

Confronting Christianity – Part 9

Isn't Christianity Homophobic?

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Oct 30th, 2022

Intro:

- The question we are seeking to answer this morning is, “Isn't Christianity homophobic?” In order to answer this question, we need to define what “homophobic” means and then look to see what the Christian scriptures teach about homosexuality. According to Dictionary.com, homophobic is defined as “**an aversion or hostility to, disdain for, or fear of gay sexual orientation or gay people**” and the British dictionary defines homophobic as “**intense hatred or fear of homosexuals or homosexuality**” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/homophobic> - accessed Oct. 29th, 2022).
- Now, if you think Christianity is best represented by those of Westboro Baptist Church and others who protest with signs that read “God Hates Fags” and the like, then you would surely conclude that Christianity is Homophobic. However, for us to reach a conclusion, we must look to see what the Bible teaches on the subject and then formulate a Biblical Christian response.

Homosexuality and the Old Testament

- The design for marriage was established in the creation account in the book of Genesis. As we talked about last week, God's image is seen in His creation of man and woman. And because of His image seen in our creation, “**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh**” Gen 2:24 ESV. This establishes the pattern for marriage as one man and woman together in marriage.
- As the story unfolds in the Old Testament, God chooses a family to follow him (Abraham and Sarah) and then creates a nation for Himself from them. This nation was taken out of slavery in Egypt and was given a land promised to them. This nation was also given rules and laws to follow. The details of these rules and laws were primarily recorded in the book of Leviticus.
- The book of Leviticus is the major document that deals with God's and our holiness. Holiness is the book's overarching theme. The first half of Leviticus talks about the whole system of Israel's worship, assuming the holiness of God as its starting place. You have holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by a holy law, that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The second half starting in chapter 17, is called the “holiness code,” detailing how the people are to practically apply this in their day-to-day living.
- In this section, you find laws about things like not eating shellfish, not charging interest on loans, not wearing clothes with two kinds of fabric, not eating pork, not letting your cattle breed with a different kind, not sowing your field with two kinds of seed, not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk, etc. along with sexual behavior, which was forbidden which includes, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality.
- Since we are focusing on Homosexuality, this is what it says:

Lev 18:22 ESV

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Lev 20:13 ESV

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

- So those who are pro-homosexuality argue Christians are inconsistent with the application of scripture where they now allow something and enforce others. So, therefore, you have to obey it all or get rid of it all.
- Unfortunately, this conclusion is based on a misunderstanding of the connection and relationship between the Old and New Testaments.
- There are three basic categories of law; ceremonial laws (which include worship and the sacrificial system), ritual purity laws (which include what you ate, what you wore, how you worked, etc.), and moral laws (your relationship with God and other people).
- This is where Jesus and the New Testament come in. Jesus, in His teaching, talked about what the Old Testament law was all about – it was always and will always be about the heart. He was getting at this on the Sermon on the Mount and all of His teachings and actions. His message was “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand” – it was not “death to the lawbreakers.” Why? Because Jesus perfectly lived by and fulfilled all the requirements of the law – He did not break a single one. In his death and resurrection, people have a new covenant in His blood. In this covenant, we have forgiveness through repentance (Jesus and the women caught in adultery). He did for us what we could not do, so this is why faith in Jesus is the only thing that matters. If you want to get to heaven by your works, you must do all of them (which no one can). So, in Jesus, we have a new way of approaching God the father – it is through him.
- Jesus did away with the ceremonial and ritual purity laws. All foods have been declared clean (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:8-11:18); holy days have been rendered optional (Rom 14:5-6); the entire sacrificial system of temple, priest, and sacrifice has been superseded (Heb. 7:1-10:18). The moral laws were brought forward into the New Testament and those who broke them were told to repent, make amends to those who they have wronged (including God), put to death our sinful nature and walk in accordance with the Holy Spirit trusting Christ for our salvation.
- Another text has to do with Sodom, and Gomorrah, found in Genesis Chapter 19, referenced in Ezekiel 16:47-50, and Jude 1:7, and also mentioned by Jesus in the gospels as a warning of impending judgment and to expose people’s hardness of hearts. Homosexuality was one of the reasons God destroyed the cities.

Homosexuality and Jesus

- We don’t have a sermon recorded by Jesus talking specifically about homosexuality or rape or incest or bestiality because these things were not the main issues of His day and because He was talking to mainly Jewish people who were well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures and knew these things were forbidden.
- However, Jesus clearly forbade any and all forms of sexual immorality, of which homosexuality is a subcategory. By prohibiting the more general concept of porneia (Matt. 5:19, Matt. 15:18-20, Mark 7:21), Jesus clearly prohibited its particular forms.
- Jesus also confirmed the pattern for marriage by quoting Genesis 3 when asked about divorce in Matthew chapter 19, agreeing with and reestablishing this pattern of one man and one woman in marriage in the New Testament.

Homosexuality and the New Testament

- Homosexuality is mentioned three times in the New Testament, all by the Apostle Paul and all in the negative. The first mention is in the book of Romans, where Paul links humanity's refusal to acknowledge the truth about God and glorify Him to a tumbling down of worsening behavior and hardening of heart. Homosexuality is mentioned in this list, but it is not the final stopping point, the list gets progressively worse.

Rom 1:26-27 ESV

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

- It is clear that God sees same-sex passions as “dishonorable,” but some have questioned this understanding. For example, some say the statement “women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” talks about what is natural to them – which would be a same-sex attraction. However, this is not talking about their nature but to nature – the natural order of things, how things are normal as seen in nature.
 - In nature, we find some animals/insects with homosexual traits – but these things are anomalies (natural selection) and also in nature, you find insects after mating, the female kills the male – or hippos after giving birth – try to kill the male child, or ostriches/turtles abandon their young . . . this is talking about the way things normally are.
- To make the point clearer, Paul states, “man likewise (in the same manner) gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.”
- People argue that Paul was referencing exploitive homosexuality and not addressing mutually reciprocated care of modern homosexual practice. This objection has recently been almost completely dismissed in light of the weight of evidence for mutually caring homosexual relationships in antiquity. There is no evidence to suggest that Paul was ignorant to the prevalence of such relationships within his own context. In addition, it is important to note that verse 27 says that “the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.” The desire was reciprocated and not merely exploitive. Though many forms of homosexuality in antiquity were oppressive, it is simply historically inaccurate to claim that the first century was ignorant of mutually reciprocated relationships similar to those observed in modernity.
- Louis Crompton, a gay man, and pioneer in homosexual studies, wrote in his massive book *Homosexuality and Civilization*:

“Some interpreters, seeking to mitigate Paul’s harshness, have read the passage in Romans 1 as condemning not homosexuals generally but only heterosexual men and women who experimented with homosexuality. According to his interpretation, Paul’s words were not directed at “bonafide” homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstances. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any Jew or early Christian.”

- This passage addresses all homosexual behavior – the Greek words used as a reference to homosexual practice were commonly used in the ancient world (Plato, Plutarch, Philo, Josephus, and others) to cover all forms of homosexual behavior.
- Paul then names those who practice homosexuality among a long list of things that are ungodly.

1 Tim 1:8-10 ESV

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine

- This list includes all types of things that are not good or holy. Those who hold the Bible as the authoritative word of God must be careful not to just point to the one issue of homosexuality in this passage but include all of the things listed as equally wrong in the sight of God. We cannot come down strongly on homosexuality but not as strongly on the other items listed, other sexual immoralities and lying as examples.
- The last place where homosexuality is mentioned is in a list of people who will not “inherit the kingdom of God.”

1 Cor 6:9-11 ESV

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- Notice that is a list of those who are unrighteous. These are what identified these people, and this is who they are. Now the good news is that when we give our lives to Christ, we are made new and have been given a new nature and a new identity. We were sinners in need of grace, and now in Christ, God calls us saints and saints who occasionally sin. Our identity is not in who we were, but who we now are “and such were some of you.” These things are not our identity, these are the things we are moving away from as we become more like Christ. This leads us to the question of how should Christian’s respond to the issue of homosexuality.

Homosexuality and the Christian Response

- Recognize the personal nature and sensitivity in your response.
- Recognize the teaching of the Bible on the subject. The Bible condemns all kinds of sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage. All people are made for relationships and desire love. Loving each other is good and right, but there are different kinds of love, and there are boundary lines drawn around sexual expressions of love. Love does not need sex, and sex does not equal love. Loving one another deeply from the heart is what scripture teaches us to do.
- Relate to all people with love and dignity. We can love the person but disagree with their choices. Ask God for the wisdom to best live and relate in this way.

- Recognize there is a difference between same-sex attraction and same-sex actions. For example, the author of *Confronting Christianity*, Rebecca McLaughlin, is a same-sex attracted person who has not acted on this attraction. (See her book about her rationale for this choice.)
- Recognize that we are all in need of the grace and mercy of God.
- Prayer and transition to communion.