It is likely that Sodom and Gomorrah practiced many sinful things – but it is also true that homosexual behavior was one of them.

It should also be noted that it is not the specific act of these men on this particular night that brought condemnation to Sodom and Gomorrah – but rather the continual wickedness of these people (i.e. the outcry against them). It is evident from the story that homosexual behavior was one of the sins of Sodom, and it is this fact that has caused the word Sodom to "represent" homosexual behavior in the English Language – (sodomy – n. Any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural or abnormal, especially anal intercourse or bestiality. – American Heritage Dictionary).

Sexual Orientation is not in the Bible

Greg Smith wrote:

Again, it should be noted that these passages do not deal with same-sex

orientation, nor is there any reference to genital love between lesbian or gay persons.

The passages in the Bible that condemn homosexual behavior, condemn the actions without regard for the “sexual orientation” of the ones involved – it simply is not important with regard to what is being condemned. The Bible does refer to “genital love” (i.e. sexual relations) in same-sex relationships:

Romans 1:25-27 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. {26} Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. {27} In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Leviticus is not relevant

Greg Smith wrote:

Of thousands of Old Testament passages, only two make explicit reference to homosexual acts; Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13. Both of these passages are a part of the Levitical holiness code which is not kept by any Christian group. If it were enforced, almost every Christian would be excommunicated or executed.

This argument fails to recognize that the Bible teaches that the Mosaic Regulations are not binding today (Col. 2:14) and attempts to brand Christians as hypocrites for attempting to bind this one (Lev. 18:22) while failing to keep others.

Although the commandment (Lev. 18:22) is no longer binding by Mosaic Authority, the prohibition is plainly declared in the New Covenant (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; Rom 1:25-27, etc.). Leviticus is important because it tells us that this practice of sexual relationship between two men is an “abomination” (something that is repulsive or disgusting) to God. It is also important to remember that God is not “fickle” about what is an abomination to him. The same moral behavior that was wrong under the Old Commandment is still wrong today. Of the 10 commandments (the primary moral code of the Mosaic Law), only one is not repeated in the New Covenant – keeping the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was a method of reverencing God, and God is still to be revered, but keeping the Sabbath was part of the Old Covenant, and has been done away in Christ.

James wrote (James 1:17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (KJV) We do not observe God “changing his mind” with regard to whether he loves us or with regard to what is an abomination to him. Paul made reference to this when he talked about the basic principles of those who labor for the Lord by pointing out that the “principles” that he propounded were also a part of the Mosaic Law:

1 Corinthians 9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? (KJV).

The Bible never Addresses Homosexual Love

Greg Smith wrote:

“The Bible never addresses the issue of homosexual love, but has several examples of same-sex love. David’s love for Jonathan was said to exceed his love for

women. Ruth's relationship with Naomi is certainly an example of a deep, bonding love. The Bible does value love between persons of the same sex."

It is true that the Bible advocates love between persons without regard for gender.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another; 1Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

This "love" is the Greek word "agape" meaning "love, i.e. affection or benevolence".

The charge that the Bible never addresses the issue of "homosexual love" is simply not true. If the definition of "love" used by Greg Smith here is the normal "affection and benevolence" which is to be directed towards all without regard for gender, then the Bible promotes that (1 Thess. 3:12) for all.

If the definition of "love" used by Greg Smith in the context of the adjective "homosexual" (i.e. "homosexual love") means "genital love" between two persons who have a "sexual orientation" toward those of the same gender, then this is a sexual love, and the Bible addresses this as well:

1 Corinthians 6:9 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders..." (NIV)

It is not important what the desires of those involved are (whether they are normally heterosexually oriented, or whether they are normally homosexually oriented, or even whether they are bi-sexual) – it is the homosexual behavior that is condemned.

Jesus' Attitude

Greg Smith wrote:

Episcopal priest, Dr. Tom Horner has written the Gospels imply in two places that Jesus' attitude toward lesbians and gays would not have been hostile. The first is found in the story of Jesus healing the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8.5). The word used for the servant is "pais" which in the Greek culture referred to a younger lover of an older more powerful or educated man. Clearly the story demonstrates an unusually intense love, and Jesus' response was wholly positive.

Jesus' remarks about celibacy and castration are clear, but a male child being born without testicles is a rare birth defect. It is only in our day that the Kinsey Institute has demonstrated that sexual orientation is likely determined prior to birth. It would well be that those to whom Jesus refers as being 'born eunuchs' are the people we call lesbian or gay.

In the story of Matthew 8:5, the Greek word used for the servant ("pais") does not have any connotation of sexual relationships. The word means:

"a child in relation to parents, of either sex; a child in respect of age, either male or female, and of all ages from infancy up to manhood, a boy, youth, girl, maiden; a servant, slave; an attendant, minister" (The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978 Edition, by Harold K. Moulton.)

Not only does this word NOT have the meaning that Greg Smith attempts to pour into it, it is clearly NOT used in that manner in the Bible. The Greek word "pais" is the very word used to describe Jesus as "son" in Acts 3:13 "God... hath glorified his Son Jesus..."

With regard to the argument that “eunuchs” were lesbians or gay, it simply is not true. Examine any reputable Greek Lexicon and you will find the meaning in accordance with the translations of the Bible. Here is one such entry:

“one who has charge of the bedchamber; hence, a eunuch, one emasculated, Matthew 19.12; as eunuchs in the East often rose to places of power and trust, hence a minister of a court, Ac. 8.27, 34.” (“The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978 Edition,” by Harold K. Moulton)

Note: Emasculate means to “castrate” or “To remove the testicles of (a male);” (American Heritage Dictionary).

Paul’s References

Greg Smith wrote:

Paul’s statement in Romans 1:18-32 has been taken as the strongest New Testament rejection of homosexuality. He is concerned about the influence of the pagan culture on the Roman Christians. ...Most reputable scholars believe that Paul was referring to homosexual temple prostitution which was performed by various cults (though far more cults used heterosexual prostitution). Again, Paul is not referring to same-sex love, and he clearly has no concept of persons for whom this lifestyle is “natural”. Paul’s other reference to homosexual acts is similar to that of 1 Timothy 1:8-11. Both passages contain lists of persons to be excluded from the Realm of God. The interpretation of these passages depends on two Greek words which have always presented a problem for translators. In the King James Version, they are translated “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind”. In the Revised Standard Version, they were combined and rendered homosexuals; however, these are not the Greek words for homosexual, so that translations reflects the scholars’ bias. The New International Version illustrates the difference in these two words by translating them “male prostitute” and “homosexual offenders”. The Jerusalem Bible uses the terms “catamites” and sodomites”. Catamites were youth kept especially for sexual purpose; they were usually paid large sums of money. Neither passage refers to persons of same-sex orientation, but to people who used their sexuality for personal gain.

The two Greek words used in 1 Corinthians 6:9 are “malakos” and “arsenokoites” and are translated as follows:

	malakos (1 Cor 6:9)	arsenokoites (1 Cor 6:9)	arsenokoites (1 Tim 1:10)
KJV	effeminate	abusers of themselves with mankind	them that defile themselves with mankind
NKJV	homosexuals	sodomites	sodomites
NIV	male prostitutes	homosexual offenders	Perverts
NASB	effeminate	homosexuals	Homosexuals
ESV	men who practice homosexuality (these two Greek words combined in the translation)		men who practice homosexuality
NLT	male prostitutes	homosexuals	homosexuals

The Greek word “malakos” has caused some variety of translation. In context, (1 Cor 6:9) it is sandwiched between “moichos” (adulterer) and “arsenokoites” (homosexual), and thus it is used in the context of sexual sins. It’s literal meaning is “soft”, and in the context it is thus typically rendered as one (a man) who is effeminate in a sexual relationship – thus a homosexual.

The Greek word “arsenokoites” is defined as “one who lies with a male, a sodomite” (“The Analytical Greek Lexicon, Revised,” 1978 Edition, by Harold K. Moulton). Also, the same meaning is given by the “Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament” by Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D. The translations are particularly uniform for this word. The usage of “sodomites” (NKJV) is defined as “one who engages in sodomy”, which is defined as

- “Any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural or abnormal, especially anal intercourse or bestiality.” - *American Heritage® Dictionary*
- Anal copulation of one male with another - *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary*
- Etymology: Anglo-French *sodomie* sexual intercourse between men, from Old French, from Late Latin *Sodoma* Sodom, from the supposed homosexual practices of the men of the city in Genesis 19:1-11
: the crime of oral or anal sexual contact or penetration between persons or of sexual intercourse between a person and an animal; *especially* : the crime of forcing another person to perform oral or anal sex - *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*
- anal intercourse committed by a man with a man or woman - *WordNet ® 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University*

It is clear that the sexual practice of one man sexually engaging another man is condemned, both from the practice mentioned using the word “arsenokoites” and from the description itself (Romans 1:27):

Romans 1:27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Does God Love Homosexuals?

Without regard for whether the word “homosexual” is used to mean “having a sexual orientation” to be attracted to those of the same gender, or to mean “one who practices sexual relationships with those of the same-sex” then the answer would be that God has said that he loves man and his demonstration of that love is that he gave his Son for our sins:

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This means that God loves all men and wants all to be saved – (2 Peter 3:9) “...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

This is not just for “certain ones”, but for all men:

1 John 2:1-2 “...Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. {2} He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

However, God’s love will not prevent him from executing judgment on those who will not obey:

Psalms 7:11 “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

Psalms 11:5 “The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love

violence his soul hates.”

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Summary

God loves all men and wants all to be saved. However, salvation is not without repentance and obedience. God's word has condemned sexual relations between those of the same gender. God's word has also condemned other sexual sins including sexual relationships between a man and a woman who are not married.

Those who seek God must recognize that he exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6). It must also be acknowledged that those who seek him, must be willing to obey him, repent from sins and keep his commandments (Matthew 7:21).