

Homosexuality – My Understanding

by

G. Harry Leafe, Th.M., D.Min

Homosexuality has become a major topic of discussion in our modern culture. The discussion is not limited to a particular country or race of people – it is a human issue.

One of the primary areas of consideration in the discussion must be the matter of *worldview*. Everybody has one, but very few can define or describe what it is. Yet it impacts all of life!

Essentially, a worldview is comprised of a person's basic beliefs. When facing the everyday issues of life, a person will evaluate and respond to those issues based on their worldview – their own personal beliefs. The main areas of belief most often mentioned in describing a person's worldview are these: God, Reality, Knowledge, Ethics, and Man. We all have beliefs in these areas. They have been formed over our lifetime, mostly based on what we have been taught and experienced.

Ever-changing cultural norms and standards have a great influence on our thinking – including our beliefs. If you can, recall how things were fifty years ago. In that day if two unmarried people decided to live together while remaining unmarried, it was viewed by most of society as being morally unacceptable. Today, in most areas of our country, the same behavior is viewed as being acceptable. And so it goes.

Currently, we face another major cultural shift related to homosexuality. And society at large seems to have spoken! Is it acceptable? It would seem that most in our society think that it is. And even the president of the United States believes that it is!

On the other hand, most Evangelical Christians (the terms most often used of Christians who believe that the Bible alone is the word of God), would be opposed to such thinking (and behavior). In the Bible God sets forth his moral and ethical standards. They touch every aspect of life – including our motives and behavior. Understandably, then, the Bible addresses the issue of homosexuality.

In the Old Testament God gave legislation to the descendants of Abraham as he formed them into the nation of Israel that would serve as their “national constitution” and govern their relationship with God. That legislation, which is commonly referred to as the Law of Moses (because God gave it to them through Moses), is introduced by the Ten Commandments. The seventh commandment is, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14 NET).¹ In discussions about homosexuality, this becomes a key issue. Sexual involvement outside of marriage is sin before God!

¹ Quotations in this paper are from the following English translations: NET (New English Translation), NAU (New American Standard Bible), and NLT (New Living Translation).

After forming the first man from the dust of the ground, God announced, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him” (Gen 2:18 NET). The formation of that companion is recorded in verses 21-23: “So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man's side and closed up the place with flesh.²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said, ‘This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

The next thing that God did was to announce the formation of the institution of marriage: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24 NAU). The phrase translated “become one flesh” implies a sexual union (see also 1 Cor 6:15-16).

The Lord Jesus Christ in answering questions about the institution of marriage gave his audience a crystal clear response: “He answered, ‘Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female,⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’” (Mat 19:4-6 NET)

There is much more that can be said about the biblical perspective of marriage, but without question it is clear that marriage as established by God involves the union of a man and woman. The union of any two people outside of marriage involves sexual sin – heterosexual or homosexual – and God condemns it!

As we mentioned in the beginning, this brief paper is focused more on issues related to homosexuality, and it does not require a lot of discussion or research to understand God’s position on the subject. So we will just set out a major statement from the Law of Moses, and then a major statement from the New Testament.

First, from the Old Testament:

“If a man has sexual intercourse with a male as one has sexual intercourse with a woman, the two of them have committed an abomination. They must be put to death; their blood guilt is on themselves” (Lev 20:13 NET).

Second, from the New Testament:

“And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved” (Rom 1:26-27 NLT).

The first chapter of Romans indicates that homosexuality manifests itself as a result of people's departure from God. When people (a person or a group of people) began to ascribe greater worth and value to "people, places and things" than they did to God, God abandoned them "to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies" (Rom 1:24 NLT).

It is clear from the biblical evidence that homosexuality involves sexual involvement between two people of the same sex. Absent such sexual involvement there is no homosexuality. This then raises another issue. Some people may have a deeper and more intimate (psychologically or spiritually) relationship with someone of their same sex than perhaps they do with someone else of the opposite sex. They may even manifest some behavioral characteristics which might be interpreted as more feminine than masculine. But in such cases, it would be incorrect to classify such behavior as homosexual.

It seems that there may be a significant number of people who think they are homosexual just because they enjoy friendships and relationships with people of the same sex. But let me say again, absent sexual involvement there is no homosexuality. It should also be pointed out that there is no scientific data to date that indicates homosexuality is genetic in origin. That is why we see no indication of genetic origin in Scripture and why all appeals in Scripture are directed to volition.

Our current society in large measure is made up of people who believe that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative lifestyle for anyone who would desire to engage it. And most of these same people are also supportive of the movement pushing for the legalization of "gay marriage" – the union of homosexual couples.

Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible alone is the word of God and ground their moral values on the teachings of the Bible. But a major problem that faces the church in the current generation is that most Christians today have such a shallow understanding of the doctrines of Scripture that they do not think biblically – and as a result do not have a biblical worldview. Syncretism (blending of ideas) and postmodernism (e.g. a general distrust of theories and systems of ideas) have infiltrated the Church to such a degree that immoral behavior is becoming more and more accepted/tolerated by Christians!

Since this sort of thinking dominates the culture in which we live, how should we respond?

In dealing with a situation of immorality in the church at Corinth the apostle Paul gave clear instructions to them about how to handle such an issue:

"I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or

a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. ¹² For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ But God will judge those outside. Remove the evil person from among you” (1 Cor 5:9-13 NET).

Paul’s words are very instructive. Immoral people – and in this brief paper we have been addressing homosexuality specifically, are found both inside and outside the church. The church has an obligation before God to uphold biblical standards of morality, which would of necessity involve church discipline for those engaged in such activity. As long as a person is involved in such immoral activity, fellowship with that person should be withheld. Withholding fellowship from such people is to indicate to them that we do not approve of their immorality and fellowship with them cannot be maintained (individual or corporate) as long as they are involved in it. However, if they come to a biblical understanding of the sinfulness of their behavior and repent (i.e. change their thinking and behavior), they are to be forgiven and welcomed back into the fellowship of the church (see 2 Cor 5:5-11). For all with opposing viewpoints, I offer the following suggestions:

- Be ready to biblically defend what the Bible teaches.
- When confronted by those who oppose our beliefs, follow biblical instruction:

“And the Lord's slave must not engage in heated disputes but be kind toward all, an apt teacher, patient, ²⁵ correcting opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance and then knowledge of the truth ²⁶ and they will come to their senses and escape the devil's trap where they are held captive to do his will” (2 Ti m 2:24-26 NET).
- Be ready to share the Gospel of Christ whenever the opportunity arises.
- Pray for our leaders in government and the Church that they will use their influence to turn back our nation to God so that he may be honored and glorified – and that we may be spared from his judgment.