

towards ► belief

Homosexuality

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Today we live in the aftermath of the 1960s sexual revolution. There is a significant change in community views about sexual morality including homosexual behaviour. An active gay lifestyle is becoming increasingly accepted and, in some circles, actively celebrated and promoted. The push for gay marriage to be accepted has gained momentum and has been adopted in a number of Western countries.

Historically the Church has taught that homosexual sex is contrary to Biblical teaching. This stance has come under increasing community criticism. The Church is now being regularly branded 'homophobic' by critics. This topic is extremely sensitive and opinion, even within the church, is quite diverse. It raises many issues about human identity, sexuality and the definition of marriage. Critics note that the traditional teaching of the Church is turning many people away. With so many political parties and countries changing their view on this matter should the Church also change? How should Christians respond?

WATCH THE DVD

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF HUMAN IDENTITY, MARRIAGE & SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

According to most surveys of Western countries about 3-4% of people consider themselves gay, i.e. their 'orientation' or 'predisposition' is homosexual. Another 1% consider themselves 'bisexual', i.e. are open to both a heterosexual or a homosexual orientation. That does not mean these people are actively engaging in homosexual sex. An orientation is neutral when it comes to God's will. God doesn't speak against 'a predisposition' but against certain behaviour. Christians should be careful not to judge a sexual predisposition. With God's help Christians who consider themselves as having a 'gay' orientation may live a celebrate life just as other single Christians are instructed to. In some cases orientation can change.

THE BINARIES OF GOD'S CREATION

Genesis 1

Q1. How many complementary pairs are listed in Gen 1? (see e.g. vv.1, 2, 4, 5[x2], 6, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 27)

There are a great number of 'complementary pairs' listed in Genesis: heaven & earth; formless & empty; light & darkness; day & night; morning & evening; sea & sky, land & ocean; sun & moon; plants & trees; fish & birds; and at the climax – humans as 'male and female' v.27

Q2. What might this 'complementary pairing' suggest in terms of human identity?

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 19:4-6

Q3. How does this passage describe a marriage? What are the purposes of a marriage? Matt 19:4-6

While everything is declared 'good' in Genesis 1, according to v.18 of Genesis 2 the creation of the man alone' is 'not good'. God remedies this by creating his complementary partner, 'Eve', to overcome his 'aloneness'. Eve is a 'suitable' partner in that she is the same yet different. She 'suits' him and is a 'helper' for Adam, made from his rib so as not to dominate him nor be dominated by him. He celebrates Eve's arrival v.23 and v.24 notes how a marriage begins: by 'leaving' one's parents, being united to a suitable helper and enjoying a 'one flesh' relationship for sexual fulfilment and procreation. All of these qualities are intended as happening between a man and a woman, not between two men or two women.

THE OLD TESTAMENT & HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY

Genesis 19:1-5, Judges 19:22, Leviticus 18:21-22, 20:13

Q4. What do these passages say about homosexual behaviour?

In Gen 19:1-5 (& Judges 19:22) wicked men attempted a homosexual rape and, in Sodom's case, as a result of this and other widespread wickedness, God destroyed the city. Jude 7 affirms this same strong condemnation of sexual 'perversion'. The other passages call male homosexual acts 'detestable'. These passages suggest that homosexual acts are contrary to human identity.

THE NEW TESTAMENT & HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY

Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10

Q5. What do these passages say about homosexual acts?

All of these passages take a similar stance to the OT. Homosexual and lesbian sexual activity are contrary to human identity, as God created it, and forbidden. In Romans 1 it is a behaviour of those who have '*exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped created things rather than the Creator*' leading to '*an exchange of natural sexual relations for unnatural ones*' v26. In the Corinthian passage Paul calls both '*male prostitutes and practicing homosexuals,*' '*wrongdoers*' along with several other abhorrent behaviours.

'BIG SINS OR LITTLE SINS?'

Q6. In some Churches homosexual behaviour is singled out as particularly evil? Do the NT passages do this?

Homophobia is rife in some churches. However in the NT passages homosexual behaviour is listed alongside many other sinful behaviours, including greed and lying. Christians are called to love and to welcome all people, as Jesus did. Acting out fear or hatred in violence or abuse is never Christian.

IDENTITY ISSUES: NATURE V NURTURE OR PREDISPOSITION.

Q7. Is someone 'born' with a homosexual orientation?

"When we look at sex research today what we do know is that there is no gay gene. However what we do think, that there is for some people a predisposition to same sex behaviour or same sex attraction. Now, that is a clear difference from predetermination. In other words, you are disposed to, but you have a choice as to, how you behave. Now, there is just as much evidence if not more that social issues and environment, such as poor parenting, absent father, childhood sexual abuse, the environment in which kids are brought up – that these things influence sexual orientation. So nature/nurture we've still got both issues involved."
Patricia Weerakoon.

'IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY' IN CHRIST AND CELIBACY

Q8. How should single Christians define their identity? Is an active sex life part of that identity?

"What I really believe in the deepest part of my being is that we live in a time in which people have come to define themselves by their sexual orientation, their sexual attraction. And my belief is that's not at the very heart of who we are. We are human beings, male and female, made in the image of God, and loved by God."The truth of the matter is that while we are in a very sexualised culture and we see sexuality as a right; the reality is that sexual relationships is not what makes us happy. ... And what we all crave is love. What we all crave is relationship... friendship. We crave deep, abiding relationships that go over a long period of time in which we are loved for who we are and we love another for who they are." Prof Dale Kuehne

What we need is to first and foremost see our identity as in Christ and a part of His family. It's in His love and the love of His body for singles that they can be accepted, supported, transformed, renewed and, when necessary, forgiven. Then they must take up their cross and live a celibate life with Jesus' empowering.

SUMMARY: WHAT TO SAY TO THOSE WHO SAY THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE TO HOMOSEXUALS CALLS IT INTO QUESTION?

- i. Sexual predisposition (orientation) is not a sin: heterosexual or homosexual. Homophobia is wrong.
- ii. Human identity is first and foremost as made 'in God's image' not our sexuality. In Christ we are deeply loved and have the basis for rich relationships and love to enable us to live as God has shown us.
- iii. The Bible clearly maintains that homosexual behaviour is contrary to God design for us and forbidden.

SHARING & PRAYER