

Homosexuality and the Bible

1). Introduction

I would like Christians in the Christian churches, to recognise that there are two views on this issue for which it is possible to make a thorough theological and Biblical defence. While one view is clearly more prominent within the Body of Christ, both are held by faithful and committed Christians, with respect for Scripture, and the long-held traditions of the Church.

a). I affirm and accept Homosexual people as created by God, made in the image of God, welcomed and loved by God.

b). I see the presence of Homosexual people within human society as a naturally occurring feature of human diversity, and therefore part of God's good creation, not necessarily a sign of sin or brokenness. I recognise that all human sexual relationships have the potential for unhealthy expression and sin, but I do not consider all Homosexual love to be inherently disordered, 'unnatural' or sinful, and I do not believe that Christian theology and the Bible requires me to do so.

c). I believe that most Homosexual people experience their gender identity and sexual attraction as innate and unchosen in the same way Heterosexual people do. I do not believe that most Homosexual people can or should be asked to change their sexuality, and this is being increasingly confirmed by the statistics emerging from those organisations set up with this intent and the closure of Exodus and Courage. The fruit of the 'ex-gay' teaching has been, in the main, harmful.

d). I fully understand that some Homosexual Christians are persuaded in their own conscience that they must stay celibate, in obedience to how they understand the Scriptures. I affirm that choice, if made freely, and would naturally support those people to fulfill their conviction.

However, I am also persuaded that nobody can impose life-long celibacy on someone else if that is not their sense of call and conviction, and to do so is both unhealthy and unethical.

e). Therefore I believe that Homosexual Christians are entitled to give and receive sexual love within faithful relationships, in the same way as Heterosexual Christians are. I am a witness to the grace and care and generosity present within the relationships of my Homosexual friends, and see the blessing and presence of God's Spirit in these relationships no less than in Heterosexual marriage.

f). I grieve for the pain that the Church has caused over the years to Homosexual people, and for the lack of understanding and compassion that they have suffered. I note that the suicide rate of young Homosexual people is higher among those who have had some church backgrounds than those who haven't. I am also concerned to make clear that even where individuals and churches attempt to scale back their active condemnation of Homosexual people, the commitment to seeing their relationships as forbidden and unable to be blessed by God, is in itself still hurtful and alienating. I question whether it is possible for a church to be genuinely welcoming of seeking Homosexual people, while staying opposed to them finding love and fulfillment in human relationship. I reject the separation of 'orientation' and 'practice' as artificial, even specious, distinction that leads to arbitrary lines being drawn across the whole-person experience of eros as a blend of attraction, longing, love, desire, touch, and companionship. I feel that statements like 'love the sinner, hate the sin' applied to this issue, and still communicate on some level the rejection of people's sexual identity that prevents Homosexual Christians finding a place of belonging in Christian churches.

g). I believe that one of the problems is the lack of visibility and voices of Homosexual Christians within the Christian churches. There is still a quality of 'them' and 'us' in the debate that might make it possible to assume that we are exclusively talking about people outside the Church, when I reflect

on this issue. We are the poorer for having exclusively Heterosexual church leaders and scholars determining our stance, without having to experience in themselves any of the consequences of their teaching.

I would like to see Homosexual Christians welcomed into full participation in the life of the Christian churches, including visibility in leading worship and small groups, as church leaders. As with the involvement of women in these roles in the church, the Body of Christ is enriched when the members of the Body see themselves reflected in the leadership. Conversely, the homogeneity of leadership diminishes the confidence of significant portions of the diverse Body, and thus diminishes the full expression of the reach and presence of Christ within the world.

h). I feel that the thinking of Christians on this issue has been framed within too narrow parameters of Biblical interpretation, seemingly uninflected by scholarship that comes to different conclusions. There also seems to be a lack of consideration for the fluidity of gender and sexuality that we all experience, the journey of Homosexual people. I am positively influenced by liberation theologies in their various forms, and hold a literary and critical awareness in relation to the Scriptures. I accept that the theological and Biblical rationale for the majority of Christians on this issue is legitimate within its starting parameters. However, mine differs, and I also consider my own position to be faithful to Scripture, and faithful to my calling in Christ.

i). I recognise my stance to be in a minority position within the wider Christian community, and do not expect other Christians to alter their stance or practice, much as I might find it distressing. I do not see a need to opt out of Christianity on this matter, and feel that the wider family of Christian churches is stronger for being able to contain the difference of our perspective. I do not believe that denominational unity should be based on lengthy confessions or moral uniformity, and I do not believe that our collective Christian witness and mission to the wider society is harmed by holding difference on this or any other issue.

2). **Biblical and Theological matters**

a). I see that the 'proof texting' approach that relies on quoting one or more of the six texts referencing Homosexuality in the Scriptures not only tends to take verses of the Bible out of context, but is inadequate to the fully orbbed nature of complex issues to do with human dignity and morality.

I note that none of the texts usually cited to condemn Homosexual sex, when read in context, is intended as teaching on human sexuality per se, but as an example to support some other theological or legal point. What can be clearly inferred from them is that the Biblical writers, including the Apostle Paul, held, and did not question, the ancient Jewish mindset that all Homosexual activity is unnatural and therefore outside the will of God. However, I do not consider the culture or worldview of the Biblical authors to be inspired or authoritative in determining how we ought to live well in our own cultural setting.

3). **Sexual Immorality**

a). I affirm that the Bible teaches about sexual immorality as inimical to the life of faith. Along with Scripture, I would experience concern where any sexual relationship, Homosexual or Heterosexual, is non-consensual, non-mutual, abusive, unloving, and unfaithful, and where any person was using sex as an addiction, power game, or 'sleeping around' indiscriminately. I am persuaded that the Bible texts that are cited as prohibiting Homosexuality in general assume that some element of promiscuity, exploitation, adultery, or ritual practice are part of all Homosexual sex. Based on my experience of same sex relationships among family and friends, and given that I do not share the cultural assumptions of the Biblical writers, I do not believe that all Homosexual relationships fit this definition of 'immoral.' Some might, as do many Heterosexual relationships. My contention is that the Church should have a positive vision of committed relationships, based on God's covenantal and faithful love for humanity, and be willing to share this vision even where it is counter-

cultural. Part of my desire to uphold the sexual relationships of Homosexual Christians is to affirm, celebrate, and support all relational commitment as trending towards this positive vision.

For more understandable and positive information about Homosexuality and the Bible, please click on www.christiangays.com.

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