

Homosexuality and AIDS

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Introduction: We must have the courage to follow scripture even when it goes against the "common wisdom." Indeed, it usually does, I Cor. 1, 2.

I. The Family in Scripture

- A. Gen. 1:27-30. God wants us to carry out our human task by a sexually differentiated partnership.
- B. Gen. 2:20-24. Companionship, unity, diversity.
- C. The authority structure reflects sexual difference.
 - 1. I Tim. 2:11-13-- subordination in church because Adam created first.
 - 2. Eph. 5:22f, subordination in family, because the husband is the "head."
 - 3. Parents have authority over children, Eph. 6:1ff.
 - 4. Authority is servant-authority, Matt. 20:26, loving authority, Eph. 5:25.
- D. Why this authority structure?
 - 1. Not that women less competent, etc.
 - 2. God wants *competent* people in humbler roles.
 - 3. Division by sex: partly arbitrary, but not entirely so. Women have babies.
- E. Marriage as image of the divine-human relation, Eph. 5:25ff.
- F. Inadequacy of homosexual relationships to replace this structure.
 - 1. Sexually differentiated partnership.
 - 2. Procreation.
 - 3. Authority structure based on sexual difference; vs. egalitarianism or "competence base."
 - 4. So inadequate image of divine/human relation.
 - 5. Confusing role models for children.
- G. Centrality of the family in scripture.
 - 1. Seeds of church and state.
 - 2. Salvation through gathering of family, Gen. 6, Gen. 12, Ex. 1-15, II Sam. 7, Matt. 1, Luke 3, Acts 2:39, 11:14, 16:31, the "brotherhood."
 - 3. Family chief instrument of welfare, education, Deut. 6.

II. Biblical Teaching About Homosexuality

- A. Scripture limits sex to marriage, and marriage is heterosexual, as we have seen. I Cor. 6:18-20, 7:1-7.
- B. Sodom, Gen. 19 (cf. Ezek. 16:49f, II Pet. 2:6ff, Jude 7). "Know" in verse 5 is a demand for homosexual rape, not an "impolite request for acquaintance."

1. Righteous Lot saw their request as great wickedness, verse 6.
 2. Brings God's judgment, together with Sodom's other sins.
 3. Why else would Lot offer his daughters? (Parallel use of "know.")
 4. Judges 19 parallel.
 5. Certainly there were other elements in the sin of Sodom, as God says through Ezekiel. But the mention of homosexuality is not irrelevant to the sinfulness of the people.
- C. The Law, Ex. 20:14, Lev. 18:22, 20:13, Deut. 23:18.
1. Not "ceremonial," i.e., limited to sexual acts in worship.
 - a. Ceremonial transgressions don't carry death penalty in the law.
 - b. Context of chapters 18-20 is predominantly moral; 21 is ceremonial.
 - c. In Leviticus, the context is one of general sexual transgression. Homosexuality is grouped with incest and bestiality.
 - c. Pertains to nations outside Israel, 18:24-30.
 - d. Reaffirmed in New Testament (below).
 2. Not merely because of connections with idolatry, Deut. 23:17f, or other conjectural historical connections. Scripture doesn't suggest any such rationale, or any such limit on the application of the law.
- D. The New Testament: Rom. 1:26f, 32; cf. I Tim. 1:9f, I Cor. 5:9-11, 6:9f.
1. Not just a punishment for sin, but it is sin itself, 1:24.
 2. Not just condemning lust and promiscuity; scripture draws here no distinction between motive and act.
 3. Not just concerned with idolatry (above).
 4. Not only concerned with pederasty; Paul's language in I Cor. 6:9f is based on the Septuagint of Leviticus rather than on the Greek usage.
 5. "Contrary to nature" = contrary to God's purpose in creation, not merely contrary to one's own inclination.
 6. Venereal disease as God's recompense, verse 27. AIDS.
- E. Scripture never says anything favorable about homosexuality; indeed, it never mentions it except negatively. It does not limit its condemnations only to certain kinds of homosexual behavior; rather, it condemns such behavior generally.

III. Act and Orientation

A. Are there people who "cannot help" homosexual attraction?

1. Genetically, no proof of this yet. If there is a predisposing factor, it does not *force* anyone to be homosexual. It merely raises a moral *problem* with which we must deal in a godly way.
 - a. For one thing, half of all the identical-twin brothers of homosexuals are heterosexuals; so any genetic factor must be less than compelling.
 - b. To put this in context: There may also be genetic factors which predispose one to alcoholism, anger, fornication, carelessness, etc.
 - c. At the very least, we should seek ways to overcome such conditions, as we seek to overcome genetic illnesses. The fact that a condition is influenced by genetic factors does not mean that we must accept it as "normal."
 - d. Genetic factors are no harder to overcome, generally, than environmental factors. But in Scripture, no predisposing factor provides an excuse for sin, though it may mitigate the level of condemnation, Luke 12:47, 48.
2. Is there no "choice" available to the homosexual?
 - a. The relations between feelings and choices are hard to figure out psychologically. Each influences the other to some extent. Certainly when our choices become habits, we often come to feel that we cannot break them.
 - b. Surely at least there is the choice to become sexually active, and with a particular partner.
 - c. Besides those who are exclusively homosexual (probably no more than 1-2% of the population), there are many more who are bisexual. For them, there

is choice in an obvious sense.

d. But the presence or absence of a choice is not the issue. In one sense, our choice to sin was made by Adam.

3. Scripture says no one is *forced* to commit sin, I Cor. 10:13, Rom. 1:32.

4. Habitual sin of any kind can create a condition very hard to control. Drug addiction, kleptomania. But that does not make it right. In the very nature of biblical ethics, we are called to oppose the inclinations of the flesh.

5. Sin itself inescapable apart from grace.

B. Is it sinful to be attracted to a member of your own sex? We need to make some distinctions.

1. Admiring beauty is never wrong in itself. I may admire the beauty of another man's wife without desiring adultery. I may admire an art collection without wanting to steal it.

2. Similarly, temptation is not sin. We may be sexually tempted (or tempted to steal, etc.) without yielding. Heb. 4:15f.

3. But lust is evil, Matt. 5:27-30. Lust exists when we not only admire something, when we not only are tempted, but beyond that, when we start wanting to break God's rules.

C. Verdict On "Homosexual Orientation"

1. If this means that one regularly or often admires the beauty of people of his own sex, it is not wrong in itself, but there are dangers.

2. If this means that one is regularly or often *tempted* toward homosexuality, that too is not sinful in itself. But one should take precautions.

3. If this means homosexual *lust* as defined above, then the orientation is as wrong as the act.

IV. Hope for the Homosexual, I Cor. 6:11.

A. Really deep change is possible only through Christ.

B. Even repentant homosexuals may not become completely "normal." Sin leaves wounds.

C. But homosexuality is not unforgiveable. The Lord calls us to love homosexuals and to offer them salvation in Jesus' name.

D. Repentant homosexuals should be received into the church with open arms, even if they still do not seem entirely "normal."

E. But homosexuality as such is not to be accepted among Christians. It should bring church discipline.

V. Homosexuality and the Church

- A. The push for acceptance of homosexual members and ministers usually follows the push for women's ordination.
- B. The two issues are similar:
 - 1. Both involve denials of biblical authority and/or serious misreadings of scripture.
 - 2. Both arise from the church's capitulation to fashionable, "politically correct" views within secular society. In these cases, the church is accepting direction from the world.

VI. Homosexuality in Society

- A. A crime in Ancient Israel and often in the US, until recently.
- B. Homosexual society is highly promiscuous. About a third of gays have had 1000 sexual partners in their lifetimes. (Bell and Weinberg, *Homosexualities*.)
- C. The gay lifestyle is dangerous. Life expectancy of male homosexuals is around 43. Violence, suicide and depression are common, to say nothing of AIDS.
- D. Therefore, even if there were no explicit biblical prohibition on homosexuality, there would be ample reason to discourage it in society, as we discourage the use of drugs and membership in gangs.
- E. All societies have frowned on some forms of homosexuality, and most until recently have condemned homosexuality of any kind. Perhaps they knew some things that have escaped modern thinkers.
- F. Civil rights? But civil rights require others to tolerate the homosexual lifestyle. Renting, employment, education, churches, pederasty.
- G. Should homosexuality be presented to school children as a legitimate alternative lifestyle? Certainly not.
- H. Social benefits for homosexual "marriages" and "families?" Certainly not.

VII. AIDS

- A. AIDS is a usually, perhaps always, fatal suppression of the immune system.
- B. Causes: Most likely the HIV virus, though there is some controversy over whether that is the cause, or the sole cause. It is communicated by:
 - 1. Sexual transmission. In Africa, predominantly heterosexual; in Europe and America, predominantly among male homosexuals.
 - 2. Contaminated needles and blood transfusions, wound-to-wound contact.

3. Fetus receiving the virus in the womb.
 4. Most authorities believe that it is not spread through "casual contact."
- C. AIDS is increasing. In 1991, 46,716 new cases were reported. In 1992, 97,368. In California, there were 8,641 new cases in 1992, 17,474 in 1993. The "safe sex" campaign does not seem to have been successful.
- D. The AIDS epidemic has increased other health problems. One form of TB, resistant to normal treatment, has occurred often among AIDS sufferers and through them has increased in the general population.
- E. Governments have treated AIDS as a civil-rights issue rather than a straightforward health crisis. Thus the reporting of victims and their contacts is actually discouraged. It is a "politically protected disease."
- F. The use of condoms is not an adequate protection.
- G. Nevertheless, AIDS is almost entirely preventable. Except for contamination through blood transfusions, AIDS can be avoided by avoiding "risk behaviors." That means that those who follow Scriptural principles have little risk of getting AIDS.
- H. Is AIDS God's punishment for homosexuality?
1. All disease is the result of sin.
 2. Though all evils are the result of sin, disasters do not usually come upon people strictly in proportion to their individual sins, Luke 13:1-5.
 3. In Africa, AIDS is not predominantly related to homosexuality. It is, however, related to promiscuity.
 4. Rom. 1:27 does draw some correlation between sexual immorality and venereal disease.
 5. Luke 13:1-5 indicates that our role should not be to talk about who does and does not deserve AIDS; clearly many do not. Our role is to call all people to repent.
- I. Ministering to AIDS patients
1. We should minister to people with AIDS as to any others with serious, indeed fatal, diseases. Where there has been sin, we call for repentance, and we share with them the gospel of grace. We seek to love them because of Jesus.
 2. Talk to Dick LaFleur and others about practical ways to help._