

What the Bible and Medical Research Say About Homosexuality

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Background to the Subject

As of 2015 Ireland's referendum on the issue of homosexuality resulted in the legalizing of gay marriage. This was shortly followed by the same legalizing in the United States of America. So now is a good time to analyze the Scriptures and their background for the Christian to gain a perspective on this issue—to get God's mind on the subject.

For most of Christian history the traditional churches have condemned homosexuality and homosexual acts as sinful. Generally those in the churches state that homosexuality is not a matter of inherited genes, but of a person's sinful desire in their mind, and so the person can change if they want to become a Christian. Other Christians feel that in most cases homosexuality is a genuine sexual orientation and so homosexuals are not to be condemned—i.e. the person himself or herself—but rather it is any homosexual acts that are to be condemned, and so the person must exercise total self-control and completely desist from any homosexual relationships or activities. Furthermore, there is a growing number who say they are Christians and yet live a homosexual lifestyle because they were born gay. Indeed, there are strong arguments from those who understand the idea that the homosexual lifestyle is acceptable for Christians, and strong arguments from those who understand it as sin in God's eyes. This means that we have to be open-minded and put away all preconceived ideas as we begin to look at this subject.

HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION

The actual nature of homosexual orientation was only begun to be understood by human sexuality researchers in the mid 1950s; and from all medical research, apart from the male/female distinction, it seems that there are indeed two types of homosexual person:

1. Those who are basically heterosexual by nature, but who, at a certain stage in life, adopt the homosexual lifestyle and so becoming bi-sexual. The proportion of women who are bi-sexual is far greater than that of men.
2. Those who have a homosexual orientation. Many of these ones have never had any attraction to the opposite sex. There is a significantly greater proportion and number of men who are homosexual than there are of women.

Regarding these latter ones, some have tried to change their sexual orientation, but have been finally unsuccessful. Some have been directed to marry a person of the opposite sex so that, supposedly, they will be able to change their sexual orientation. This too has proved to be unsuccessful and, in fact, disastrous for the marriage. However, there are some well documented success stories of those who have broken away from the homosexual lifestyle. So the above two categories may be not so dissimilar.

Indeed, all research shows that human sexuality is extremely complex and any individual can be positioned anywhere along the full spectrum of sexuality. In fact, although rare, gender anomalies do exist, which even prevent some people from being fully classified as male or female. There are some who have any one of the following:

- Both male and female genitals.
- Deformed genitals.
- Bodies that don't match their chromosomes.
- Chromosomes that aren't XX or XY.

Even Jesus said that *“there are eunuchs who were born that way”* (Matt. 19:12) and so indicating an abnormality which may seem strange to us. So how do we deal with a couple who have such gender issues concerning their chromosomes and then meet and fall in love. Do we judge them by their external genitalia? Do we judge them by their chromosomes? So in these cases we are really dealing with what is abnormal, and therefore not the person's fault.

Certainly, there are those who genuinely have no attraction to the opposite sex, but are attracted only to those of their own sex. So we must ask: is there scientific evidence that homosexuality is specifically caused by genetics or by a hormone surge as the person develops as a baby whilst in the mother's womb? Or is it caused entirely by the many environmental factors and influences on a young child as he or she is growing up, so that they develop a predisposition to same-sex involvement?

THE STANDARD BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS THAT HOMOSEXUALITY IS SIN

In an internet paper theologian William Lane Craig's comment may help us with some distinctions that we should be clear about before examining the relevant Scriptures:

First: Does the Bible in fact forbid homosexual behavior? Now notice how I put that question. I did not ask, does the Bible forbid homosexuality, but rather does the Bible forbid homosexual *behavior*? This is an important distinction. Being homosexual is a state or an orientation; a person who has a homosexual orientation might not ever express that orientation in actions. By contrast, a person could engage in homosexual acts even if he has a heterosexual orientation.

The proof-texts that are traditionally referenced to show that God disapproves of homosexuals or homosexual acts are:

- From the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis 19:4-8; Judges 19:22-23; and Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.
- From the New Testament: Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9b; 1 Timothy 1:10; and Jude 7.

There are explanations of these texts from both sides of the debate and, as we shall see, some are valid and some are not.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Proof-texts are generally useful, but they must be read carefully within their proper context, including their cultural context. This can be seen for example when we read of the general negative view the Bible holds of "tax collectors" in Jesus' day. These people were frequently corrupt and they cheated people out of more money than they owed. So clearly we wouldn't view all those individuals who work in modern-day tax offices negatively. They are from two very different cultures and so we would need two very different approaches to the term "tax collector." This indicates that we should examine each one of the above proof-texts in their cultural context to analyse whether they actually condemn homosexual practice or not, and if they do how strongly do they do so.

Nevertheless, the prime question for Christians is: what is God's view of homosexual practices? So now we will begin to examine the relevant Bible passages and their context on this subject.

In the Mosaic Law - Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

For those commentators and other Christians who do not consider the homosexual lifestyle as sinful, the Mosaic Law is viewed as totally irrelevant in all respects for Christians. Even those with the opposite view may say that one doesn't need to rely on texts from the Mosaic Law to show that homosexuality is wrong because there are many texts in the New Testament to show this to be true. However, these texts in the New Testament may have other explanations because those who have taken the position that homosexual practice is compatible with Christianity have also researched these passages and have come to different conclusions to the traditional interpretations. Therefore, it is necessary to establish whether or not the Mosaic Law is relevant for Christians, at least in some respects. Indeed, as they stand these texts certainly show that God's direct actual view of homosexual practices is that they are detestable to Him:

- ❖ "You must not have **sexual intercourse with a man** as you would with a woman; it is a detestable practice." *(Lev. 18:22 CEB).*
- ❖ "If a man has **sexual relations with a man** as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be **put to death**; their blood will be on their own heads" *(Lev. 20:13 NIV).*

These two texts are taken from the so-called Holiness Code detailed in those chapters of Leviticus; and although it is true that Christians are not under the Mosaic law, this is true only inasmuch as Christians are **not under the works or regulations of the Mosaic Law**. Indeed, when Paul wrote to his Christian brothers and sisters in Colossae, he wrote for them to correct their misguided willingness to keep falling back on the regulations of the Mosaic Law. He says:

- ❖ "If you all died with Messiah to the elementary principles of the world, why, as though living in accord with the world, do you subject yourselves **to regulations**—"Don't handle, Don't taste, Don't touch" (referring to things that get consumed)—according to human commands and teachings? These **regulations** indeed give an appearance of wisdom in their self-imposed devotions, self-denial, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in combating the indulgence of one's old unspiritual disposition" *(Col. 2:20-23).*

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Only before faith in Messiah arrived did the Jews have to keep the regulations of the Mosaic Law, so that they would be guided to the Messiah (Gal.3:24).

However, throughout the letter to the Romans it can be seen that Christians are obliged to live by the very spirit of the law (Rom.3:31; 7:14; 8:4). This means that one should have God's mind on matters and seek out the principles contained in those rules as did the rabbis in Israel.

So although Christians are not under the regulations of the Mosaic law they certainly seek to abide by **God's view of relationships and their practices as detailed in the law, and so follow the spirit of the law** because God does not change His view on such relationships and practices and **the morality of these**.

LEVITICUS 18:22 AND 20:13 STATE A MORAL LAW

Leviticus 18:1-4 gives God's reason for giving many rules, including the law on homosexuality, to Israel, as being because He **wants Israel to remain uncontaminated by any false worship** of the polytheistic cultures surrounding them. So for instance, they were forbidden to shave (Lev. 19:27), to get tattoos (Lev. 19:28), or to wear clothing made of mixed fabrics (Lev. 19:19)—all activities of the pagan nations. Without this context of keeping Israel separate from these pagan cultures these would seem to be a strange set of rules. They are certainly not rules that any Christian is obliged to follow for moral guidance.

However, the statements in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are more directly in a context of moral/relationship laws. In fact, the laws written by Moses form four basic categories:

- a) Universal moral laws. These include not engaging in idolatry, covetousness, adultery, stealing, or murder etc., as also often restated in the New Testament. Such moral laws are based upon the holy character of God which does not change. Therefore the moral laws also do not change—they are still in effect.
- b) Cultural universal laws. These are laws which concern Israel's culture and that have a universal moral law lying behind them such as mentioned earlier: being forbidden to shave (Lev. 19:27) etc. Within the pagan nations some of these practices were related to the occult. So following the spirit of these laws and the principles taken from them a Christian would keep clear of any modern-day occult practices, although ignoring the specific prohibitions in the Mosaic Law.
- c) Ceremonial laws. Examples of this are: the entire sacrificial system with priests, sacrifices, and a tabernacle or temple. Further examples are: the Jewish purity laws, the food laws, as well as all festivals. None of these are binding on Christians. These are the regulations that Paul shows to have been taken away since the sacrifice offered by Christ. They are not directly applicable to Christians, although they have a spiritualized function in the lives of Christians.
- d) Civil laws of Israel. Examples concern property, inheritance, and forms of punishment for offences. These do not specifically apply to any other nation, but are often similar to the laws of those nations.

The statements on homosexual activities in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are in a context of statements ruling out such things as adultery, bestiality and incest. These laws apply universally and so certainly put this law on homosexual practice in the category of universal moral laws. Few Christians today would say that laws on adultery, incest, or bestiality are irrelevant!

The enduring validity of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is further shown by Paul's appropriation and endorsement of the Levitical standards against homosexual relationships among Christians, these endorsements being found in Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; and 1 Timothy 1:10. So this law shows God's permanent view that homosexual activities are "**a detestable practice**" or "an abomination" (Lev. 18:22 ESV). There is no reason to imagine that God has changed His mind on this, so that homosexual practice is wrong for Israelites, but is fine for Christians. So God's view in Leviticus should also be the Christian's view of this issue. Yet, please note that the texts do not say that God detests homosexuals. It says he detests homosexual activities.

NOTE: Throughout all the relevant texts and passages only Romans 1:26 directly concerns females, and is generally taken as a condemnation of lesbianism. However, the condemnation of male homosexuality in other texts applies by extension just as much to lesbianism. This is because laws that say "If a man..." cannot mean that a woman can perform the same or similar wrong acts that men might do.

The Early Biblical Record of People Attempting to Perform Homosexual Acts

HAM'S WRONG CONDUCT WITH HIS FATHER—GENESIS 9:20-27

Additional to the usual passages quoted to show disapproval of homosexual acts, but rarely realized, is the Genesis account of Ham's actions regarding his father. The description is that:

- ❖ “Noah began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken. And **he was uncovered within his tent**. And Ham, the father of Canaan, **saw the nakedness of his father**, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and **covered the nakedness of their father**. And their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son **had done** unto him. And he said, **Cursed be Canaan**; A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (ASV)

There are several anomalies in this passage when it is interpreted to be simply a literal ‘seeing’ by Ham of his father’s nakedness. For example, the curse seems extreme if it was just was an accidental “seeing.” Also how could Ham have even known that his father was naked when he opened the tent flap?

Older translations render the Hebrew as, “he was uncovered within his tent,” as in the ASV above. This rendering is a passive rather than the usual reflexive used in most modern versions, and so shows that Ham uncovered “the nakedness of his father,” rather than Noah simply undressing himself. So, because this phrase about “nakedness” refers in the Hebrew Scriptures to sexual intercourse (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 17-21) it seems that Ham’s sin was a homosexual act performed on his drunken father i.e. incestuous homosexual rape. In particular the law in Leviticus 20:17, in referring to a man’s sister, has the phrase “sees her nakedness” as a Hebrew way of saying “has sexual relations with her (incest)” as shown in modern versions. So, too, the phrase “**saw the nakedness of his father**” refers to Ham’s sexual act with Noah—it was something that Ham “**had done**” to his father.

But why would Ham do such a thing and then boast of it to his brothers by bringing his father’s garment outside the tent to show them? In ancient times such a homosexual act was for the purpose of emasculating a man—to disgrace him and so to demonstrate power over him. So in this way Ham sought to usurp the authority of his father; but the fact that Noah curses Ham’s “seed,” namely, Canaan shows his total disapproval of this vile homosexual act.

ATTEMPTED HOMOSEXUAL GANG-RAPE BY THE PEOPLE OF SODOM—GENESIS 19:4-8 AND JUDE 7.

Now we must examine the remaining two passages from the Hebrew Scriptures that are often presented as proofs for the condemning of all homosexually oriented people. Do they actually stack up as proof the God hates and condemns such ones? On the other hand, do the arguments presented by the supporters of Christians who practice homosexuality prove that God does not view it as sin? Closer examination will give us pause for thought regarding both positions.

This event concerned attempted homosexual gang-rape of the two angels who were sent to the city of Sodom to rescue Abraham’s nephew Lot and his family before God brought destruction on the city for its wickedness. Lot then offered them hospitality in his home, but:

- ❖ “Before they had gone to bed, **all the men** from every part of the city of Sodom – both young and old – surrounded the house. They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men [*the two angels*] who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us **so that we can have sex with them.**’ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, ‘No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. Look, **I have two daughters** who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come **under the protection of my roof**” (*Gen. 19:4-8 NIV*).

Like any other city Sodom was populated primarily by heterosexuals, and indeed Lot found husbands for his daughters there. Also, the fact that “**all the men** from every part of the city” were seeking to gang-rape the two angels shows that this was not primarily about homosexually oriented men. Even if the word “all” is being used hyperbolically of a kind of mass hysteria it still indicates an extremely large crowd of men of which only a small proportion were likely to be homosexually oriented. Nevertheless, the acts that they wished to perform were homosexual in nature. Additional proof that these were primarily heterosexual men, more so than homosexual men, is shown by the fact that Lot offered his two daughters to these men of Sodom, even though the men of Sodom did not finally get their way in this situation. Indeed, God’s decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah was some time before the event that occurred with the two angels in front of Lot’s home and so showing that that was not the reason given for the destruction of Sodom.

The fact is that God did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah only because of homosexuality. The decree to destroy the people there was because: “they didn’t help the poor and needy. They were arrogant and did disgusting things (abominations) in front of me” (Ezek. 16:49 NOG)—most likely idolatrous things as well as atrocious sexual immorality as part of the “abominations” in Ezekiel 16. Such sexual immorality is indicated by the fact that, all of the prohibited sexual behaviour of the Holiness Code is called “abominations,” including that of the homosexual acts.

So this event in Sodom seems to be about predominantly heterosexual men seeking to perform homosexual acts with these angels. Even though Sodom was clearly a wicked city it does not mean that it was a “homosexual city,” but rather that this situation was one of violent threats against the two angels. Indeed, **homosexual gang-rape** was apparently a well-known tactic for bringing humiliation on someone to prove one’s dominance over them. Furthermore, it is generally accepted today that rape is more about gaining power over another person than it is about sex or passion. This case of attempted gang-rape is similar to the case of the men of Gibeah (Judges 19:22-23).

Certainly, a major part of this sin was the violation of the **hospitality rule** whereby a guest should be offered protection while in the host’s home. So Lot, as an outsider in the city, was attempting to give these angels that protection. This is no insignificant aspect in the story.

So of all the passages against homosexual activity, this and the one concerning gang-rape in Gibeah are the least relevant. However, they absolutely present the attempt to perform homosexual acts in a very bad light.

NOTE: First century Jewish teaching was that the women of Sodom also were trying to have sex with these angels, so that they could have supernatural children, as similar to the situation in Genesis 6:2-13. So although the account mentions only men, it is likely that some women were also seeking sex with these angels, having recognized them as such.

JUDE’S STATEMENT ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF SODOM

❖ “So too, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, which **indulged in sexual immorality and pursued different [alien – angel] flesh**, is now displayed as a perpetual example, by undergoing the penalty of the age to come fire” (*Jude 7 KGV*).

Additional to the above is Jude’s phrase concerning “different (strange) flesh.” This indicates that the men of Sodom were not seeking a close sexual relationship with humans as such, but were seeking a forbidden mixing in with an alien species, namely angels, who were of “different flesh.” So *The Expositors Bible Commentary* p. 390 states: “Thus the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was seeking union with “different flesh” in a way similar to the “sons of God” (angels?) did (Gen.6:2) when they mingled with the “daughters of men (humans).”

So this event was not a condemnation of a homosexual orientation, but of many sins including that of homosexual acts as being clearly unacceptable to God. This is just as already noted in Leviticus 18 and 20 which gives us God’s direct view of homosexual acts as detestable.

GANG-RAPE BY THE MEN OF GIBEAH - JUDGES 19:22-23

In this event a Levite and his concubine are invited to stay with an old man in his home. This man was an Ephraimite, living in a Benjamite city. The event unfolds showing that:

❖ “While they were enjoying themselves, some **worthless men** from the city surrounded the house and pounded on the door. They told the old man, the owner of the house, “Bring out **the man** who came to your house **so that we can have sex with him.**” The owner went out to them. He told them, “No, my friends! Please don’t do anything so evil! This man is **a guest in my home. Don’t do such a godless thing!** Here, let me bring out **my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. Rape them, and do with them whatever you want. Just don’t do such a godless thing to this man.**” But **the men refused to listen to him.** So the Levite grabbed his concubine and forced her outside. **They had sex with her** and abused her all night until morning. They let her go when the sun was coming up. At daybreak, the woman came to the door of the house where her husband was and collapsed. She was still there when it became light” (*Judges 19:22-26 GW*).

This event was similar to that of the event in Sodom, but this time it was the attempted gang-rape of a human rather than of angels. Again this event could not have involved only homosexually oriented men because the owner of the house offers his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine to the men. This self-centred Levite then forced his concubine (a secondary wife) outside and then the men of Gibeah raped her. So, clearly they were primarily heterosexual men. Jewish commentary generally views the original prime sin here as that of the “worthless men” violating the “guest in my home” rule of protection. However, because “**the men refused to listen to him**” concerning the two women offered it is clear that these men sought to perform homosexual acts—this being “**such a godless thing.**” So it is also evidently about the sinfulness of homosexual gang-rape. These sex acts were done so as to cause humiliation of and domination of a person. Even the rape of the concubine was effectively the homosexual rape of the Levite himself. So again this story is not about any homosexual orientation, although, once again, those homosexual acts are condemned here as in the account about Sodom, as well as in the Mosaic Law.

Note: The Bible record goes on to show that after these men gang-raped the concubine all night long she eventually died and so adding to the wickedness of these men.

Jesus' View of Homosexuality

There is no direct statement by Jesus in any of the gospels concerning those who are homosexual or those who practice homosexual activities. However, Jesus did speak on one occasion of those who were sexually abnormal at birth. This occurred in response to the difficulty his disciples were having with his rejection of the Hillelite “Any Cause” divorce arrangement, after which the disciples said: “It is better not to marry.” So Jesus said to them:

- ❖ “Not everyone can accept this teaching [*that some remain single*], except those to whom it has been given. There are **eunuchs who were born that way**. Others were made eunuchs by someone. There are eunuchs who have made themselves celibate for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone who can accept this accept it” (*Matt. 19:11-12*).

So when Jesus said: “*there are eunuchs who were born that way*,” it seems that he had in mind persons who are either born with a genital deformity, or who are asexual i.e. no sexual desire at all and he did not condemn these ones as sinful. For those who “*have made themselves celibate for the sake of the Kingdom*,” he certainly didn’t mean that they had cut off their genitalia, as second-century church father Origen foolishly and wrongly did because of his failure to understand Jesus’ Jewish non-literal rhetorical teaching in Matthew 5:29.

However, Jesus was under the Mosaic law and would have been fully cognizant with the statements in the Holiness Code of Leviticus 18 and 20 which show that God detests homosexual acts—they are an abomination to Him. So Jesus’ silence on this speaks volumes. In fact he was silent on such behaviour as “incest” and other wrong behaviour in the Holiness Code, yet we can hardly think that he thought differently to what was said in that code concerning those behaviours. Such silence on the subject could only have been understood by the disciples as acceptance of the basic position on homosexual acts embraced by all Jews of the time. This strongly indicates that Jesus was opposed to all homosexual activity.

Paul’s View of Same-Sex Relationships in Romans 1:26-27

SUPPRESSION OF GOD’S TRUTH BY IDOLATRY AND SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE

In this passage Paul is discussing the pattern of idolatry and morality developed by the pagan Gentiles. However, they should know better because of the witness to God as Creator through the created order. So to get the full context we must first of all read verses 18-23 which tells us that:

- ❖ “...God’s retribution is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the injustice of people who, in their injustice, suppress the truth. Indeed, what can be known about God is evident to them, because God has made it plain to them. Certainly, **since the world’s creation His invisible attributes are clearly seen** and rationally understood in the things which have been made, both His eternal power and divine nature, so that these people are **without excuse**.”

Although they knew God, they didn’t glorify Him as God or give Him thanks, but **became futile** in their thinking, and their senseless **hearts were darkened**. Professing to be wise they became foolish, and **exchanged** the glory of the incorruptible God *for the likeness of corruptible humans, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.*” (*Romans 1: 18-23*).

Through the witness of the creation about God’s natural order of things, the Gentiles were “without excuse” when they involved themselves in idolatry and the same-sex intercourse that is described in verses 24-27. The created order showed them that only the Creator should be worshipped, rather than creatures (through idols); it also showed them that the Creator established the use of only male and female sexual organs as complementary to each other.

Their falling into idolatry may have resulted in their expressing of such worship in the temples of pagan gods by exchanging their normal sexual nature from birth for a homosexual one and then engaging in homosexual acts, which they previously hadn’t done. Indeed, the Greco-Roman culture of the time encompassed orgiastic temple prostitution, both male and female, as part of the wild idolatrous worship in the fertility rites in Rome. Certainly the Roman readers of Paul’s letter would be immediately familiar with these fertility cults and rites, where men and women engaged in both heterosexual and homosexual sex rites in their sexual orgies.

However, even though temple worship may be a significant part of the background here there is **nothing in Paul’s words in verses 24-27 to indicate that he has only such pagan temple worship in mind**. His words encompass all situations involving same-sex intercourse. The passage continues to tell us how far they went, and so:

❖ ²⁴“For this reason **God gave them over**, in the cravings of their hearts, to uncleanness and to the **dishonouring of their bodies** among themselves: ²⁵they **exchanged God’s truth** for falsehood and venerated and devotedly served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason **God gave them over to** degraded passions. Indeed, even their **females exchanged their natural sexual function for what is contrary to nature**. ²⁷In the same way the males **abandoned** their natural sexual function with females and were inflamed with their uncontrolled passion for each other, males acting indecently with males, and receiving back in themselves the inevitable penalty for their error.

²⁸And *because they didn’t see fit* to properly acknowledge God, **God gave them over to** their **disapproved thoughts**, to do what is improper. ²⁹They were filled with all kinds of injustice, wickedness, greediness, and depravity; they became full of envy, murder, quarrelling, deceitfulness, and spitefulness. They also became gossips, ³⁰character assassins, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. Furthermore, they invent ways to be cruel; they are disobedient to parents; ³¹they have no conscience; they don’t keep their promises, and they show no kindness or care to others. ³²Although they *have known God’s just decree*, that those practicing such things **deserve death**, they not only do the same, but approve of those practicing them.” (*Romans 1: 24-32*).

Paul is speaking of these Gentiles as ones who “*knew God*” by means of the natural order of things and yet had “*exchanged God’s truth*” for idolatrous religion and homosexual passions and the accompanying acts. “*Their hearts were darkened*,” so that they worshipped creatures in the form of idols. They became so depraved that God gave them over to a whole range of other sins (vss. 29-31).

Further to this, there are many phrases and terms that Paul uses in Romans 1:21-32 showing that he is referencing the Genesis One account. For instance, in verse 23 he uses the same three categories of “birds, animals, and reptiles” as used in Genesis 1:30, as well as the terms “male and female” (Gk *arsenes* and *theleia*) [the connection is lost when translators render this as “men and women” (Gk *andres* and *gynaikes*)]. It is this very account in Genesis which shows God’s natural arrangement for human sexual relations i.e. one man with one woman and the complementarity of the male and female sexual organs. Clearly homosexual relationships distort this original pattern for relationships.

The three occurrences of the phrase “*God gave them over to*” do not represent temporal sequences, but are referring to the same fundamental act. The first occurrence (vs.24) states the outcome of their actions in general terms. The second one (vs.25) focuses on these acts more specifically; then the third one (vs.26) picks up the first one again. The plot structure of the “*exchanged/abandoned*” phrase and the “*gave them over to*” phrase is as follows:

Stage 1: God’s invisible transcendence and majesty is visibly manifested in creation (1:19-20).

Stage 2: Humans knowingly and thus foolishly “*exchanged*” the true God for idols (1:21-23, recapitulated in 1:25 and 1:28a).

Stage 3: God “*gave them over to*” their desires/passions and to “*their disapproved thoughts*” which aim at self degrading and self destructive forms of conduct (1:24, 26, 28).

Stage 4: Many humans then dishonoured themselves by “*exchanging*” natural intercourse for manifestly self-degrading and unnatural intercourse (1:26-27); all engaged in some form of “*improper*” and godless conduct (1:28-31).

Stage 5: The self degrading evil behaviour to which God “*gave them over to*” ends in the ultimate recompense of “*death*” (1:32).

So pagan Gentiles had developed in such a way that they had exchanged what is normal heterosexual function from birth to practicing homosexual intercourse—something completely unnatural and which God had “*given them over to*” i.e. allowed to continue. This was “*contrary to nature*” i.e. contrary to the fittedness of the male and female sexual organs.

DID THESE PEOPLE REMAIN HETEROSEXUAL WHILE INDUGING IN HOMOSEXUAL ACTS?

Some researchers on this passage in Romans propose that Paul was speaking about entirely heterosexual persons who were over-sexed and therefore indulged in homosexual intercourse for a number of reasons, one of which was that they had become bored with sex with women. However, there are a number of reasons why there is no reason to think that this is so:

1) The characterization of homosexual desire as excessive heterosexual or homosexual lust would be only incidental to Paul’s main point that homosexual intercourse is “*contrary to nature*.”

- 2) In ancient times no terms were used to distinguish between homosexuals and heterosexuals. So Paul's criticism does not focus on this, but rather it is on those who practice same-sex intercourse.
- 3) There is considerable testimony that moralists of the time did not consider homosexual acts to be an overflow of heterosexual passion, but that it was congenital or psychological.
- 4) The statements concerning those who "exchanged" or "abandoned their natural sexual function" with the opposite sex does not necessarily mean that Paul thought that they had all individually experienced heterosexual desire at one time. Some may have never had this desire and may have been exclusively oriented to those of the same sex as them. The statement means that pagan nations historically exchanged their natural function.
- 5) To suppose that Paul was condemning only the homosexual acts by those who are 'naturally' attracted to the opposite sex is equivalent to saying that the biblical condemnation of adultery refers only to those who are 'naturally' monogamous.

So there is no reason to imagine that these were entirely heterosexual persons who were so over-sexed that they began engaging in homosexual acts. All such acts were condemned and seen as worthy of death in those times.

DOES THIS PASSAGE CONCERN ONLY IDOLATRY AS BEING CONDEMNED?

However, those who understand the homosexual life-style as compatible with Christianity say that this all concerns only the ancient idolatry which modern-day homosexuals are not involved in. They state that those in Rome were not genuinely homosexual because they "exchanged their natural sexual function to sex with females for what is contrary to nature." They reason that if this was about same sex orientation then such people:

- Must always have become idolatrous before experiencing any sexual attraction to a person of the same sex.
- Would know when they changed from heterosexual to homosexual.
- Would have lost all faith in God and fully turned to idolatry.
- Would have their same-sex relationship based solely on lustful fertility religion.
- Yet, these are not the kind of experiences of all homosexual or lesbian people today.

Nevertheless, those who claim that this passage is entirely about idolatry are missing or ignoring the fact that the homosexual activities mentioned are just as much Paul's prime target as is the idolatry. He focused on this as an example of the worst of sexual sins because it entails a confusion of genders, and so is equally condemned by God along with idolatry. It seems that the other general sins listed in Romans 1:28-32 are secondary in Paul's mind to same-sex intercourse although equally deserving of death.

Furthermore, Paul cannot here be limiting his condemnation of homosexual practices to those involved in idolatry, because idolatry is not the necessary prerequisite for homosexual behaviour as is shown in 1 Corinthians 6:9b and 1 Timothy 1:10.

JEWISH JUDGMENTALISM

Indeed, Paul goes on, in Romans 2, to show that the Jews should not be judgmental over these Gentiles who have fallen into idolatry, homosexual practice, and many other sins, because it could happen to them. He says:

- ❖ "For this reason you are without excuse, whoever you are who sit in judgment. When you pass judgment on the other person, you condemn yourself, because you, who pass judgment, practice the very same things. We know that, in harmony with truth, God's judgment is against those who practice such things. Whoever you are who pass judgment on those who practice such things, but do the same yourself; do you suppose that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you scorn the wealth of His kindness and of His self-restraint and patience? You fail to realize that the kindness of God is meant to lead you to change your mindset and life-direction" (*Rom. 2:1 to 2:4*).

When one reads these words in chapter two, one sees that Paul is making a primary point about the delusions of Jews who think they are doing well at being righteous. However, Paul shows that they are wrongly judgmental and could easily become guilty of the same things, thereby condemning themselves. So it concerns the results of idolatry including this prime example of sin as being homosexual acts for both Jews and Gentiles. **So those who promote the concept of the homosexual lifestyle as compatible with Christianity i.e. that it is not sinful, fail to recognize that the homosexual acts performed by these ones in the Roman world were condemned along with their idolatry and all the other sins listed in vs. 29-31 all of which deserve death (vs32).** So the following text and comments should help us see the details in Romans 1:26-27:

ROMANS 1:26-27 WITH COMMENTS

❖ “For this reason *{exchanging God’s truth about correct worship and proper sexual relations as revealed in the creation vs. 25}* God gave them *{pagan Gentiles}* over to degraded passions, because their *{heterosexual at birth}* females *{not “women” because Paul’s reference is to Genesis 1:27}* exchanged their natural sexual function *{to sex with females}* for what is contrary to nature. *{by ignoring the fittedness of the male and female sexual organs}* ²⁷ In the same way the *{heterosexual at birth}* males *{not “men” because Paul’s reference is also to Genesis 1:27}* abandoned their natural sexual function with females and were inflamed with their uncontrolled passion for each other, males acting indecently with males *{i.e. sexual intercourse with males. These homosexual acts were from “degraded passions” and therefore were condemned by God (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). God’s moral standards do not change}*, and receiving back in themselves the inevitable penalty *{degraded passions}* for their error *{becoming idolatrous and no longer acknowledging the True God}*.”

All of this implies that these Gentiles, through their earlier history, naturally had a heterosexual orientation, but had exchanged it along with their adoption of idolatry. Indeed, “God gave them over,” i.e. allowed them to do what was unnatural. These things may have included the engaging in homosexual orgies as part of the common fertility religious practice as done, for example, in the temples dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite. Of course, male/female heterosexual immoral sex acts also took place in these pagan temple settings, but Paul focuses on those acting contrary to their normal sexual nature at birth. It certainly seems that Paul was familiar with such worship and its practices.

Nevertheless, these acts were sinful activities and so being “a dishonouring of their bodies,” and as “degraded. Paul is really using same-sex intercourse as the prime example of the Gentile depravity that he mentioned. They were working against the created order by denying the clear anatomical gender differences and functions. So although this passage is *not* a condemnation of homosexual orientation it does demonstrate God’s disapproval of homosexual behaviour—it is contrary to the normal natural heterosexual laws that God arranged for humans and therefore contradicted God’s moral laws as applied to all humanity.

IN ROMANS PAUL’S PRIME EXAMPLE WAS SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE

.....BECAUSE GENTILES IGNORED THE CREATED ORDER

There was no recognized heterosexual/homosexual orientation distinction in Bible times, and this passage is a reference to Gentiles who historically began to involve themselves in homosexual acts and so have “exchanged their natural sexual function for what is contrary to nature.” The primary errors of these Gentiles were that of leaving “God’s truth,” concerning the creation, engaging in idolatrous worship, and in same-sex intercourse as “contrary to nature.” Simply, God’s moral standard for humans on this issue does not change from when it was first stated in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

Paul’s Statement on Homosexuality in First Corinthians 6:9b

From his writings it seems that Paul discovered more problems in the thinking, attitudes, and conduct of the Christians in Corinth than anywhere else. They seemed to be particularly prone to following worldly standards in a number of areas of life. So Paul felt obliged to write to them to show them the dangerous position they were in as regards their inheritance of God’s Kingdom. In a standard translation 1 Corinthians 6:9 reads as:

❖ “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **men who practise homosexuality** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (ESV).

TRANSLATION ISSUE

Please note that this ESV rendering has wrongly combined two Greek words into one thought and so has lost a certain distinction. With reference to the REB, Bauer’s Greek-English Lexicon comments that the, “REB’s rendering of *malakoi oute arsenokoitai* with the single term ‘sexual pervert’ is lexically unacceptable.” This is true also of other versions including the ESV rendering of “men who practise homosexuality.” There are also other issues concerning the rendering of the Greek words *malakos* and *arsenokoites* that Paul used in this passage.

Modern translators often render *arsenokoites* as simply either “homosexuals” or “homosexuality.” Yet, these words did not come into any Bible version until 1946, even though they were first used in 1892 in the English translation of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* - a German reference work on sexual perversions. In fact,

the two parts of this word mean “male” and “bed,” but the complete word literally refers to “*males who take other males to bed.*” Now although that sounds the same as the word “homosexual,” that is not specifically correct because the word “homosexual” implies simply a sexual orientation, which is not what the word *arsenokoites* means.

The other Greek word involved is *malakos* and is often poorly rendered simply as “effeminate.” *Malakos* basically means “soft,” and in the context of sex it refers to femininity, but in the context of male sexual involvement with another man it refers to a male who is the non-dominant/receptive sex partner acting as the female partner. So in 1 Corinthians 6:9b Paul is distinguishing the two different roles in this sexual activity i.e., *arsenokoites* as the dominant male and *malakos* as the non-dominant male. This distinction is rarely clear in the standard translations.

Of the general versions of the New Testament the Complete Jewish Bible notably distinguishes the terms as, “*those who engage in active or passive homosexuality,*” and the Easy-to-Read Version comes even closer to the meaning by rendering the phrase: “*men who let other men use them for sex or who have sex with other men*” So the focus is on the homosexual acts rather than simply a homosexual orientation. For us to get a better understanding one must examine the known cultural context along with the lexical definitions.

NOTE: The fact that the existing Greek words (not used in the New Testament) that clearly refer to homosexuality in general were *arrenomanes* or *erastes* does not mean that *arsenokoites* and *malakos* also do not refer to the same activities.

GRECO-ROMAN BACKGROUND

In the first century under Roman rule, but with significant Greek influence, the outlook upon sex was very different to that of the modern centuries. There were no terms for “homosexual” or “heterosexual.” These distinctions just did not exist. Rather there was a conquest mentality—“the cult of virility” which was the prime directive of masculine sexual behaviour. So it was socially acceptable for a Roman freeborn heterosexual man to have sex with both female and male partners, provided he took the dominant penetrative role. However, he could not have sex with another freeborn man’s wife or daughter or underage son; but he could have sex with the freeborn man’s slave—male or female—if he had been granted permission by that freeborn man. So the term *malakos* was applied primarily to:

1. A male youth in the Greek culture of the time, generally between 12 and 17 years of age and who was to be educated, protected, and used for sex by an older man, so that he might provide a rite of passage for the youth. This pederasty/male homosexual paedophilia was part of a social and educational institution, and probably existed only among the upper classes.
2. A male slave in the Roman culture of the time and who was used for sex by his married master. This could be a youth or an adult.
3. A male temple prostitute, again either a youth or an adult.

Although these were the primary categories, the word *malakos* certainly includes any male who plays the role of a female in homosexual intercourse because Paul’s focus was on the sex act itself rather than the age of the *malakos*. **Paul makes no distinction between youths and adult males.** So from these factors it seems that the most culturally sensitive and literal renderings of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 are those of assistant professor of New Testament Robert Gagnon who translates these terms as “*nor effeminate males who play the role of females, nor males who take other males to bed.*” Similarly my rendering is: “**nor males who give themselves for the sexual use of other males (Gk *malakos*), nor dominant males who have sex with such males (Gk *arsenokoites*)**” (KGV). These renderings make more sense of both the lexical meanings and the background information.

In the culture of the time the having of sex with other males was treated as something extramarital, yet not considered as adultery in Greco-Roman society. This activity was something fairly common in the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day and was well-known to his audience. Archaeological and literary evidence prove that these relationships were common for centuries in Greece, and even being publicly practiced.

ARE THE GREEK TERMS LIMITED TO EXPLOITATIVE SEX – PEDERASTY?

Is Paul referring only to the situation of male slaves, male youths, or male temple prostitutes being exploited by their masters? There are several reasons why this is not the case:

- 1) It is clear from the above renderings that the receptive partner is a willing participant in the homosexual activity and so there is no coercion. Such “morally bad people will not inherit God’s Kingdom.”
- 2) Paul would have kept in mind the traditional view of all Jews of the time that was based on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 that homosexual acts were wrong whoever committed them and whatever age they were.

- 3) The prohibitions in the Scriptures against homosexuality are as absolute as the injunctions against incest, adultery, and bestiality. In other words there are no exceptions as for example the age of the receptive partner. To argue that non-exploitative homosexual acts would be acceptable is like arguing that the Holiness Code was only opposed to exploitative incest or exploitative adultery!
- 4) If the homosexual acts were wrong only because they were exploitative why would Leviticus 20:13 specify the death penalty for both participants. Surely, if the receptive partner was coerced or forced he would then have been considered a victim and worthy of no punishment.
- 5) If Paul had wanted to focus specifically on male youths instead of using the term *malakos* he would have used the Greek term *paidika*, as meaning the younger or boyish passive homosexual partner.
- 6) Real love between two men is not only a modern phenomenon. There are many examples from the history of the Greco-Roman world of genuine love between a man and a youth or two young men. Therefore the Scriptures are not simply concerned with exploitative homosexual relationships.

ARE THE GREEK TERMS LIMITED TO ONE MALE DOMINATING ANOTHER MALE

The rendering “dominant males” in the KGV version of 1 Corinthians 6:9b and 1 Timothy 1:10 does not mean ‘dominating’ as in one who ‘dominates’ over the receptive partner, but rather that he is the one who takes the dominant role because of penetrating the other, and so is the more active. Although, the Greco-Roman society had “the cult of virility” and a man was often viewed as dominating his wife in the sex act, Paul’s terms are not so limited. He clearly is against all aspects of same-sex intercourse because it changes God’s ordained role of male and female. As noted above there are written clues in Romans 1:21-32 that Paul is referencing Genesis One regarding the original roles set for humans.

THE MAIN ISSUE IS THAT 1 CORINTHIANS 6: 9b SHOWS HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE AS BEING SINFUL

As with Romans 1, such homosexual acts of a dominant male with another male mentioned in first Corinthians are clearly wrong in God’s eyes. They are a sin and will keep a person who practices them out of God’s Kingdom. Furthermore, when verse 11 says, “you have washed yourselves; you were set apart; you were put into a right relationship with God in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and in the spirit of our God” it indicates that such people **can make a change**, at least to some extent. If they are really bi-sexual the change can be total toward a proper heterosexual relationship—but if of someone who has practiced homosexuality for a long period it will be much harder for them to change. However, with a strong motivation and support such changes can be made so as to keep to God’s moral standards.

Whichever way the homosexual community wishes to view these texts, there is clear evidence that God does not approve of any homosexual activities. God’s moral standard for humans on this issue does not change from when it was first stated in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. However, we must keep in mind that the biblical texts simply do not discuss a homosexual orientation that is not acted upon.

Paul’s Statement on Homosexuality in 1 Timothy 1:10

In writing to Timothy, Paul’s counsel would be for the Christian community in Ephesus and Asia Minor because Timothy acted as Paul’s emissary to Ephesus. In time this counsel would be of benefit to Christians everywhere. Here there is a vice list, seven of which are specific, including: usually married “males who have sex with males” as an extra-marital relationship. So Paul writes that:

“We realize that law ... is for lawless and rebellious people, the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who mistreat their fathers or mothers, and for murderers. Law is for the sexually immoral, **for dominant males who have sex with males** (Gk *arsenokoites*), for slave-traders, liars, perjurers - and those practising anything else which opposes healthful teaching, as set out in the blessed God’s glorious good news, with which I was entrusted” (*1 Tim. 1:9-11*).

Here there is the same translation issue of the Greek word *arsenokoites* as in 1 Corinthians 6:9b. This text also concerns the Greco-Roman culture where men, either homosexual or heterosexual, would commonly have sex with males, either youths or adults. However, there is no reason to imagine that this excludes unmarried men because there were many examples of famous individuals in Greek history who were single and also had an unmarried male sex partner.

Again this is not about homosexual orientation, but about homosexual acts whether performed by homosexually or bi-sexually oriented men and is shown to be a sin worthy of one’s being denied access to God’s Kingdom.

Is Having a Homosexual Orientation a Sin?

Again from theologian William Lane Craig's internet paper he says:

Now what the Bible condemns is homosexual actions or behavior, not having a homosexual orientation. The idea of a person's being a homosexual by orientation is a feature of modern psychology and may have been unknown to people in the ancient world. What they were familiar with was homosexual acts, and this is what the Bible forbids.

Now this has enormous implications. For one thing, it means that the whole debate about whether homosexuality is something you were born with or is a result of how you were raised really doesn't matter in the end. The important thing is not how you *got* your orientation, but what you *do* with it. Some defenders of the homosexuality lifestyle are very anxious to prove that your genes, not your upbringing, determine if you're homosexual because then homosexual behavior is normal and right. But this conclusion doesn't follow at all. Just because you're genetically disposed to some behavior doesn't mean that behavior is morally right. To give an example, some researchers suspect there may be a gene which predisposes some people to alcoholism. Does that mean that it's all right for someone with such predisposition to go ahead and drink to his heart's content and become an alcoholic? Obviously not! If anything, it ought to alert him to *abstain* from alcohol so as to prevent this from happening. Now the sober truth of the matter is that we don't fully understand the roles of heredity and environment in producing homosexuality. But that doesn't really matter. Even if homosexuality were completely genetic, that fact alone still wouldn't make it any different than a birth defect, like a cleft palate or epilepsy. That doesn't mean it's normal and that we shouldn't try to correct it.

Summary Concerning the Sins in the Relevant Passages

Genesis 19:4-8, Jude 7. The sins of Sodom were:

- Failure to help the poor and needy (Ezek. 16:49).
- The violation of the hospitality rule for protection of a guest.
- Atrocious sexual immorality, likely including homosexual acts.
- The violent threat of homosexual gang-rape of angels by primarily heterosexual men.
- The attempt to have sexual cohabitation with another species ("different flesh").

Judges 19:22-23. The sins of the Gibeonites were:

- The violation of the hospitality rule for protection of a guest.
- The violent threat of homosexual gang-rape of a man by primarily heterosexual men.
- The gang-rape of the Levite's concubine.

Romans 1:26-27. The sins of the Gentiles were:

- The two major sins of idolatry and same-sex intercourse. It appears that in the history of pagan Gentiles they exchanged "God's truth" about who to worship and who to have sex with "for falsehood." This meant that they sinfully worshipped idols and they sinfully engaged in sex with those of their own sex.
- Secondly, the committing of the many other non-sexual sins listed in Romans 1:28-32.

1 Corinthians 6:9b. The sin described here was:

- The having of homosexual intercourse by any man who takes the male role (Gk *arsenokoites*) with any man who willingly takes the female role (GK *malakos*). There is no distinction in the word *malakos* as indicating that the female role concerns only youths. However, there is no condemnation of one's having a homosexual orientation, but not acting upon it.

1 Timothy 1:10. The sin here was:

- The homosexual acts of the one who takes the male homosexual role.

THOSE WHO PROMOTE HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY AS COMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIANITY

They often redirect attention away from the homosexual aspects described in the above passages to the other sinful factors involved in all these passages. These other factors are:

- Failure to help the poor and needy.
- Violation of the hospitality rule for protection of a guest.
- Gang-rape.
- Idolatry.
- Pederasty.
- Heterosexual involvement.
- The many non-sexual sins listed in Romans 1:28-32.

However, the key point in these passages is either missed or chosen to be ignored by those who accept homosexuality as compatible with Christianity. This key fact is that the homosexual activity described in these passages is always shown in either a negative light or as sinful no matter who is doing it. Paul's statements in Romans 1 show it to be a particularly bad sexual sin.

Other Biblical Points Concerning Homosexuality

1: THERE AREN'T ANY POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BIBLE

Although some people try to show that David and Jonathan were in a same-sex relationship or that Ruth and Naomi were in a same-sex relationship, there is actually no proof in the Scriptures of there being any such relationships, and in fact there are indicators that such was never the case. Please see Appendix 1.

2: GOD DESIGNED OUR BODIES TO FUNCTION HETEROSEXUALLY

The predominant sexual behaviour of humans is heterosexual because of the way we are designed. The very complementarity or fittedness of the male and female sexual organs shows that this was God's purpose for mankind in their sexual relations. But please note that a homosexual orientation is a malfunction caused by many factors and certainly not the way God designed humans. However, to engage in homosexual acts, either male with male or female with female is contrary to nature as God set it out.

Are People with Homosexual Feelings “Born Gay”?

Of the many studies on the causes of a homosexual orientation it would seem that the causal factors are a mix of several, including genetic factors, hormonal events in the womb, environmental factors, and early life experiences and influences related to sex, including sexual abuse.

ARE THE BRAINS OF HOMOSEXUALLY ORIENTED PEOPLE WIRED DIFFERENTLY?

A 1991 study by Simon LeVay indicated that this was so. He concluded that INAH3 was twice as big in heterosexual males as in females or homosexual males. However, his study was very flawed for a number of reasons, including the fact that his sample size was very small. Also three of the heterosexual males had an INAH3 smaller than the average homosexual male. Furthermore, his findings could be as the result of other factors. Indeed, the AIDS virus and some AIDS drugs lower the testosterone levels in those individuals carrying the AIDS virus.

ARE GENETIC FACTORS RESPONSIBLE?

For many years there has been a search for a ‘gay gene,’ but with all scientific research on this failing to find such a thing. Even the results of the research published in 1993 by Dr. Dean Hammer concerning **X chromosomes** with the claim that “two thirds of gay brothers in families had this in common” has turned out to be poor research and with the genetic markers being found to be insignificant. Dr. Hammer himself later admitted that there was no evidence for a ‘gay gene.’

At the same time professor of psychiatry Dennis Mcfadden claimed that the **sensitivity in hearing** in homosexual people was closer to that of their opposite sex and so proved that homosexual orientation was genetic. Eventually Mcfadden himself stated that “multiple explanations can be generated for the weaker click-evoked otoacoustic emissions.” More recently an internet article stated:

The largest ever study into the existence of a so-called ‘gay gene’, conducted by North Shore Research Institute, looked at 409 sets of gay brothers in an effort to finally put the debate to rest. The study identified two genetic regions—Xq28 an 8q12—which seemed to be correlated to homosexuality in men. Lead scientist Alan Sanders said that the work “erodes the notion that sexual orientation is a choice” – but said the study also **did not identify a single gene** which was the direct cause of homosexuality. He stressed that a variety of factors—including genetics, upbringing and environment play a part in developing sexual orientation, which is **complex and emerges over time**. (boldening mine).

In 1996 Dr Jeffrey Satinover wrote in *The Journal of Human Sexuality* that: “There is no evidence that homosexuality is simply ‘genetic’—*and none of the research itself claims there is*. Only the press and certain researchers do, when speaking in sound bites to the public.”

All other studies, including those on identical twins, indicate that genetic influences on any person’s homosexual orientation may be only between 5% and 8%. This means that genetic influences alone do not produce a homosexually oriented person.

INTRAUTERINE HORMONAL EFFECTS ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

At a certain point during any pregnancy there is a testosterone surge for a foetus at which time male characteristics are formed. If no such surge occurs the foetus will develop female characteristics and become a girl. If a very weak surge of the male hormone occurs due to the mother taking certain hormone pills, such as estrogen, then the baby female will exhibit characteristics somewhat male-like, and so is more likely to become rather tomboyish. If the testosterone surge is a little weaker than normal a baby boy will have slightly less definitely male characteristics, and so is more likely to become rather effeminate.

One study concerning the **length of the fingers** of homosexuals concluded that, “The right hand second and fourth digit ratio of homosexual women was significantly more masculine than that of heterosexual women” because they were exposed to greater amounts of foetal androgen during their development in the womb. However, this research was conducted on animals and with excessive amounts of hormones, specifically steroids which would never naturally occur in human development.

Nevertheless, none of this is greatly significant on actual sexuality. Even the combined effects of the genetics and a faulty intrauterine surge are not so significant as to produce people who will necessarily become homosexual.

In spite of these factors, former president of Exodus International (for helping Christian lesbians in their fight), Joe Dallas wrote that:

Even if homosexuality is someday proven to be inborn, *inborn* does not necessarily mean *normal*... Second, inborn tendencies toward certain behaviors (such as homosexuality) do not make those behaviors moral. Obesity and violent behaviour are now thought to be genetically influenced.... Surely we are not going to say that obesity, violence, alcoholism, and adultery are legitimate because they were inherited.

EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES AND INFLUENCES RELATED TO SEX

With reference to lesbianism, a primary factor in leading to that orientation is emotional insecurity. This often happens because of gender role rejection when:

- a mother appears ‘weak’ in responding to a physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive husband, or
- the father is a hater of femininity, or
- there is an unhealthy father-daughter relationship, or
- there is a damaged mother-daughter relationship, or
- there is any sexual abuse from inside or outside of the home, or
- other very bad parenting skills, or
- other childhood trauma.

A girl may begin to despise her mother for being ‘weak’ or ‘a doormat’ and then feel that there is nothing good about being a woman. She may then seek a relationship with a woman having a strong character, and this may eventually lead to a sexual relationship with her. This is often begins when a girl becomes and remains a tomboy beyond a reasonable amount of time and seeks out only boy-type activities. For a boy this often begins when he shows an inordinate interest in girls’ toys or when he displays rather effeminate qualities.

Also, for girls or boys in school, there is much teaching and discussion concerning homosexuality as well as promoting the idea that one must not be homophobic. Often text books include positive references to homosexuality. Sometimes even the administrators or teachers themselves lead homosexual lives and often promote the legitimacy of their life-style. Also much that is in the media promotes the same life-style. With all of this there is a pushing of any child/teenager with a developed predisposition toward homosexuality to desire to express those homosexual feelings.

A HOMOSEXUAL PREDISPOSITION

From the above it appears that homosexual people have developed a predisposition toward homosexuality, and usually from the time of their teens. Clearly it is not an absolute genetic orientation toward it from birth; yet the more homosexual experiences they have the more embedded this behaviour becomes. Again this is very similar to someone with a predisposition toward alcohol who must abstain from alcohol completely if he or she

wants a healthier life. Similarly, the person who has lived a homosexual life is going to have an enormous struggle. The longer they have lived the homosexual lifestyle the harder the struggle will be. So, although many have been proven to have never had any attraction to the opposite sex it is significantly because wrong things were happening in their early life before and during the time they were developing sexually.

So on balance it seems that the answer to the question: are people with homosexual feelings “born gay,” is no! So does this mean that they consciously choose to be gay? The answer here seems to be “yes” and “no.” This is because of the many factors mentioned earlier. In particular it is because of their early life negative experiences and influences, so that these ones have a predisposition toward homosexuality and can be easily drawn into it, and so finally leading them to choose that life-style.

Is Homosexual Activity a Sin if It Is Within a Loving, Committed, Relationship?

From the above analysis of the relevant Scriptures the answer is clearly “yes”! Homosexual acts are always shown in the Bible as being behaviour which is unacceptable to God, even if practiced by individuals who are in a loving relationship with each other. Such acts are not natural, not the norm, and contradict God’s original arrangement for sex between two humans—one male the other female. The biblical fact is that homosexual acts defy what God has established as the moral standard for mankind. So any feelings of love that some may claim they have for each other do not change God’s moral standards.

As an example, suppose a heterosexual couple commits adultery claiming to be in love and fully committed to each other, yet they are still committing a sin—and therefore are not excused. Their claim to be in love does not make that relationship morally right.

As a second example, suppose a paedophile claimed to be in love with the under age child he is having a sexual relationship with, would this be acceptable to God or even to most humans? Obviously not!

As a further example, take someone who is a psychopath and so has no natural feelings of remorse for any evil that he does. He cannot be excused for the evil done just because he has a predisposition toward it. So, too, with any homosexual activity, it cannot be excused—it is sinful. Each of us is personally responsible for our behaviour. Otherwise, drunk drivers, rapists and child molesters would be “let off the hook” by playing the “victim of their childhood” card.

Health and Related Issues for People Who Engage In Homosexual Activities

Endorsement by society of same-sex behaviour will only accelerate its many negative effects, including the very great likelihood that more people will adopt that life-style.

SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES

These concern AIDS, hepatitis, rectal cancer, mental illness, substance abuse, and a twenty-five to thirty year decrease in life expectancy.

OTHER SERIOUS ISSUES

These are suicide and a dramatic increase in the incidence of paedophilia (7 to 8 times more than in the heterosexual community).

So-Called Gay Marriage

The “So-Called” in this heading is because the homosexual community has hijacked the term “marriage,” which throughout history is a term referring to the union of a man and a woman. As mentioned at the beginning of this study there is a trend among the law-makers of the nations to legalize homosexual marriage. However, we have seen throughout this study that the Scriptures show God’s detestation of homosexual activity; yet loving sexual activity should be part of any marriage. So clearly God must also detest homosexual marital unions.

Additionally, it is a well established fact that those who live the homosexual lifestyle are generally more promiscuous than those in the heterosexual community. In fact, all promiscuity is ultimately damaging, so biblically all sex should take place in the setting of marriage, and all extramarital sex is sinful. Clearly, in the Bible every marriage is heterosexual—there is no occurrence of a same-sex marriage. Biblically marriage is defined in the Bible as being of one man and one woman.

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage in Bible times had some very different aspects to it compared with modern-day marriages—some that seem a little strange, even bizarre to us. For instance:

- Marriage in the ancient Israelite culture was significantly about inheritance rights, and concerned the providing of a dowry and a bride-price.
- Levirate marriage. A man was required to have sexual intercourse with his dead brother's wife in an attempt to produce heirs for him—Deut. 25:5-6; Gen. 38:8. Jesus nullified this aspect of the law (Luke 20:35).
- Polygamy was a generally accepted practice (Exodus 21:10-11; 2 Sam. 12:7-8). It also seems that Jesus nullified this aspect of the law too (Matt. 19:4-6).
- A master of a household could buy a wife for his male slave and then, after later setting the slave free, keep the wife and children as slaves (Exodus 21:2-4).
- A woman was required to marry her rapist, who then can never divorce her (Deut. 22:28-29).

Although none of these things are required in the culture of our day and, in fact, some are outlawed, nevertheless none of this involves same-sex relationships. Therefore, gay marriage cannot be considered as an acceptable exception to normal heterosexual marriage—it cannot be considered as marriage. Indeed, all of the above forms of marriage were heterosexual marriages of a man with a woman (or women—in a polygamous culture). This is the only biblical definition of marriage.

Can Homosexuals Be Christians?

Many Christians would say that there is no such thing as a homosexual Christian. Others might say that homosexual people can be considered as Christians. They may illustrate this in considering two couples who are close to identical—but one couple is straight the other is homosexual, and they both:

- Are totally devoted to God and to Christ and live a fully Christian life, (the exception being the ongoing sin of the homosexual couple, although not being promiscuous).
- Pray and study together.
- Promote the Kingdom together.

Those who say that homosexual people can be considered as Christians then ask: Are we to assess the straight couple as approved of by God, but the homosexual couple as condemned by God and to be finally destroyed? However, those who view homosexual activity as sinful may still recognize that the homosexual couple are Christians, but with a very significant sinful aspect in their lives—one in which they need help.

From our research we have to conclude that the biblical response should be that the homosexual person cannot become a baptized Christian until, in repentance, they have ceased living the homosexual life-style and show that they are determined to fight against their orientation and temptations.

How Should Christians Treat Homosexual People?

It seems that there are several aspects to this:

1) THE CHRISTIAN WHO HAS A HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION/PRE-DISPOSITION BUT DOES NOT ACT UPON IT

These are our brothers and sisters who are struggling with an issue that could lead to sin, but they are endeavouring to win their fight against homosexuality. They could be helped to recognize the triggers that stimulate their attraction to someone of the same sex and their desire for a same-sex sexual relationship. So they should be treated with love as any other brother and sister would be, even if they succumb on some occasion and fall into sin, but then sincerely repent. However, these ones should not be encouraged to marry someone of the opposite sex as if this will cure the problem, although they may eventually want to marry at some future time when they feel confident in maintaining a heterosexual relationship.

If the person has a low sex drive then they may be able to live a celibate life. However, control is much harder for a person with a high sex drive as noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:9, although this text clearly only applies to a heterosexual person. So one must be aware of the enormous pressure a homosexual person with a high sex drive is under to maintain his or her celibacy. So their brothers and sisters should be very supportive of their efforts and never be judgemental of them if they should fall into sin (Rom.2:1-4), while at the same time helping them to fight their way away from their predisposition to homosexual thoughts, feelings, and actions.

2) *THE CHRISTIAN WHO HAS A HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION AND IS INVOLVED IN HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY*

These ones are actually living a sinful life as are most people of the world as well as some heterosexual Christians. So as ever, we must follow Messiah's example. He treated sinners with love, respect, and as having worth in God's eyes. Yes, Jesus is obviously against sin, but he is not hateful or demeaning of sinners—not even ignoring the prostitutes of his day. We must recognize that homosexuality is one among many sexual sins, such as adultery, incest, bestiality, or paedophilia.

Therefore, one should show love to any person who is struggling with this issue; yet never showing any approval of what they do, but, in fact, showing them that they are living a life of sin. They too, if they are willing, should be helped to fight their way away from their predisposition to homosexual thoughts, feelings, and actions. They also may be helped to recognize the triggers that stimulate their attraction to someone of the same sex and their desire for a same sex sexual relationship. Indeed, it takes a person's conscious decision to act in a specific sexual way. If everyone simply acted on their natural impulses, then one would have to sanction the actions of people having a tendency toward addictions, rather than encouraging them to make changes in their lives.

Indeed, after much education in the Scriptures on this subject, any Christian would simply be living in rebellion against God if they refused to acknowledge that their homosexual life-style is sinful in God's eyes and that they should change their mindset and life-direction. If after many attempts to help them they make no change in their thinking they should be disfellowshipped. This would be done on a similar basis to that of the sexually immoral man noted in 1 Corinthians 5, in anticipation of their later repentance and welcoming back into fellowship.

3) *THE CHRISTIAN WHO HAS A "BI-SEXUAL" ORIENTATION AND IS INVOLVED IN HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY*

This obviously is also sin, but which can be broken in time. These ones can be directed to give up their homosexual lifestyle. However, in leaving their current partner, they may have a considerable struggle if they have been together for a long time; but, at least they have previously experienced a heterosexual relationship. This makes it considerable easier for them than for the person with an entirely homosexual orientation. They clearly can eventually live without being involved in any homosexual relationship. Yet, if their sex drive is high or for other reasons they can be encouraged to seek out an appropriate heterosexual relationship.

4) *THE NON-CHRISTIAN WHO HAS A HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION WHETHER ACTING UPON IT OR NOT*

Christians should treat such people no differently to any other worldly person because all are living lives with sin in them and without God. "Always deal wisely with outsiders, making the best use of your opportunities. Always let your conversation be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how best to answer each person" (Col. 4:5-6). So the Christian hope and lifestyle should be presented to them in a loving manner just as with any other non-Christian person and, if they accept God's truth, then they can be directed to change away from any homosexual lifestyle and such practices that they may have been engaging in.

Conclusion

As with all study of the New Testament one must be culturally sensitive so as to receive these statements in the same way that a 1st century audience would have received them, and then see how they may or may not apply in the modern-day culture; otherwise one is misreading those statements. This has been the case in the past with issues over the justification of slavery, a woman's relationship to her husband, whether or not a woman should wear a head covering in church, as well as over the issue of divorce.

From the key texts on this subject it is evident that God detests homosexual relationships because it destroys His plan in Genesis One for males to be males and females to be females and to act accordingly with regard to sexual relationships. This is shown by the design of the male and female sexual organs.

Also, within the Greco-Roman culture of the time, those who were either homosexual or bi-sexual and who engaged in homosexual acts were committing sin. In each of these texts or passages those homosexual acts mentioned are condemned, and with this condemnation being in harmony with God's view clearly expressed through the spirit of the Mosaic Law in Leviticus 18 and 20. These passages show that homosexual relationships and homosexual acts, even in a committed homosexual relationship, are totally unacceptable to God and therefore to Christians. They are sinful.

So any heterosexual (effectively becoming bi-sexual) person of today who adopts the homosexual lifestyle or in any way engages in homosexual acts is, in fact, committing sin when they engage in same-sex relations. This is part of the sexual depravity that Paul spoke against. Furthermore, those persons with a predisposition, developed through childhood, to sexual feelings toward those of the same sex and then act on those feelings are also committing sin. Those who claim that the above passages of Scripture do not condemn same-sex relationships are choosing to sideline that condemnation by focusing only on the other details of the passages i.e.

the idolatry etc. In other words they are either missing or ignoring the very bad light in which the homosexual actions are shown. In fact, nowhere in Scripture is there any condoning of a sexual relationship of persons of the same sex.

Sadly, a genuine homosexual orientation/predisposition seems to have been as a result of mankind's general broken relationship with God leading to a variety of causes as shown above. But change is possible if a person's motive is very strong as for example the desire to please God. Even so such a change may be extremely difficult and we as Christians should show a merciful non-judgmental attitude toward them and act as their support team as they struggle their way out of this sinful behaviour. We should remember that Jesus purposely associated with sinners, and homosexuality, as a sin, is in the same category as other sexual sins.

FOUR REASONS WHY THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE ACT CONTRARY TO GOD'S INTENTIONS

1. Same-sex intercourse is strongly rejected by the revelation of Scripture.
2. Same-sex intercourse suppresses the visible evidence of nature regarding male-female anatomical complementarity i.e. the fittedness of the male and female sexual organs.
3. Endorsement by society of same-sex behaviour will only accelerate its many negative effects, including more people adopting that life-style and the many serious health issues, suicide, and a dramatic increase in the incidence of paedophilia.
4. The practicing homosexual's own relationship with the Creator is put into jeopardy.

Appendix 1

In 2 Samuel 1:26 King David says of the now deceased Jonathan: "Your love was more wonderful to me than the love of women." Also 1 Samuel 18:3 says, "Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul." Although a few modern Bible commentators state that this was a homosexual relationship, most show that this was not the case, but was a sincere brotherly love with nothing romantic about it. In fact, 1 Samuel 18:16 also shows that "all Israel and Judah loved David" clearly in kinship and friendship.

Further showing that it was very unlikely that there was anything homosexual about David is the fact that he was totally attracted to Bathsheba and later took other wives. So as a heterosexual God-fearing man David would not have purposely gone against his nature and broken God's law as stated in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Jonathan also was married with children (1 Sam. 20:42; 2 Sam 9:3) and therefore was heterosexual.

Appendix 2

Those who practice homosexuality and those who support their "rights" in this issue sometimes argue that homosexuality is natural because it occurs in the animal world. Although it is true that there is some homosexual behaviour among some species of animals it is still not the norm. In fact, animals also behave in many other ways that would never be condoned in human behaviour. For instance, some animals eat their prey while it is still alive and even eat their own young. Also in the animal world we see much cruelty and brutality, and which we all condemn whenever it occurs in human society because humans are made in God's image and so do not or should not behave like animals. So those who defend homosexuality are not consistent in their arguments on this issue.

SUGGESTED READING

The Bible and Homosexual Practice Robert Gagnon
Restoring Sexual Identity Anne Paulk

www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk