

HOMOSEXUALITY, CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH (Part 1)

What the Bible really says about homosexuality

Before I begin to take you through the six passages of the bible presumed to speak about homosexuality I need to state four important things.

1. I'm not a theologian
2. I'm not an expert in Greek
3. I'm not an expert Hebrew
4. I'm not an expert in ancient history or archaeology

So how can I speak about these bible verses with any authority?

Firstly I am a reasonably intelligent person and have been reading constantly on this issue since 1999. I've read all I can from both sides of the debate; certainly more than the average Christian or church leader. I've drawn on the knowledge of other 'experts', scholars, researchers, who surprisingly don't all agree on many things.

Secondly the issue is intensely relevant to me. I am gay (same-sex-oriented) and my Christian faith is important to me. People like me have to work this out as we are told it has eternal consequences. But of course church leaders also have to work it out as it has been their ignorance on the issue that has caused LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) suicides, mental health issues and people given no choice except to walk away from God and the church. **Mark 9:42** *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea"*. This is a dire and sobering warning.

One game I refuse to play is Bible poker. I'm sure we are all familiar with the game. People play this game with this and other doctrinal issues (e.g. women in ministry) It is about using bible verses to try and out-trump each other. The last card (Bible verse) put down is the winner. This win/lose game has gotten us nowhere. It's a game played by Pharisees. So my intention is not to quote scripture and tell you exactly what it says or means but to show you the variety of interpretations that exist amongst scholars today, raise some questions and allow you to come to your own conclusions.

Three false statements about homosexuality

1. **The bible says homosexuality is sin** (chapter and verse please). What we have come to understand is that homosexuality is an orientation and is amoral, as is heterosexuality. As I often say. My morality is a choice my sexual orientation however isn't.
2. **The bible clearly condemns homosexuality.** The Bible is clear on lots things, loving your neighbour, stealing, murder etc but as I hope you will soon see, homosexuality is not one of them.
3. **Homosexuality is a choice.** This statement, more than any other, reflects how ill-informed some people are about homosexuality and how little they have thought through the issue. Saying homosexuality is a choice is completely irrational. Think about it! When I have asked people why I or anyone else would choose to be gay it makes them stop and think. Okay, I'll make it easier for you. I won't ask you to give me 10 reasons why a person would choose to be gay, I'll ask for just one. When you put some time into thinking about it you realise that no-one would choose to be hated, possibly bashed, rejected by family and friends, risk the potential for promotion at work etc etc etc. Being gay or lesbian is so innate and fundamental to our being as is your opposite sex orientation. I have worked with people in their 60's who have decided to come out. Think about that for a moment. Would could possibly be gained from coming out so late in life? Why risk so much for this one thing? I can tell you what the motive is and it isn't sex. It's that we have lived fragmented lives for so long, lived for many years with cognitive dissonance that there comes a moment when we realise it is better to live on day on this planet being true to ourselves than an entire lifetime which is a lie.

I should say that I really don't have any problem with people believing the Bible is the inspired Word of God. What I do have a problem with is people who interpret that word and tell the rest of us I am right

and you are wrong; this is the truth. If there was only one truth then we would have one church and not over 33,000 Christian denominations as stated in the 2001 World Christian Encyclopedia. Each denomination interpreting the bible differently and sometimes on fundamental doctrines. Whilst I think we can all see perfection in God I think we all must acknowledge the imperfections of human beings and this includes translators who have always had to work with incomplete knowledge. They are not God. The texts we read with limited knowledge are not God. God is God.

Understanding the process of finding biblical reconciliation for LGBT people

The process most gay and lesbian Christians go through in order to resolve the perceived conflict between their faith and their sexuality usually goes something like this. It is a journey taken over time, is never instantaneous and occurs through much experiential and cognitive learning. This has been my journey.

1. We have an **inner knowing** deep within our hearts that we are okay. As the bible says “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” Romans 8:16
2. If we begin studying a bit deeper being willing to be open to new truth/understanding we think that we and the authors we are reading are just trying to **justify** our positions – but if we keep reading then.....
3. The next step is - we fear being **deceived** by satan – but if we keep reading then.....
4. The next step is – you realise that **this is not a black and white issue** and the evidence at least means no one can say for certain, absolutely, definitely without a shadow of doubt. – but if we keep reading then.....
5. The next step is – **we come to understand** that the interpretations have been based on reading English translations viewed through a limited cultural lens of preconceived ideas and misconceptions.
6. You realise that it's not just you who has this new understanding but also **a growing number of heterosexual Christians and scholars.**
7. **Finally there is no more cognitive dissonance** and you can get on with your life living it with purpose and meaning; no longer drained by the subconscious sense that you are condemned and unworthy. The words of Jesus become profoundly true. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

I should say that straight Christians often go through a similar process when seeking understanding of LGBT people, their community and relationships.

Background to looking at what have become known as the ‘Clobber Passages’

The six passages of scripture below have become known to many LGBT Christians as the clobber passages. The reason why these have become known as the clobber passages as these are the verses that Christians regularly quote to gay Christians telling them they can't be Christian and gay.

I always find it a tad amusing when I get random emails from total strangers quoting these verses to me as if I have never heard of them or knew of their existence. It is actually quite insulting, if not arrogant ,to glibly quote simple bible verses to someone who has spent more time and study of these passages than they would ever do in a lifetime.

A recent conversation on my Facebook wall is a good example.

Anthony Venn-Brown: *The statement ‘the Bible says homosexuality is a sin’ is actually a false statement. It’s impossible for homosexuality to be a sin. We know from science today that homosexuality is a sexual orientation like heterosexuality and therefore it’s amoral. As I find myself saying repeatedly to people who have*

been taught to believe the equation that homosexuality = promiscuity—'my morality and faith are choices. My sexual orientation, however, isn't'.

Phillip Giamalis *Homosexuality is a SIN. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

Dominic Lesniowski *Homosexuality is an abomination. Nothing has changed since Sodom and Gomorrah. Why do so many refuse to learn the lessons from Sodom and Gomorrah?*

Scott Davis *YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM GRACE AND ARE demon POSSESSED YOU ARE ROMANS 1:18-32*

Dominic Lesniowski *Leviticus 18:22 makes it clear. What part of that verse do people not get? This is how people become deceived - first they give in to sinful perverted desires; then they become slaves of sin; then they try to defend or justify their sinful and perverted actions. What has happened is that people have fallen into sin and bondage, and then tried to defend themselves. It is a terrible deception. It is true that Jesus loves the people. And the first step to be free from this terrible darkness and bondage is to come to God in true repentance.*

And the above were some of the tamer comments unlike these ones below.

Sera Kobiti ...signs of the last days.....living a lifestyle of gay and lesbian.....you are already a walking dead, fueling the logs in hell where you will eventually end up.....because you already know the truth and the truth should have set you free, not add onto your problems!!

Scott Davis YOU CAN KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THIS LIE AND WAKE UP IN HELL homosexuals WILL NOT HAVE THEIR PLACE IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN OR IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST HE IS A NEW CREATURE OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY AND BEHOLD ALL THINGS ARE MADE NEW AND ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD. YOU WILL PERISH IN YOUR SINS IF YOU DONT REPENT OF THIS DEMONIC WICKEDNESS THEY ARE NOT "GAY PEOPLE THEY ARE SODOMITES!!!! DONT BELIEVE THE LIE OF THE DEVIL REPENT AND BE CONVERTED AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL LET HE WHO HATH EARS HEAR AND YOU WILL HEAR UNLESS YOU HAVE A SEARED REPROBATE MIND

Five things to understand before we look at the bible passages

1. Sexual orientation, as we know it today, was not a concept in biblical times as are so many things that science has discovered.
2. The word homosexual is a relatively new word which first appeared in 1869 in a pamphlet in Germany. Next it appeared in a book *Discovery of the Soul* in 1880 and in 1886, Richard von Krafft-Ebing used the terms *homosexual* and *heterosexual* in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*,
3. There is no Hebrew or Greek word for homosexual as we know it today. The word didn't come into use till the late 1800's.
4. To look at this intelligently we need to get our minds out of the bedroom and not focus completely on sex. Too often this debate is reduced to one sexual act; that is, anal intercourse. That is why some people have moved from being anti-gay to saying things like "ok, I can accept the fact that you are gay but you can never act on it."
5. Reading some Christian literature about homosexuality it seems this is the only thing they know about and are indeed embarrassingly obsessed about it. They do this completely ignoring the fact that anal sex is also a part of straight sexual practice or that many gay men don't do it. The offensive thing in biblical times was being the receptive partner which would reduce the male to role of a female. Andrew Marin in his book, *Love is an Orientation* says it was one of the first hurdles HE had to get over before he could begin to minister effectively to LGBT people. He had to stop thinking about sex.

6. Words in themselves give meaning but to fully comprehend, it is the context that gives us greater meaning and understanding. I completely understand how a person, reading an English translation of the bible, backed with negative social view of homosexuality comes to the conclusion God is against homosexuality and homosexuals. I did. What I can't understand is how for some Christians that has turned into hatred of gay and lesbian people.
- a) You read in Genesis 19 about a town of men who tried to have sex with angels and God destroyed the city
 - b) You read in Leviticus that men shouldn't lie with men as with a woman and if they do they should be put to death
 - c) You read in Romans 1 that men and women turned from what was natural and burned with lust for each other; therefore God gave them over to a depraved mind and all kinds of evil
 - d) You read in I Corinthians 6:9 that homosexuals are listed with a range of evil people that Paul says cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Adding of course that some of you were these kinds of people.

So it all sounds pretty cut and dried, doesn't it? But the context can change the meaning of what the words are saying.

In our next session we will look more closely at what these passages say and mean.

1. **Genesis 19**
2. **Leviticus 18:22 & Leviticus 20:13**
3. **Romans 1:26-27**
4. **I Corinthians 6:9**
5. **1 Timothy 1:10**
6. **Jude 1:7**

You can access audio and PDF of HOMOSEXUALITY, CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH (Part 2) What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality [HERE](#)

This resource is made available by Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International (ABBI).

ABBI's mission is to create understanding and acceptance for LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) people, empower community members and build bridges with churches, religious organisations and leaders.

ABBI's work can only continue through gifts from people who understand the importance of creating a better world for LGBTI people. You can make a one-off donation or become a part of the ABBI family on [this link](#) via credit card or internet bank transfer. ABBI is registered with the [ACNC](#) as a not for profit charity and all donations are tax deductible.

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For any further information please email info@abbi.org.au

Anthony Venn-Brown is one of Australia's foremost commentators on faith and sexuality. His bestselling autobiography '[A Life of Unlearning](#)', detailing his journey from married, high profile preacher in Australia's growing mega-churches, such as Hillsong, to living as an openly gay man, has impacted thousands globally. He is also an [educator and consultant](#) on LGBT/faith issues and leader in [deconstructing the 'ex-gay' myth](#). Anthony is the founder and CEO of [Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International](#). In recognition of his work he has received numerous awards including being twice voted 'One of the 25 Most Influential Gay and Lesbian Australians'