Homosexuality and the Christian faith

Five points to understanding homosexuality and Christianity.

- Christians face a difficult challenge.
- Homosexuality involves the whole human race in its fallen condition.
- Sexual idolatry is an underlying problem.
- Homosexual behavior has a troubled track record.
- Speaking the truth in love is needed.

A.

Sensing the dissonance

Evangelical Christians are torn between a desire to be sensitive and yet faithful as they try to address this issue in the public square.

Romans 1

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,”

Evangelical Christians are caught between two spiritual virtues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity to the heart felt experience of the homosexual community</th>
<th>Sensitivity to the traditional understanding of the Scripture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To ignore this makes one an cultural bigot.</td>
<td>To ignore this makes one a Christian heretic.</td>
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</table>

Many well known gay and bisexual people are talented, productive, sensitive, and caring. They don’t seem to be God hating, spiritual rebels, who want to destroy all that is good.

Hans Christian Andersen  Henri Nouwen  Alexander the Great
Susan B. Anthony  Philip Johnson  Rosie O’Donnell
Joan Baez  Angelina Jolie  Ellen Degeneres  James Dean
Francis Bacon  Billie Jean King  Tyrone Power  Elton John
Leonard Bernstein  Rock Hudson  Hadrian  Robert Reed
Little Richard  Bill Blass  Czar Alexander I  Lily Tomlin
Leonardo da Vinci  Tennessee Williams  Michael Feinstein
Aaron Copland  Barry Manilow  Scott Wittman
Anderson Cooper  Martina Navratilova  Andy Warhol
B. The whole human race is involved.

Homosexuality is a visual aid to the fallen human race and its unnatural condition of being separated from God.

Key points to Romans 1
1. The natural man suppresses knowledge of the glory of God.
2. The natural man suppresses knowledge of his sinful condition.
3. Paul is describing the condition of fallen humanity (as a whole) of which we are a part.
4. Homosexuality is a judgment on a whole culture, which has exchanged the natural for the unnatural.

C. Seeing the bigger issue

The homosexual question reveals a sexual idolatry.

Genesis 1:27
“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

**The first two things God says about humans:**
- They are spiritual “created in God’s image”
- They are sexual “male and female”

Note:
- Pagan worship often included sexual acts.
- Greek gods were sexually active.
- Sexual sins are set apart in Scripture.

Genesis 3
"6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."

**Where do humans find fullness of life?**

To experience the life that God offered

Eve needed to obey God’s Word,

but the serpent convinced Eve to find life on her own

and the seeds of human autonomy were sown

bearing fruit in the Enlightenment

resulting in the sexual revolution,

which saw sexual freedom as a path to life.

Galatians 5
“19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these,"

**Where do we look for life apart from God?**

**Sexual fulfillment** immorality, impurity, sensuality.

**Spiritual ecstasy** idolatry, sorcery,

enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing.

**Social harmony**

immorality, impurity, sensuality,
The great exchange of Romans 1

Many people who are passionate about sexual freedom are fighting for their hope of life - human fulfillment and wholeness. We live in a generation that has cast its lot (in the quest for life) with:

- sexual fulfillment
- spiritual ecstasy
- social harmony

But it has confused the creation with the Creator, and in seeking life apart from God it has lost it.

D. Seeking the facts

Data about homosexuality is often ignored.

Definition

What is homosexuality?

An activity (Biblical) culture
An orientation (modern) culture

1. Repentance has to do with sexual behavior not orientation.
2. It is possible to be a mature disciple of Christ without having a heterosexual orientation.

Moral responsibility

Sexual acts
Sexual lust
Sexual longings
Sexual orientation

We can expect God to change some things and not others.

- A person’s behavior can change immediately.
- A person’s orientation may change over time.
- A person’s orientation need not change to be fully repentant or healthy.
- If sexual attraction is outside our control, sexual behavior is not.
- Living a celibate life may be difficult and stressful, but it is not unusual, impossible, unreasonable, or unjust.

Matthew 10

“38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”
Four homosexual postures

- **Celibate** - they choose not to engage in sexual acts with members of the same sex.
- **Closet** - they are sexually active but private.
- **Confused** - they are sexually active but are not at peace with their sexuality.
- **Contentious** - they are openly advocating the public affirmation of homosexuality.

Sexual Promiscuity

is

recreational sex with multiple partners outside marriage.

Sexual Addiction

is

a preoccupation with sexual matters to the point of disrupting other important responsibilities in life.

Sexual Idolatry

is

the use of sexual experience as a means to satisfy the soul’s hunger for life.

How common is Homosexuality?

- 100% heterosexual: 86%
- Mostly heterosexual: 10%
- Mostly homosexual: 1%
- Bisexual: 2%
- 100% homosexual: 1%

Add Health study, Wave 4 data collected in 2008-2009 from 15,701 young adults, ages 26-32 years old

Duration of male homosexual relationships

- 6 months or less: 37%
- 1 year: 35%
- 1-5 years: 12%
- more than 5 years: 16%
• The life expectancy of a gay male in America is shortened by 20 years (without factoring in HIV).


• Depression is 7 times more likely among male homosexuals and suicide is 6 times more likely as compared to the control group.


• 75% of general population believe homosexuality is wrong but that homosexuals should have equal rights in the work place.

• 78% of male homosexuals have had sex with more than 100 partners,
  • 43% with more than 500,
  • 28% with more than 1,000

• 79% say that half of those partners are total strangers, and 70% of those sexual contacts are one night stands.


• 73% of all homosexuals have had sex with boys under 19 years of age.


• homosexual monogamy is rare (a distinction between emotional fidelity and sexual exclusivity is common)

  Harold N Miller http://members.aol.com/gaymatter/monog.htm

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**Percent reporting sexual fidelity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Married Females</th>
<th>Married Males</th>
<th>Homosexual Males (current relationship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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The Old Testament speaks of six kinds of sexual sin.

• Seduction of a virgin (Exodus 22:16)
• Rape (Deut. 22:28)
• Adultery ( Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22)
• Incest ( Lev. 20:11,12,14; Deut. 27:27,22,23)
• Bestiality (Exodus 22:19; Lev. 18:23, 20:15-16)
• **Homosexuality** (Lev. 18:22, 20:13)

  “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.”

  Only homosexuality is questioned.

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Are homosexual acts unnatural?

*Romans 1:26* “exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural”

*The same language is used by non Christian authors in denouncing homosexual acts*

• Plato (300 BC) Laws I.656C
• Philo (AD 40) Special Laws 3.37-39
• Josephus (AD 70) Against Apion 2.273-75
• Plutarch (AD 100) Moralia, Dialogue on Love 751.D-E

Is “natural” defined by what “feels” normal for me or by what is healthy given my created purpose?

There are many things that “seem” natural to some - pedophilia, promiscuity, honor killing, hatred, revenge, racism, sexism, etc.

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In 1974, 60% of the members of the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from the category of conditions, which are in themselves pathological or diseased. A recent poll of psychiatrists has noted, however, that 69% of those approached still answered “yes” to the question, “Is homosexuality usually a pathological adaptation?” (18% answered no, 13% uncertain).
E.

Speaking the truth in love

Christians must recognize the common story they share with all people including homosexuals.

Abigail Van Buren
Her response to a reader who complained that a gay couple was moving in across the street and wanted to know what he could do to improve the quality of the neighborhood.

“You could move.”

Billy Graham
“I think that the Bible teaches that homosexuality is sin, but the Bible also teaches that pride, jealousy, hatred, and evil thoughts are sins.”

Christians should understand that the secondary signs of our brokenness vary, while the primary cause is the same.

Curse
God’s judgment on the earth because of Eve’s sin effects everything including our sexual orientation.

Nature
Some people may have a genetic predisposition to be homosexual.

Choice
Homosexual acts are a choice stemming from spiritual decisions.

Nurture
Sexual orientation is shaped by the home and culture.

Genesis 3:17
“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers . . .
. . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

Romans 8:22-23

Christians share a common story with everyone else.

• We share common failures as broken people in a broken world.
• We share common longings with everyone for unconditional love and fullness of life.
• We share common temptations to find our life in the creature rather than the Creator.
• We share common redemption through the Cross of Christ and faith.
• We share common callings to bear one another’s burdens and walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

Galatians 6:2
“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ”

Scriptural ethics are a guide to finding fullness of life and avoiding idolatry.

• Homosexuality is God’s curse on a rebellious society - it is not the path to life.
• Homosexual acts are forbidden in Scripture because they are a false hope for fullness of life.
• We each have different burdens to bear because of the curse of the Fall.
• We expect to experience the joy of life by living disciplined lives no matter what our personal preferences.
Christians are called to be tolerant - legally and socially but not ideologically.

- Kingdom standards are distinct from public policy.
- American pluralism is defined by legal and social rights not personal or private ideology.
- No individual or culture is pluralistic at all levels - proscription of child sacrifice, racism, polygamy, honor killing, etc. reflect a common ideology.
- The gay community tends to confuse and equate ideological agreement with legal and social rights.

Political responsibility “personal rights” and the “general welfare.”

- Human (including gay) rights of all citizens should be defended in a pluralistic society.
- Special rights including special favored treatment for homosexuals should be resisted.
- The interests of the “common good” of a society will dictate the discouragement of some behaviors including homosexual acts.
- Moral dialogue in a pluralistic society should be conducted with respect for the common good and common ground.

Competing values in the American vision

1776

Individual freedom

GENERAL WELFARE

Throughout our history we have moved back and forth on this issue.

CIVIL discourse and debate are vital to our system.

2013

Pastoral responsibility

- We start by sharing our common story of our search for love and life.
- We understand Scripture, sexuality, and spirituality imperfectly and therefore are learners (disciples).
- When we share the Gospel’s hope and the wisdom of the Word of God, we must audit our own souls.
- Sexual preferences of all types require sacrifice, discipline, understanding, and often repentance.
- The church is made up of dirty, rotten, sinners who are fully justified by grace through faith.
- The church needs to welcome and help believers who struggle with homosexual issues.

Homosexuals rights and wrongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil rights?</th>
<th>Gay partnerships?</th>
<th>Christian status?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights</td>
<td>YES!</td>
<td>Christian fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special privileges</td>
<td>No!</td>
<td>YES!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay contracts</td>
<td>YES!</td>
<td>Ordination of active gays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay marriage</td>
<td>No!</td>
<td>No!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pietro Aretino (poet 1550)

“I love you, and because I love you, I would sooner have you hate me for telling you the truth than adore me for telling you lies.”

- Homosexuality and the Bible - two views by Dan Via & Robert Gagnon
- Straight & Narrow - Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexual Debate by Thomas E. Schmidt
- What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality by Daniel A. Helminiak
- Washed & Waiting - Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality by Wesley Hill