

HOMOSEXUALITY

“natural and unnatural functions”

Key question

How does a Biblical understand of homosexuality affect the modern debate over gay rights?

Key text

Romans 1:26-27

“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.”

Key Definition

Homosexuality

A HOMOSEXUAL (in the Biblical sense) is a male or female who is motivated in his or her adult life by a preferential erotic attraction to members of the same sex **and who engages in overt sexual relations with them.**

Introduction

1. **Society defines a homosexual as a person with an erotic sexual preference for members of the same sex.**
 - a. The term is often applied in a more limited way to individuals who engage in sex acts with members of the same sex. This is the Biblical understanding of homosexuality. Ancient cultures did not have a sense of sexual orientation only of sexual actions
 - b. **It is helpful from a Christian perspective to make a distinction between a person with a homosexual preference and a person who is actually engaged in homosexual acts.**
2. The homosexual community consists of individuals who occupy differing postures in their relationship to the broader society.
 - a. Some are **celibate**. For any number of reasons (often religion, marriage or health) they choose not to engage in sexual acts with members of the same sex.

- b. Some are **closet** homosexuals. They are sexually active and private in their lifestyle. They may or may not have accepted their sexuality but want to be left alone.
 - c. Some are **confused**. They are sexually active but uneasy with their lot in life and would like to be heterosexual but do not believe that they can change.
 - d. Some are **contentious**. They insist that a gay “lifestyle” be not simply tolerated but affirmed. They want a radical change in social behavior, religion, morality and law. They are convinced that homosexuality is biologically determined, psychologically irreversible, and sociologically normal.
3. A Biblical perspective on homosexuality sees it as a form of idolatry.
- a. The first two things that the Scripture tells us about humanity is that humans are spiritual (made in God’s image) and sexual (male and female). **Gen.1:27** “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”
 - b. The temptation and fall of Eve is a basic decision about finding 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 and human fulfillment.
 - c. When Paul describes the deeds of the flesh in **Gal.5:19-21** he is describing the human search for fulfillment apart from God. The deeds can be linked to three broad categories.
 - 1. **Sexual fulfillment** – “immorality, impurity, sensuality”
 - 2. **Spiritual enlightenment** – “idolatry, sorcery”
 - 3. **Social community** – “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing”

Note: 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 enlightenment, and social community. But in doing so it has confused the creation with the Creator and in seeking life apart from God has lost it. **Matt.10:39** “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”
 - d. There are two very different views of how we experience “life.”
 - 1. The path is given based on Scripture.
 - 2. The path is created based on secular humanism.
 - e. **Sexual idolatry** is the use of sex as a means to satisfy the soul’s hunger for life.
4. The sexual revolution is the mother of the politically active homosexual movement.
- a. A key presupposition of the revolution is that human health and flourishing require that sexual desire, understood as a “need,” be acted upon and satisfied. Any discipline of denial or restraint has been popularly depicted as unhealthy and dehumanizing.
 - b. The revolution has introduced a new category of civil rights — the right to sexual privacy. It is reasoned by gay activists that if society respects the heterosexual communities right to enjoy the benefits of the sexual revolution (easy divorce, promiscuity, etc.) why is the gay community not given the same respect?

- c. Gay activists insist that homosexuality is:
 - 1. biologically innate,
 - 2. psychologically irreversible
 - 3. sociologically normal
- d. The life expectancy of a male homosexual is significantly shortened. (A 1992 study by the Family Research Institute of 5,246 obituaries in 16 homosexual newspapers from coast to coast found that the average age of men dying from AIDS is 39. The average age of homosexuals dying from all other causes is 41.) If there was any other subculture identified with a particular social behavior with that kind of life expectancy the behavior would be critically assessed. But sexual promiscuity and gender preference have become among our most basic human rights. To fail to support them is to be labeled inhuman.

A. Our sexual identity and erotic preference are malleable and partially conditioned by our environment.

- 1. It is estimated that 50% of American men (38% of women) have responded erotically to a person of their own sex at least once in their lives.
- 2. Most children (80%) are conditioned by virtue of being raised by a mother and father.
- 3. The most significant factor in a child’s sexual identity seems to be the relationship with the father.
- 4. Our sexual preferences are best described not as a dichotomy (like male and female) but as a continuum (exclusively heterosexual, bisexual, exclusively homosexual).

NOTE: Alfred Kinsey’s Heterosexual-Homosexual Continuum

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63%	12%	8%	7%	5%	3%	2%
Exclusively heterosexual						Exclusively homosexual

5. Statistics:

- a. Based upon the Kinsey report of 1948 it is estimated that today 5-10% of the total population would identify itself as homosexual.
 - 1. 35% of males and 20% of adult females have reported a homosexual experience during adolescence.
 - 2. 2% of males (1% of females) claim to be exclusively homosexual.
 It should be noted that more recent studies have found these figures to be inflated. Koray Tanfer and fellow social scientists at the Battelle Human Affairs Research Centers in Seattle found: One percent of the male population had only male sexual partners within the last ten years. The Add Health study of 15,701 young adults, ages 26-32 years old between 2008-09 confirmed these numbers.
 - 3. Studies in France and England in 1992 put the number of exclusively homosexual males at 1.4 percent.
- b. A study entitled, “The Social Organization of Sexuality” surveyed 3,432 adults ages 18-59; between Feb.- Sept. 1992 (with a margin for error 5% or less). The study is

based on a randomly selected nationally representative sample. It asked the following questions.

Have you experienced same gender desire, attraction, appeal?

9% of men said "Yes"

4% of women said "Yes"

Have you had at least one same gender sexual experience?

8% of men said "Yes"

4% of women said "Yes"

Do you identify yourself as homosexual?

2.8% of men said "Yes"

1.4% of women said "Yes"

- c. The study also concluded that:
1. Both men and women who, as children, had been sexually touched by an adult were more likely, as adults, to have more than 10 sex partners, to engage in group sex, to report a homosexual or bisexual identification and to be unhappy.
 2. HIV infection and AIDS are unlikely to become epidemic in the general American population and probably will remain confined to high risk groups: gay men, intravenous drug users, their sexual partners and their children.
- d. One research project interviewed 979 homosexual persons with the following comment summarizing their research: "The model view of the white male homosexual, based on our findings, would be that of a person reporting 1,000 or more sexual partners throughout his life-time, most of whom were strangers prior to their sexual meeting and with whom sexual activity occurred only once. During the past year, 28% reported having had more than 50 partners."
1. In another study, 43% of white male homosexuals were guilty of having sodomite relations with 500 or more partners, 28% admitted to 1000 or more partners in a lifetime, and of these people, 79% said that half of those partners were total strangers. (*Bell, A. and Weinberg, M. Homosexualities: a Study of Diversity Among Men and Women. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978.*
<http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=IS01B1>
 2. A 1997 study of 2,583 older homosexual men found the "modal range for number of sexual partners was 101-500. 10 to 15% said they had had more than 1,000 sexual partners. *The Journal of Sex Research. Timothy J. Dailey, author, Dark Obsession.* <http://www.lifeway.com>
 3. Another study of 50 AIDS victims by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta found that the median number of lifetime sexual partners for these men was 1,100, with a few of the men reporting as many as 20,000. The median number of different partners for a homosexual control group without the disease was 550.
- e. Some male homosexual relationships are committed (?). One researcher studied 50 males who had lived with their respective partners an average of 3.7 years. But it should be noted that these committed relationships were seldom if ever monogamous.
1. One study noted that 4.5% of male homosexual males in current relationships were reporting sexual fidelity (compared to 75.5% of the married male population). *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, 216; *McWhirter and Mattison, The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop (1984): 252-253; Wiederman, "Extramarital Sex," 170.*
 2. A distinction is often made between being emotional fidelity and sexual exclusivity. *Harold N Miller* <http://members.aol.com/gaymatter/monog.htm>

- f. In a 1989 Gallop poll 53% of adult Americans said that homosexuals should not be hired as clergy, 42% would not have them hired as elementary school teachers, 36% believed that homosexual acts should not be legal.
 - g. Public opinion over the last several years has moved toward a more tolerant view of homosexual behavior.
 1. Roughly 3/4 of the population continues to believe that homosexual relations are wrong.
 2. About 1/2 the population believes that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal.
 3. Three in four believe that homosexuals should have equal rights in job opportunities.
- B. The Biblical proscription against homosexual activity is clearer than some want to admit.**
1. **God's designed purpose** in erotic preference among human beings is best described as "heterosexual" stemming from a "proper" sexual self-identity.
 - a. **Scriptural revelation** (Genesis 2:24 "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.")
 - b. **Biological evidence** - i.e., sexual organs.
 - c. **Sociological evidence** - i.e., propagation of the race.
 - d. 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).
 2. The Old Testament speaks of seven kinds of sexual sin:
 - a. Seduction of a virgin (Exodus 22:16)
 - b. Rape of an unbetrothed virgin (Deut. 22:28)
 - c. Rape of a betrothed virgin (Deut. 22:23-27)
 - d. Adultery with or rape of another's wife (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22)
 - e. Incest (Lev. 20:11,12,14; Deut. 27:27,22,23)
 - f. Bestiality (Exodus 22:19; Lev. 18:23, 20:15-16)
 - g. **Homosexuality** (Lev. 18:22, 20:13)
 3. A **HOMOSEXUAL** (in the Biblical sense) is a male or female who is motivated in his or her adult life by a preferential erotic attraction to members of the same sex **and who engages in overt sexual relations with them.**
 4. **The testimony of scripture concerning homosexuality:**
 - a. The Old Testament:
 1. **Genesis 1:27-28**
 - a. In the creation narrative Adam is mated to Eve with the expectation that procreation was to result.

- b. The Fall (Gen. 3) distorts this purpose and opens the door to sexual dysfunction.
2. **Genesis 19:4-9 (Isaiah 1:9-10, 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49)** Sodom
 - a. **D.S. Bailey** argues that the demand to “know” the strangers was nothing more than a desire to get better acquainted; it was no more than a matter of a breach of **hospitality**.
 - b. In the book of Genesis the word YADA is used 12 times, and in ten of those instances it denotes sexual intercourse.
 - c. In the immediate context it is used in a way that unmistakably refers to sexual intercourse - “Behold, I have two daughters who have not **known** man;”(19:8).
 - d. Jude 7 describes the situation with these words “these indulged in **gross immorality** and went after **strange flesh**,”.
 - e. Until recently, the interpretation of this text as a reference to homosexual acts has been unanimous among Biblical scholars.
 3. **Leviticus 18:22** “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination”, **20:13** “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death,”
 4. **Judges 19:22-26**
- b. The New Testament:
 1. **Romans 1:18-32**
 - a. The context does not lend itself to the restricted sense of promiscuity or male prostitution as pro-homosexual interpreters insist.
 - b. There are few passages that suffer more violence at the hand of external political forces than this one.
 - c. In vs.26 “shameful lusts” is literally, “passions of dishonor”. Note that it is not only the lust that is viewed unfavorably here. In vs.27 “indecent acts” are also emphasized.
 - d. In vs.26 “natural” is key. It is a reference to the created order of Gen.1-2. The suggestion that homosexuality is “natural” for some who are born with a genetic predisposition to homosexuality, presupposes that the condition is in deed a state at birth. Such assumptions are not supported by good science.
 - e. In vs.27 it is clear that homosexual actions are viewed as abnormal. “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.”
 - f. If “natural” is defined by what “feels” normal for the individual then what prevents us from including – pedophilia, promiscuity, honor killing, racism, sexism, etc. which may feel natural to some people.
 2. **I Corinthians 6:9-11**
 - a. It is claimed by John Boswell that male prostitution is in view here and that Paul knew nothing of constitutional homosexuality.

- b. The term translated “homosexuals” (ARSENOKOITAI) in verse 9 is used only here and in I Tim.1:10 and literally means “males who go to bed with males.” This term most likely refers to the aggressive member in a homosexual act. The term translated “effeminate” (MALAKOI) in verse 9 refers to the passive member in a homosexual act. The NIV renders ARSENOKOITAI “male prostitute.” this is a possible meaning but it does not change the general proscription of homosexual acts.
 - c. The vast majority of commentators understand this text to refer to general homosexual behavior.
3. **I Timothy 1:8-10** lists homosexuals with others who are “lawless, rebellious, ungodly, sinners”.
 4. **Jude 3-23** speaks of those who “went after strange flesh” as in Sodom and Gomorrah.

5. Principles:

- a. Scripture most often refers to homosexuality as an act or lifestyle more than a disposition. Homosexuality is something you DO as opposed to an orientation you have. It is possible for a person to repent of a homosexual act but it is not always necessary to change a sexual preference before living a Christian life.
- b. Scripture consistently refers to homosexuality as a sinful act.

(from Romans 1:8-32)

- Homosexuality is often the result of spiritual decay in a society (a judgment of God). The presence of homosexuality in a society is not so much a judgment of the “sinfulness” of the individual as it is of the society as a whole.
- Homosexuality is unnatural and a dishonor to the body.
- Homosexuality stems from a mixed-up thinking process.
- Homosexuality includes homosexual lust.

(from I Corinthians 6:9-11)

- Homosexuality is inconsistent with the Kingdom of God.
- Homosexuality is not a SPECIAL unforgivable sin.
- Homosexuality can be changed through the power of Christ.
- Homosexuality can be forgiven through the blood of Christ.

(from I Timothy 1:8-11)

- Homosexuality is to be confronted with both truth and grace.
- Homosexuality is an act of rebellion against God.

(from Jude 7 and II Peter 2:6-8)

- Homosexuality will be judged.

6. In their book, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*--Another Christian View (1978), Scanzoni and Mollenkott offer different interpretations of the above texts.
 - a. Genesis 19 and Judges 19 refer to violent gang raping and a lack of hospitality.
 - b. Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 refer to sexual relations with male cult-prostitutes employed for pagan religious rituals.

- c. Romans 1:26-27 refer to homosexual lust and idolatry and are not meant to censure homosexual Christians who love Christ.
- d. I Corinthians 6 and I Timothy 1 refer to similar sex abuses but not to lifelong homosexual conditions or orientations.
- e. Scanzoni and Mollenkott make the following conclusions: “Since the Bible is silent about the homosexual condition, those who want to understand it must rely on the findings of modern behavioral science research and on the testimony of those who are themselves homosexual.”
- f. Others have used additional arguments to downplay the Biblical proscriptions regarding homosexuality.
 - 1. Chapters 17-26 of Leviticus are said to have been the writings of priests about 400 B.C. or later who were reacting to Canaanite practices and not reflecting a basic Hebrew moral precept.
 - 2. Others tell us that the only clear references proscribing homosexual behavior come from extra-Biblical writers like Philo and Josephus along with the questionable N.T. books of II Peter and Jude.

C. The origin of homosexual orientation is unclear.

1. **BIOLOGICALLY DETERMINED:** Some are born with a homosexual genetic predisposition toward homosexual preferences (Krafft-Eding, Havelock-Ellis). Research investigating the genetic and hormonal aspects of both normal and abnormal human sexual behavior cannot be ignored. There is some evidence that has led researchers (Dr. Simon LeVay) to conclude that there may indeed be a biological aspect to homosexuality. It must be noted, however, that the results of such research is not so clear as to demand such a conclusion. For example, studies of identical twin pairs have not indicated that a genetic root was present (Bailey and Pillard).
2. **ENVIRONMENTALLY DETERMINED:** Early childhood experiences in the home shape a person’s sexual orientation (Freud, Skinner, Bieber). In the case of male homosexuals the father / son relationship seems to be key. If the male child, growing up under his mother’s care, fails to transfer his identity to the father (especially at puberty) because it is unsafe to do so, he may continue to identify with his mother and women. He may carry a need for love from his father into adulthood and inappropriately mix it with sexual activity.
3. **PERSONAL CHOICE:** An individual’s sexual orientation is primarily a matter of individual choice (Rogers, Glasser). In all behavior choice is a factor.
4. **THE JUDGMENT OF GOD UPON IDOLATRY:** Homosexuality is a sign of moral and spiritual decay in a society. As such it is God’s judgment on a culture more than His judgment on an individual although homosexual acts by individuals are condemned.
5. **A combination of some or all of the above is probably closest to the truth.**
 - a. Scientific research into the origin of homosexuality is inconclusive at this point in time.
 - b. Homosexuality seems to be not only a problem of sexual function but also identity.
6. **A distinction should be made between primary and secondary causes.**

- a. The **primary cause** is always theological – in this case God’s curse on nature **Gen.3:17** “Cursed is the ground because of you” and **Rom.8:22-23** “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.” This would suggest that all of nature (including human sexuality) is negatively altered by the fall.
 - b. The **secondary cause** is what can be discerned scientifically – in this case genetic, social, and volitional factors.
- D. A person with homosexual passions can be a Christian.**
1. Discipleship includes dying to self and following Christ.
 - a. For someone with a homosexual orientation, this may mean celibacy or an exclusively heterosexual relationship.
 - b. We do not have the option of negotiating a contract with God whereby we are free to rewrite part of the rules so that we can keep our personal preferences.
 - c. The story of the Rich Young Ruler is an example of what it means to deny self and follow Christ.
 2. Discipleship includes receiving and showing grace.
 - a. We are saved by faith not faithfulness. That applies to the homosexual and the covetous as well (I Cor.6:9-10).
 - b. The person who is gay must sense God’s grace without demanding that his or her sexual orientation be changed.
 3. When someone is unwilling to submit to the Word of God with respect to its moral judgments, there is need for harsh discipline as in I Cor.5.
- E. Christians share a common story with everyone else.**
1. We share common frustrations as broken people in a broken world.
 2. We share common longings with everyone for unconditional love and fullness of life.
 3. Jesus said that those who find their lives by losing them in Him will not be disappointed.
 4. When we seek to find life in ourselves (sexual experience, spiritual encounter, or social community) we will ultimately be disappointed. We share the Gospel by starting with our common story – **Acts 17:22-31**
- F. Scriptural ethics are a guide to finding fullness of life and avoiding idolatry.**
1. Homosexuality may be a part of God’s curse on a rebellious society (in general) but it is not the path to life.
 2. Homosexual acts are forbidden in Scripture because they are a false hope of fullness in life.
 3. We each have different burdens to bear because of the curse of the Fall.
- G. Christians are called to be tolerant – legally and socially but not ideologically.**
1. Kingdom standards are distinct from public policy in many cases – preaching a false gospel for example.

2. American pluralism is defined by legal and social rights not personal or private ideology.
3. No individual or culture is pluralistic at all levels – laws forbidding incest, child abuse, racism polygamy, honor killing, etc reflect a common overarching ideology.
4. The gay community tends to confuse and equate ideological agreement with legal and social rights.

H. Christian citizens should promote both “personal rights” and the “general welfare.”

1. Human (including gay) rights of all citizens should be defended in a pluralistic society.
2. Special rights including affirmative action for some behaviors (including homosexuality) should be resisted on the basis of the “common good.”
3. The interests of the common good of a society will dictate the discouragement of some behaviors, which may be legally permitted.
4. Moral dialogue in a pluralistic society should be conducted with respect for the common good and common ground.

I. How should a disciple of Christ relate to a homosexual neighbor?

1. We can start by sharing our common story of a search for love and life.
2. We communicate that our understanding of Scripture, sexuality, and spirituality may be imperfect and therefore we are in process of learning.
3. When we share the Gospel’s hope and the wisdom of the Word of God, we must always audit our own souls.
4. Sexual preferences of all types require discipline, understanding, and often repentance. The church is made up of dirty, rotten, sinners who are fully justified by grace through faith in Christ.

J. Encourage the church to minister to the homosexual and not just condemn the sin.

1. **PREVENTION:** The key to prevention seems to rest with three factors:
 - a. **A God-fearing community:** Romans 1 and Genesis 19 strongly suggest that community values are very influential.
 - b. **A home with sex roles ordered by Scripture:** Biblical roles for men and women play an important part in our sexual identity.
 1. The father should assume an appropriate father figure in the home; one of love and authority; the mother, one of submissive respect.
 2. It is essential that there be open affection in the home and that Christ’s love be the focus of the family’s interactions.
 3. Parents are to model and encourage their children toward appropriate sex roles and identity.
 4. There is clinical evidence supporting the correlation between sex role identification and heterosexuality. This suggests that the father plays a key role in the sexual identity of sons and the mother in the life of daughters.
 - c. **A sound Biblical education:** The truth of Scripture is designed to be a light to our path.

1. Churches should be communicating Biblical truths concerning homosexuality to families and individuals.
 2. Proper psychological and etiological information from scientific research should be made available to families.
2. **TREATMENT:** Success in changing from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation is a function chiefly of the individual's personal desire to change, coupled with a pastoral rather than a punitive community posture.
- a. **Imparting the Biblical perspective:**
 1. The person has choices available to him.
 2. Homosexuality is a sin, but not an unpardonable sin.
 3. There is pardon in the cross.
 4. There is hope for change in Christ.
 - b. **Reconciliation with God**
 1. Genuine conversion--receiving the power of the Holy Spirit.
 2. **"Putting off the old"**
 - a. Confession and brokenness.
 - b. Abandonment of homosexual associations.
 - c. Putting less emphasis on sex.
 3. **"Putting on the new"**
 - a. Reconstructing one's whole life according to the Scriptures.
 - b. Developing a positive attitude toward self and the opposite sex.
 - c. Cultivating faith in God's ability to change you.
 4. Homosexuality often involves a disorder concerning assertiveness in behavior.
 - a. Example (male):
 - a) As a young child he is made to feel insignificant through criticism and pampering.
 - b) He is manipulated by a parental figure (usually the mother) into an emotionally interdependent position, "Don't let me down."
 - c) The mother's influence emasculates the son and strips the father of admirable masculine qualities, and the father makes identification with himself unpalatable.
 - d) He avoids girls.
 - e) He has a homosexual encounter.
 - f) He finds that this relationship offers intimacy, which does not require assertion.
 - g) The more often sexual pleasure occurs in homosexual contact, the more firmly is the bond developed.
 - b. Counseling strategy:
 - a) Look for and identify assertive disorders.
 - b) Change "self talk."
 - c) Condition assertive behavior.

- d) Cultivate identification with the same-sex parent or parent figure.

Note: Studies have indicated that treatment of homosexual orientation in a Christian context has produced about a 60% reorientation rate.

Those that are most likely to change are: young, bisexuals with aggressive personality patterns.

c. **The support of the Christian community**

1. Experiencing God's forgiveness and acceptance through His people.
2. Help in encouraging and disciplining a new lifestyle.

"If the church gets overrun with homosexuals, that will be terrific. They can take their place in the pews right next to the liars, gossips, materialists, and all the rest of us who entertain sin in our lives." "When I die, if someone stands up and says 'Ed Dobson loved homosexuals' then I will have accomplished something with my life." *Ed Dobson, Leadership journal*

3. **AIDS**

"AIDS is the only disease in history which has been treated politically and not medically, merely because of its incredible lobbying efforts. These lobbyists try to obscure the fact that most of those with AIDS are professing and practicing bisexuals, homosexuals, or drug users who will not take responsibility for their own actions. Behavior accounts for over ninety percent of those with AIDS. Yet, it is treated like a plague, which just dropped out of the sky and affects poor, innocent people who have no responsibility for its acquisition. AIDS receives more funding (\$2.3 billion annually) than cancer research, while a host of other diseases, many of which have been around a long time and are not behavior-related, are left with very little funding to find cures." Cal Thomas the nationally syndicated newspaper columnist

K. **Support an informed political policy with respect to the homosexual issue.**

1. **A distinction must be made between the ethical standards within the Christian community and the public policy of a secular state.**

a. **CHRISTIAN ETHICS** — the private order of the Christian community.

1. Homosexual acts are outside God's will.
2. Homosexuals are to be loved and understood.
3. Following Christ may involve sacrifice.
4. People outside the Christian faith are not expected to live as Christians.
5. Christians do bear a responsibility to promote "the good" for all humanity.

b. **PUBLIC POLICY** — the public order of a democratic republic.

1. Personal freedom and public good are not always compatible.
2. Our national motto — E PLURIBUS UNUM — suggests tension between individualism (plurality) and common good (conformity).
3. Respect for transcendent moral law is implied in the words of the Declaration of Independence — "Laws of nature and nature's God"
4. Majority rule with minority rights has been the pattern of our republic.

2. **When does the issue of homosexuality become a justified public concern for Christians and other citizens?**

- a. When homosexuals are denied basic human rights that belong to all citizens.
- b. When homosexuals demand preferential treatment.
- c. When homosexuals demand that their life style be officially sanctioned.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1. How are we to take the Biblical proscriptions of homosexual behavior?** Seriously! Nowhere does the Scripture treat homosexuality as a “natural” God given option for some people. But the proscriptions against homosexual acts are to be applied to the covenant community of faith not to a pluralistic secular state. There is a tension in a pluralistic secular society between individual freedom and the public good. Christians can and should argue that liberal sexual practices do not contribute to the public welfare but they must submit to the majority with respect to what is proscribed by law.
- 2. Is there a distinction between homosexual orientation and behavior?** Yes. The Biblical proscriptions are best applied to the behavior, not the orientation.
- 3. How does homosexual behavior effect a person’s constitutional rights?** It should not effect them at all. In the same way that a person who is divorced or irreligious should not fear the loss of constitutional rights in a pluralistic society. This is not to say that it is a “civil rights” issue like slavery. Unlike slavery, homosexual acts involve personal volition.
- 4. Does a democratic republic (that values pluralism and tolerance) have a vested interest in discouraging certain types of sexual expression?** Yes, when it is deemed to be in the interest of promoting the “public good”. Polygamy, bestiality, incest, prostitution, promiscuity, etc. cannot be prevented, but they can be discouraged or not encouraged as healthy options.
- 5. Does God love homosexual persons?** Yes, just as much as heterosexual persons. This does not mean that He endorses the behavior. Love seeks the good of the one loved. It does not necessarily validate their preferences.
- 6. Is it fair for homosexual Christians to live celibate lives?** Although we are equal before God, we are not born equal in terms of our strengths and weaknesses, our tendencies and dispositions, our nature and nurture. Following Christ involves at least two things: (1) denying ourselves and following God’s will, not ours, and (2) accepting His love and forgiveness at a level that brings deep inner peace and a gracious outer walk. A gay person who insists upon holding on to his sexual preferences when God’s Word clearly challenges him to give it up, is like the rich young ruler who when confronted must decide between Christ and his riches. In the same way that heterosexual individuals may be asked (because of circumstances beyond their control) to give up certain sexual activity in obedience to Christ, so should the person with a homosexual preference. But sexual expression seems to be so much more fundamental to human wellbeing than other characteristics. Really? Where did that idea come from? How can we have proscriptions against promiscuity if it is mandated that everyone has a need to be sexually active in any way that they prefer.
- 7. Because many homosexuals argue that they have no choice and that they cannot help themselves should their behavior not be accepted as a legitimate part of society?** There is some scientific evidence suggesting a genetic predisposition toward alcoholism and violence but this does not mean that such behaviors should not be resisted.

- 8. If homosexuality is so common, why should it not be treated as normal?** Racial discrimination and child abuse occur frequently in society but we would not argue that such behaviors deserve respect.
- 9. Because homophobia is a real problem shouldn't society give special protection to homosexuals?** We do not think it a bad thing that people should experience a reflexive recoil from what is wrong. To develop such a recoil is precisely the point of moral education of the young.
- 10. Why should homosexuality be treated as abnormal when it seems perfectly normal to many people?** Many things (promiscuity, polygamy, pedophilia, extra marital sex, etc.) may feel normal to some people but this does not mean that they should be respected as such.
- 11. Should Christians with homosexual preferences be permitted and or encouraged to be involved in Christian ministry and leadership?** Anyone in ministry leadership should be willing to submit to a strict standard of creed and conduct as a model to others. Sexual conduct is especially important and applies to everyone no matter what his or her orientation. In the same way that a person who is an alcoholic can be a pastor or elder so long as he does not drink so a homosexual person should be encouraged to lead in ministry so long as their conduct is consistent with the Biblical teaching. In this case it would mean celibacy.
- 12. Is it fair to ask a homosexual person to be celibate when a heterosexual person is not?** Everyone is asked to lay aside their rights to follow Christ and lead others. For some heterosexual persons this also may mean celibacy. At our baptism we died to the absolute autonomy that our old nature demanded. This indeed may seem unfair but it is also unfair to ask a strong willed person to lay aside what seems so natural to them in order to obey Christ. (see #6 above)

HELPFUL READING

Straight and Narrow? By Thomas E. Schmidt. InterVarsity. (This is a solid compassionate treatment of the subject from an evangelical that disagrees with the gay activist's position.)

Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth by Jeffrey Satinover. Baker (This is a study that helps the reader sort out the good scholarship from the politically driven stuff.)

Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far by Charles W. Socarides, Adam Margrave (This is a must-read resource from a distinguished psychoanalyst. It deals with the subject of gay politics.)

Unwanted Harvest? By Mona Riley and Brad Sargent, Broadman & Holman (This is a good Christian study of the issue that is dubbed "compassion without compromise.")

Homosexuality and the Bible – Two views By Dan O Via and Roert A.J. Gagnon (This is a study of two differing views of the Biblical teaching. The presentations are representative of two cultures—gay and straight—but not parallel in style making the book frustrating for those looking for a rigorous defense of homosexuality from a high view of Scripture.)

The Point

Even though homosexual acts are sinful, homosexual persons deserve basic civil rights but not special rights.

Response

Head

I am to understand that:

There is a difference between homosexual acts (which are sinful) and a homosexual oriented life (which need not be sinful if celibate).

Heart

I am to believe that:

Homosexual people are loved by God and should be respected as God's image bearers.

Hands

I am to behave by:

Showing respect and sensitivity to gay people's rights without endorsing homosexual conduct.

Pastoral advice

What constitutes a wise posture toward the current homosexual debate?

1. Homosexuals should be respected along with all people who are made in the image of God and yet are sinners. Christians should stand against homophobia.
2. Get the facts straight. Love of others demands an eagerness to understand and relate honestly with integrity.
3. Do not give in to the political pressure to excuse homosexual acts as normal or consistent with God's kingdom.
4. Argue for a common sense social policy that is sensitive to both "individual rights" and responsibility toward the "public good."
5. Extend support to Christians who struggle in areas of their sexual orientation.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. Specific facts you should know.

- a. What are the key texts in the New Testament that represent proscriptions against homosexual activity?
- b. How does the Bible understand homosexuality - Is it an act or a propensity to act?

2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.

- a. Is homosexuality an individual sin only or is it also a societal sin?
- b. How are general revelation and homosexuality related?
- c. What constitutes a common sense social policy with respect to homosexuality?

3. Questions you should wrestle with.

- a. Can a practicing homosexual be a Christian?

NEW YORK March 10, 2010—amfAR, **The Foundation for AIDS Research**, on Wednesday called for the U.S. government to redouble its efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) in the light of new estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Today, for the first time, the CDC released estimates on the number of MSM living in the U.S. and HIV and syphilis rates in this population.

According to CDC figures, there are between 3.4 and 6.5 million MSM living in the U.S., representing **approximately 4 percent** of the male population. **MSM are 44 to 86 times more likely to be infected with HIV than men who have sex with women, and 40 to 77 times more likely to be infected with HIV than women.** In 2008, the CDC estimated that MSM comprise more than half of the roughly 56,000 new HIV infections in the U.S. each year.

About amfAR amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, is one of the world's leading nonprofit organizations dedicated to the support of AIDS research, HIV prevention, treatment education, and the advocacy of sound AIDS-related public policy. Since 1985, amfAR has invested more than \$307 million in its programs and has awarded grants to more than 2,000 research teams worldwide.