

What the Bible Says about...

Homosexuality

By Bill Scheidler

What the Bible Says about...

Homosexuality

What is Homosexuality?

The term “homosexual” is an English word that is derived from both Greek and Latin words. It is considered a hybrid in its word history being made up of the Greek word for “same” (*homos*) and the Latin word for “gender” (*sexus*).

In common culture today this term is applied to “same sex” sexual attraction and relationships as indicated by the following definition from Wikipedia:

“Homosexuality is romantic or sexual attraction or behavior among members of the same sex. As a sexual orientation, homosexuality refers to ‘an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual, affectional, or romantic attractions primarily to’ people of the same sex; ‘it also refers to an individual’s sense of personal and social identity based on those attractions, behaviors expressing them, and membership in a community of others who share them.’”

Someone who has labeled themselves a homosexual is a person who defines him or herself by his preference for sexual relations with a person or persons of the same gender. There are no other defining characteristics of a homosexual apart from his preferred choice of sexual behavior including acting out stereotypical mannerisms, style of dress and homosexual thoughts and desires.

Is Homosexuality mentioned in the Bible?

While some versions or translations of the Bible may include the word “homosexuality”, the original text of the Bible does not use an equivalent term. Homosexuality is not mentioned in the Bible any more than “alcoholism” is mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible does not label anyone as a “homosexual” any more than the Bible labels anyone as an “alcoholic.” When God created mankind, He made them male and female. In doing so He made it clear that the man was made for the woman and the woman was made for the man.

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 5:1b-2

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.

Matthew 19:4-6

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

See also; I Corinthians 7:2; 11:3-12

While homosexuality is not mentioned in the Bible, the Bible does address homosexual activities that are outside of God’s prescribed order. This includes the following passages:

Leviticus 20:13

The penalty for homosexual acts is death to both parties. They have committed a detestable act and are guilty of a capital offense. –NLT

I Corinthians 6:9-10

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 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. –NIV

Jude 1:7

Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities near them, which like them committed sexual sins and engaged in homosexual activities, serve as an example of the punishment of eternal fire. – ISV

Note that each of these versions all focus on activities or practices that are of a homosexual nature. Never does the Bible refer to a person as “a homosexual” or “homosexuality” as if it were someone’s nature to be so.

What was God’s purpose in creating both male and female?

When God created this creature called “man,” He did so as part of His declared purpose. God is love. God is a Father. God had a desire to reproduce according to His own likeness and to extend His family (Gen. 1:26-28).

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

In keeping with this declared purpose God created mankind as both male and female. He did this for primarily three reasons:

1. To fulfill God's purpose of having offspring in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26-28).
2. To perpetuate life on the earth (Gen. 6:19; 7:3).

Genesis 6:17-19

And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark--you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

Genesis 7:2-3

You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.

God placed Noah, his family and animals on the ark to preserve life on the earth. Without both a male and a female of a species, this preservation would not have been possible. Without male/female interaction the entire species is only ever one generation away from extinction.

3. To model the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

God created the relationship of the man with the woman for more than just natural reasons. He also wanted to teach us something about Christ who would come as the new creation to lay His life down so that He could enter into an eternal union with His bride—the Church.

How does the New Testament deal with homosexual activity?

There are various words, terms or phrases that the New Testament uses in association with homosexual practices. All of these are clearly defined by God as sinful or "out of bounds."

Sodomy

I Timothy 1:8-10

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for

the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine...

The New Testament includes sodomy in a long list of sins (I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:10). In both places where this word occurs it seems to apply specifically to something that a man might do as opposed to something that a woman might do. The Greek word (*arsenokoites*) used in these passages means “one who lies with a male as with a female” (Thayer’s).

In the Old Testament some translations use the word “sodomites” to refer to male prostitutes who served in pagan temples (I Kgs. 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; II Kgs. 23:7). In various translations they are referred to as perverted persons (NKJV), shrine prostitutes (NLT, NIV), male prostitutes (NEB) and homosexuals (LB).

Vile Passions

Romans 1:26-28

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting...

The Greek word that is translated “vile” in this passage literally means “disgraceful, dishonoring or ignoble.” This is further reinforced later in this passage mentioning men “committing what is shameful” and “not fitting” (literally, unbecoming or unfit). Again this seems to be something that is more readily practiced by men. However, this passage also mentions that even women were involved in the practice of this expression that is contrary to nature.

Effeminate

I Corinthians 6:9

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind... –KJV

This Greek word (*malakos*) that is translated “effeminate” in some versions literally means “soft to the touch” (Luke 7:25). However, when this word is used in a negative sense it refers to a boy who was kept with the purpose of sexual relations with men (Thayer’s). Darby puts forward an interesting translation of this word when he refers to this offense as men “who make women of themselves.”

Throughout the Bible God seems to be very concerned that the lines of distinction between men and women not be crossed. God appears to want men to be men and women to be women. He

seems to care that we not confuse genders even in the way we dress (Deut. 22:5) or the way we look (I Cor. 11).

Deuteronomy 22:5

A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Is homosexuality a genetic disposition?

Even though there is strong motivation for some to find conclusive evidence for a special gene that determines whether someone will be a heterosexual or homosexual, a thorough searching of the most recent and unbiased scientific research lends little, if any, support to the theory that homosexuality is genetically determined. As one researches further you will find that the majority of investigators today agree that homosexuality is the result of learned behavior and does not in any way follow the genetic patterns established by Mendelian science.

The fact is that Romans 1:26-27 indicates that this practice is “against nature.” When you understand that our bodies have been created by God to be the way they are it is clear from the natural construction and design of the male and female apparatus that they are made specifically for each other.

Romans 1:26-27, NLT

That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men and, as a result, suffered within themselves the penalty they so richly deserved.

The only genetic issue in relation to homosexuality is the same genetic issue with which all mankind must deal, and that is the fact that we have been born of Adam and have a genetic disposition to sin.

Psalm 51:5

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Is homosexuality to be categorized as a minority to be protected or promoted with equal opportunity legislation?

The Bible clearly does not classify homosexual behavior in the same category as race or gender. No one is “born that way.” The only distinction between someone who professes to be homosexual and someone who does not is how and with whom they choose to engage in a sexual relationship.

When homosexual behavior is discussed in the Bible, it is included with other sinful behavior from which we are instructed to turn away. It would be unreasonable for God to condemn something as sin over which a person has absolutely no control. It would be similar to God declaring “blue eyes” sinful. God is not arbitrary. He is completely equal and just in His treatment of all sinful behavior.

If sexual preference becomes acceptable and legally protected based on a yet “undiscovered” genetic map, how long before the same argument can be applied to other sexual preferences including such things as pedophilia, bestiality and the like?

Are there contributing factors that would draw someone into a homosexual lifestyle?

There is evidence to suggest that some of the following can contribute to a person’s entertaining the idea that they may be homosexual or bisexual. However, it is possible that with none of the following issues present, a person can choose this lifestyle by virtue of society’s general acceptance of this behavior.

Possible contributing factors to someone accepting this identity include:

- Having been molested by someone of the same sex as a child.
- Having been labeled by peers early on as effeminate or gay.
- Having been raised in a strongly pro-gay environment.
- Having an inordinate craving of sexual arousal (sex-addiction).
- Having been seduced by someone into a homosexual encounter.
- Having a broken or non-existent relationship with the same sex parent.
- Having been isolated with members of the same sex over prolonged periods of time (prisons, armed forces, all-male or all-female schools, etc.).

In this last case there is often no other outlet for the expression of a person’s sexuality or the fulfillment of their sexual needs than persons of the same sex.

What is to be the attitude of the Christian believer toward people who practice homosexual activity?

Believers should love all people regardless of their behavior patterns. Their love, however, should never be interpreted as an acceptance of homosexual behavior. Believers must be merciful to those who have been caught in this snare, but they dare not be more merciful than God.

Believers should sincerely pray for people who have been caught up in this lifestyle. It has been demonstrated that the homosexual lifestyle is a lifestyle that can dominate and influence many aspects of a person's life because it is an expression of sin that is done in community with others. Once an individual has engaged in such a lifestyle it becomes very difficult for them to break free.

Believers should treat those involved in homosexuality no differently than they treat anyone else outside of Christ (I Cor. 5:11-13). Everyone outside of Christ needs a savior at the same level. There are no degrees of "lostness." Every person will spend eternity in heaven or in hell depending on one thing and one thing alone—those "in Christ" will live with Him for eternity while those "outside of Christ" will live separated from Him for eternity.

Believers must realize that no sin is intrinsically worse than any other sin. Sinful behavior of any kind separates us from God. However, homosexual sin is not more vile than adultery or a host of other sins. Jesus was a friend of sinners because He came to seek and save the lost. Christians need to have the same disposition toward the lost that Jesus had.

Believers must not act as if they are better than or superior to those who have declared themselves to be "homosexual." Apart from Christ all people are all capable of anything. Apart from the work of Christ on their behalf and the grace of God that they have received believers are capable of any kind of sinful behavior.

Believers must be ever ready to extend God's forgiveness to those who call upon the Lord. It is important to remember that no sin is unpardonable or outside of the scope of God's grace to forgive. Believers must demonstrate spirit of humility and realize that outside of Christ "such were some of you" (Gal. 6:1; I Cor. 6:11).

I Corinthians 6:9-11

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

I Corinthians 6:11, NIV

And that is what some of you were. 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.

What is the answer for the person who is part of a homosexual lifestyle?

The answer for this lifestyle issue is the same as it is for all issues that the Bible addresses as sin.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Christ provided a remedy for sin, not for sexual preferences. It is cruel to withhold the truth from someone who can be helped and labeling their problem as “genetic.” When we do this with withhold the answer and solution to their situation.

Leviticus 18:22

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

Leviticus 20:13a

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.

God calls homosexual behavior an “abomination.” The word used in this passage literally means, “morally disgusting.” Homosexual behavior stems from the same root from which all sinful behavior stems and that is the sinful heart of man (Mark 7:21-23). It is not external forces that cause wrong behavior; it is external forces meeting with a wrong heart condition. In order to cleanse the behavior, we must cleanse the heart.

Mark 7:21-23, NIV

For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.”

Therefore, homosexual behavior should be addressed the way all sin is addressed. Peter addressed some apparently devout people in Acts 2 with a solution for sin that worked for them and still applies today.

Acts 2:37-40

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” –NIV

This challenge that Peter gave to the multitudes still works today. There are four main components to this challenge. If you want to be made right before God you must do these four things.

1. You must repent.

When we repent, it means that...

- We accept God’s word as truth.
- We acknowledge that homosexuality is sin in the eyes of God.
- We confess our sins to God.
- We ask for God to forgive our sins.

- We turn away from homosexual activities.
- We resist further temptation.
- We renew our minds by the daily reading of the Word of God.

I John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2. You must be baptized.

When we are baptized...

- We experience a new victory over life dominating sins (Rom. 6:11-18).
- We experience a spiritual cleansing and renewal.

Acts 22:16

And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

3. You must receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit we receive power from God to fulfill the demands of the Bible.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

4. You must separate yourself from this messed up generation.

To separate or distinguish oneself means...

- Severing all ties with past partners immediately (not in person).
- Changing the elements of one's physical appearance that are linked to this sin.
- Cleaning house of everything associated with this sin including possessions, clothing, sentimental keepsakes, photos, etc.
- Changing one's working environment as needed.
- Changing one's living arrangements as needed.
- Breaking off enabling friendships and making new ones.
- Changing our diet in the area of entertainment (pornography).
- Burning all bridges that connect a person to that lifestyle.
- Avoiding areas where temptation has been more prevalent.
- Committing one's self to only speaking the truth.
- Making constructive use of spare time—volunteer often.
- Becoming a committed member of a local church.

- Developing an accountability relationship with pastoral leadership.
- Getting involved in some regular area of service to others.
- Developing godly relationships with both genders.

All of this seems rather drastic, but it has been proven that homosexuality is one of the most difficult lifestyles from which to become totally free. Drastic issues require drastic measures.

Mark 9:44-48

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

The important thing to know is that freedom is not only possible but most probable when anyone puts their faith and trust in God. Paul indicated that in the church of Corinth that there were solid Christian people who had this lifestyle as a part of their pre-conversion history and they were completely set free.

I Corinthians 6:9-11, NLT

Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers--none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God. There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.

What are some of the common myths associated with homosexuality?

People love to stereotype other people. It helps them to categorize their relationships with other people in nice neat little packages. As a result it is easy to accept some not-so-accurate myths about those who are engaged in the homosexual lifestyle.

Myth #1 – Homosexuals are born that way; therefore it is impossible for them to change.

As has been stated before, there is no conclusive evidence that there is any physiological or genetic difference between someone who considers himself to be homosexual and someone professing to be heterosexual. On the other hand, many people who have considered themselves to be homosexuals have dramatically changed their lives and successfully reentered the heterosexual world.

Myth #2 – Homosexuals are more likely to molest children than heterosexuals.

Police and child welfare workers will attest to the fact that the vast majority of child molesters are heterosexual. In fact, most child molesters are members of the victim's immediate family.

Myth #3 – A homosexual seduction in childhood will surely make a person homosexual.

Most children will experience some aspect of experimentation in all areas of sexual activity when they are coming alive physically. There is no evidence to suggest that one homosexual encounter as a child or an adult will make someone choose homosexuality as a lifestyle.

Myth #4 – Homosexuals are always identifiable by physical appearance and/or occupation.

The truth is some very rough and tumble men can be given to homosexuality. Male hairdressers, dancers, artists or nurses can be both homosexual and heterosexual as well as mechanics, police officers and firemen. It is critical not to prejudge or categorize people based on body language, hobbies and other external characteristics. The same is true for both men and women.

Myth #5 – Homosexuals are the way they are because they hate the opposite sex.

To prefer one thing over another does not automatically mean that you hate the other thing. It may be true that some people involved in the homosexual lifestyle have been seriously disappointed by members of the opposite sex and actually do become guilty of stereotyping all members of that gender. But this is not the case for most people involved in the homosexual lifestyle.

Myth #6 – Homosexual sin is the worst sin of all.

The sin of homosexual activity is no different from any other sin in the sense that all sinful behavior separates us from God. In the Bible, homosexual sin is included in the same list as adultery, stealing, gossip, greed and murderers. Actually Jesus seemed to be the hardest on the sin of hypocrisy. Certainly the homosexual lifestyle carries with it many natural risks that other behaviors do not, but as far as God is concerned there is only one sin that cannot be forgiven and only one sin that will be in common with everyone in hell and that is the sin of unbelief.

Why is the word “gay” an inappropriate term to be used in conjunction with the homosexual lifestyle?

Wikipedia offers the following history of the use of the word “gay.”

“The term ‘gay’ was originally used to refer to feelings of being ‘carefree’, ‘happy’, or ‘bright and showy’; it had also come to acquire some connotations of ‘immorality’ as early as 1637.

“The term’s use as a reference to homosexuality may date as early as the late 19th century, but its use gradually increased in the 20th century. In modern English, *gay* has come to be used as an adjective, and occasionally as a noun, referring to the people, practices, and culture associated with homosexuality. By the end of the 20th century, the word *gay* was recommended by major style guides to describe people attracted to members of the same sex.”

There are several problems with referring to the homosexual lifestyle as “gay.” When we use the term “gay” to speak of homosexuality it does four things.

1. It takes this whole issue of homosexual behavior out of the realm of sin by attaching a non-biblical name to it.

The term “gay” is of very recent origin and must be seen as a “euphemism.” A euphemism is the substitution of a more acceptable term for a less favorable term. It is so easy to refer to sin as an “error in judgment” or a “slip.” It is easier to say that someone “misspoke” instead of “lied.” It is easy to refer to “adultery” having “an affair.”

2. It once again implies that someone is homosexual by genetic disposition.

No one is born as or should be labeled as a homosexual or “gay.” You are not a homosexual you are a man or a woman who has chosen to enter into sexual relationships with members of the same gender.

3. It minimizes homosexual behavior and treats a serious bondage in a light-hearted way.

Homosexuality is a very difficult pattern of behavior to change. It is a behavior that is often characterized by lying and the rejection of God and other authorities. It is sin and if it goes forward without check it will lead to someone’s eternal damnation. This is not a joking or light-hearted matter.

4. It removes any remedy provided by Christ because there is no redemption for “gayness.”

Christ bore the sins of mankind on the cross and took the punishment for that sin upon Himself. Now, all mankind is offered salvation based on their repentance of sin and acknowledgement of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Christ did not die for alcoholism, kleptomania or gayness. He died for the sin of drunkenness, stealing and homosexual behavior.

What about the issue of same-sex marriage?

God is the author of marriage. In a sense, He united the first couple into the state of matrimony (Gen. 2:22-24). You can examine the Bible from cover to cover and find that marriage is only ever described as happening between a man, who becomes the husband, and a woman, who becomes his wife.

To sanction same-sex marriage is to legitimize and declare as “holy” a behavior that is clearly called sinful by God. How could a minister stand “in the presence of God and these witnesses” to sanction something about which God has already declared that He cannot bless?

Can reading passages from the Bible ever be considered “Hate Speech”?

No! Absolutely not!

While there are no doubt people who have used the Bible to support a position of hate and those who have misinterpreted the verses of the Bible and used them as an instrument of hate, the Bible was not written from a position of hate but of love.

The truth is that God is love personified and, therefore, so is His Word. The Bible cannot be hate speech because the aim of the Bible is to lead us to Christ. The purpose of Christ coming is to restore us to God and to lead us to an abundant life both now and on into eternity. The passages of the Bible are no more “hate speech” than the words of a doctor are hate speech when he has to deliver a difficult diagnosis to someone.

If a doctor declares that you have a heart condition and that unless you radically change your lifestyle you will die, can he be accused of “hate speech” for telling you the truth? No! He is giving you some news that is very difficult to hear, but if you hear those words and respond properly to those words, those words can actually save your life.

On the other hand, if that same doctor would ignore your problem or never speak to you about your problem you would actually have greater evidence of hatred on his part. If you say that you love someone and you see them doing something that will bring serious harm to them but say nothing that becomes serious evidence that you do not really love them at all.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” John 3:16-21, NIV

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Romans 10:9-13