

## Does the Bible have anything to say to Christians about homosexuality?

I have decided not to call my little piece 'Homosexuality and The Bible' because this assumes a common set of assumptions about what we call homosexuality. It assumes that the various people whose writings and written speech went to make up what we call the Bible would share a concept that could be translated from Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic into '**homosexuality**'.

Firstly let us ask what it means to be a Christian. This is not as simple as it sounds – from the point of view of scripture I would suggest it is an acceptance of the primacy of Christ, that we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ above all other human wisdom, and hold that same Jesus of Nazareth to have been the wellspring of Divine Wisdom – in a very real sense, the Son of God. Further, we accept that Jesus of Nazareth to have been *very God and very man*; that is truly divine yet truly and fully human.

This means that we must always look to The Gospels and possible personal revelation as to the nature of Jesus and his teaching over and above any other utterance if that utterance contradicts the core and undeniable teaching of Jesus Christ – the one we follow.

Although it is uncomfortable for many to accept, there are numerous parts of Holy Scripture that stand in direct 'literal' defiance of Christ – but if not read literally, but as part of the gradual *unfurling* of Israel's love affair with The Creator then we see instead the struggle of dozens, or hundreds of God-loving people to understand where their lives best lead to that same God. Like all of us they frequently stumbled, and there is selfishness and politics in The Bible as much as in the modern church.

We read of genocide and incest; appalling violence and cruelty - infanticide and forced marriage, slavery, polygamy and murder as all having divine sanction in the Old Testament. In The New Testament we read that women are to be submissive and slaves are to obey their masters – we read that marriage is a second best to celibacy and that the world should have ended nearly two thousand years ago. All that I have just written, while being *in* The Bible does not *define* the Bible – the core message that runs through The Bible is best summed up by the Hebrew word *Hesed* – meaning *lovingkindness*. This lovingkindness finds its glorious fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and of course, Jesus' teaching flatly contradicts the human brokenness that led to all those horrors our ancestors in the faith tried to cover with the pall of religious respectability. In truth they were then what they are now – examples of bankrupt and broken behavior that leads away from the bosom of the loving, compassionate God who created us all and hates nothing thus created.

God calls us to be **whole** human beings – to offer ourselves up for startling transformation, not to suppress ourselves into bitterness and spiritual deformity.

Already, I hope that we glimpse that the message The Bible has regarding LGBT Christians is much the same as the message it has for Heterosexual Christians! We are called to an ever more loving and compassionate way of living – of great personal responsibility but also great understanding for human weakness. We are called for honesty as we serve the God of truth, and not for blindly pretending A is B just because it doesn't fit in with our world view. Homosexuality, just like race and left handedness is a 'pre moral' condition outside of human free will. It is subject to the same biblical injunction that leads to light, compassion and love as is every other aspect of the human condition. The way we behave as homosexuals, or people of color, or left handed people is subject to the same call to love as it is for everyone else – within the obvious constraints of our orientation, color or left handedness! In order to love and cleave ever closer to God in growth and responsibility it is not necessary to either pretend or seek to be straight, to plaster oneself in white pancake or attempt to write with one's right hand. When Jesus said 'love one another as I have loved you' we are forced to concede that such love is difficult, unconditional and seeks to convert by example - by sheer glory of existence rather than browbeat with crude 'one size fits all' morality.

In some ways it is hardly necessary to visit the various passages that people have identified as condemning homosexual orientation, because as none of them came from the lips of Christ, we may be content to offer the entire person, teaching, death and resurrection of Christ as direct contradiction to an approach that seeks to leave a sizable portion of humanity as either damned or doomed to leave a lonely life without hope of marriage and companionship.

However, it just so happens that I don't accept that these passages speak to what we know of as an inherent orientation to love those of the same sex. I say **love** deliberately, because sex is here rather a red herring. In the grand scheme of things, heterosexuality is a tendency and orientation to form relationships with the opposite sex, whilst homosexuality is a tendency to form relationships, and indeed to fall in love with the same sex. This is what truly defines the issue – both straight folk may on occasion and under certain circumstances have sexual contact with the same sex and vice versa, this does not define them – it is their loving relationships that define them over and above mere physicality. The existence of **heterosexual** rapists, polygamists, and widespread adultery divorce and promiscuity no more renders heterosexuality as a whole immoral that does the same patterns of behavior amongst homosexuals. What is more to the point is the need to find condemnation of *healthy, loving, mutually chosen homosexual relationships* within the pages of The Bible, not unhealthy and unhelpful patterns, otherwise all that is being denounced are those unhealthy and unhelpful patterns, **NOT** an entire orientation.