

## **HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE**

*By Ken Coughlan*

Homosexuality is a particularly volatile topic today. Groups lobbying for homosexual “rights” have been extremely effective over the past 20 years or so in bringing their issue into the mainstream and convincing the American public that it is a matter of “equality” and “discrimination” on par with racial discrimination, something virtually everyone agrees is atrocious.

The Ten Minas Ministries website contains an article that discusses whether the alleged “discrimination” against homosexuals is really analogous to unlawful racial discrimination.<sup>1</sup> That is not the point of this hand out. Instead, this packet contains information that the article does not; i.e., what does the Bible have to say about homosexuality? Is the Bible really vague enough on this issue to leave room for debate? I believe the answer is “no,” and my reasons will be explained below.

However, this is not an in-depth article on the Biblical argument against homosexuality. I have actually tried to keep my personal comments to a minimum, preferring to let God do the talking for me. Instead, this packet is more of a list of Biblical passages divided into topical groups. Each grouping contains a brief introduction and I have provided a few short comments following some of the Bible passages. As Christians, our goal should always be to investigate how God feels about homosexual behavior, not how Ken Coughlan feels. For that reason, the Biblical quotations contained in this packet are far more deserving of your attention than anything I say. With that being said, let us begin.

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<sup>1</sup> See “The Same Sex Marriage Debate: 'Discriminating' Between Logic and Connotation” at <http://www.TenMinasMinistries.org>.

## **How God designed marriage**

The passages quoted in this section teach us that God originally designed marriage as an institution between a man and a woman. The first marriage was between Adam and Eve. This was a far superior marriage than any we see today because Eve was literally taken from Adam's flesh. Genesis 2:24 and Jesus' comments from Matthew and Mark below clearly show us that subsequent marriages after Adam and Eve are still supposed to be modeled after that original union. The point of marriage today is that a man and a woman become one flesh as Adam and Eve were literally one flesh.

Notice also that when God believed Adam needed a "suitable helper" He made a woman to be that helper, not a man. When a man leaves his mother and father it is to be with his "wife" (i.e., a female), not another man.

God also commanded Adam and Eve to "multiply on the earth." This is not the only justification for marriage (we have already seen that it is also intended as a joining of two into one flesh and to create a "suitable helper"), but it is part of the overall marriage picture. At least the first married couple was expected to have children. This would not have been possible with a same sex couple, so yet again we see God's original intention for marriage was for it to be between a man and a woman. This command was arguably repeated for Noah and his family after the flood.

The point of these verses is simply to show us how God originally set up marriage and how that first marriage is a model for marriage today. The first marriage was clearly designed and intended to be between a man and a woman. It would not have worked any other way. People who propose a different arrangement today must show where in the Bible God condoned changing this original set up.

Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:18, 20b-24

<sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

...

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> The man said,  
"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,'  
for she was taken out of man."

<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Genesis 8:15-17

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup> Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."

Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>4</sup>"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' <sup>5</sup>and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

## Mark 10:6-9

<sup>6</sup>"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'<sup>7</sup>For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

### **How God regards homosexual behavior**

The following passages do not deal explicitly with marriage, but rather with homosexual behavior in general. Notice first that the passages clearly condemn homosexual acts. Anyone who tries to convince themselves otherwise is simply trying to read into scripture what they want it to say instead of taking it at its plain meaning. However, these passages say nothing about biological attraction. People are held responsible for that which they can control. Even assuming homosexual attraction is somehow programmed into our genes, that is irrelevant. What is morality if not a set of rules telling us when we are to resist doing that which we genuinely and sincerely want to do? Men and women have biological attractions to people other than their spouse. Does this mean that adultery is acceptable? Of course not. But the attraction is still biologically programmed. The attraction itself is not the sin. Acting on that attraction (through thought or deed) is sinful.

Some people believe that these prohibitions only apply to ritual homosexual prostitution that was offered during pagan religious ceremonies. While it is true that God clearly forbade participating in pagan religions, He did so independently of any reference to homosexuality. In other words, people who try to claim that the Bible does not prohibit homosexual marriage accuse God of being redundant by saying in one breath "Don't participate in pagan religions" and again "Don't participate in pagan homosexual rituals." Isn't the latter included in the former?

Also, if that is what God meant by these passages, why didn't He say so? Look at Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 below. Where is the reference to pagan religious rituals in those passages? There is none. This is a classic example of reading into scripture what you want it to say (see 2 Timothy 4:3-4 regarding "itching ears"). God is not a God of confusion. If all He meant to prohibit was ritual homosexual prostitution, why did He use language that was so much broader and that clearly could confuse the issue?

#### Leviticus 18:22

<sup>22</sup> Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

#### Leviticus 20:13

<sup>13</sup> If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

#### Romans 1:26-32

<sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

<sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

*COMMENT: Notice that the men's relations with each other are described as "in the same way" as the women's "unnatural" relations. This seems to indicate that the women too were having relations with each other instead of with men.*

#### 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 13b-20

<sup>9</sup>Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup>nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the

kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. 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.

...

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup>But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

*COMMENT: Although the specific example of "sexual immorality" that Paul gives is prostitution, his comments in verses 13b through 20 would seem to apply to homosexuality as well. Prostitution and homosexuality are mentioned together immediately beforehand in verse 9, both as examples of "sexual immorality" (which is the overall theme of verses 13b through 20).*

*Also, note in verse 9 that "male prostitution" and "homosexual offenders" are listed separately, so Paul clearly is talking about two different things here (i.e., two different types of sexual immorality). "Homosexual offenders" cannot refer simply to ritual homosexual prostitution because that is already covered by the term "male prostitution." Why list "homosexual offenders" after "male prostitution" if they were one and the same?*

*Finally, note that one reason Paul gives for why prostitution is wrong is because by engaging in sexual relations with a prostitute the two participants are becoming "one flesh." This is the same terminology we saw above in Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:8, where it is applied exclusively to marriage. Sexual relations join two people in one flesh, but that is supposed to be reserved for marriage. Any sexual intercourse outside of a marriage between a man and a woman is contrary to God's will whether it is heterosexual or homosexual.*

### 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. <sup>2</sup>But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup>The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. <sup>5</sup>Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup>I say this as a concession, not as a command. <sup>7</sup>I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

<sup>8</sup>Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. <sup>9</sup>But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

*COMMENT: Here we see Paul telling married couples not to withhold sexual relations from each other. Why not? So that they will not be tempted to satisfy their sexual desires elsewhere. Again, the context clearly indicates that sexual relations are only to occur within a marriage between a man and a woman. Any sexual relations outside of that institution are the result of Satan tempting us due to our lack of self-control.*

### 1 Timothy 1:8-10

<sup>8</sup>We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. <sup>9</sup>We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup>for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine <sup>11</sup>that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

*COMMENT: “Perverts” in verse 10 is literally “men who sleep with men” (arsenokoitai) in Greek.*

### 2 Timothy 4:3-4

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

### **Lot and the men at Sodom**

There is one other story from the Bible that is often used to show that God opposes homosexuality. It is the story of Lot in the city of Sodom immediately before the LORD destroys the city. The text from Genesis is printed below for you to read. However, in this one case I agree with those who favor homosexual marriage; i.e., this passage does not clearly and unequivocally speak against homosexuality per se. It is possible that the sin of the men that so outraged God was attempted rape, which in this case just happened to be homosexual rape. It likely would have equally outraged God if it was heterosexual rape. It is also likely that this particular type of sin was only one of a wide variety of sins that led God to destroy Sodom, so it is probably unwise to read too much into this passage.

However, this raises one other point worth mentioning. Many non-Christians use this story to speak of how “barbaric” the “God of the Old Testament” is (as if there was some difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament). They point out that when these men asked to rape Lot’s visitors, Lot offered up his virgin daughters as rape victims to satiate these men’s sinful desires. Critics ask what kind of God would condone such a thing.

The obvious response, however, is simply to ask where in the text it ever says that God condoned Lot’s actions. God did not offer the daughters. Lot did. God likely would have been equally appalled by Lot’s actions. Critics may object that God still saved Lot from the destruction of the city, arguably (based upon the conversation between Abraham and God in Genesis 18:16-33) because Lot was considered “righteous.”

First, the conversation between God and Abraham never mentions Lot by name. It ends with God saying that if He finds 10 righteous people in the city He will not destroy it. He did destroy it, so obviously there were not 10 righteous people within its walls. The claim that God saved Lot because he was righteous is purely speculative. It is far more likely that God saved Lot as a courtesy to Abraham and in light of His covenant to make Abraham’s family into a great nation (Lot was Abraham’s nephew).

Second, even if God did categorize Lot as “righteous,” we have seen plenty of other examples in which people held in high esteem in the Bible are far from perfect. We need to look no farther than the great king David who committed both adultery and murder. Lot may have been good compared to the rest of the people at the time (and especially good compared to the rest of the people in Sodom). But this did not mean he was incapable of committing some egregious sins when faced with a highly stressful and pressure-filled situation. Today we have

the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help us out, but we still can make some very large mistakes.

Just imagine how much harder it was to resist temptation in Lot's time before God indwelled His people!

In sum, I have included this passage because you may come across people who try to use it in the Biblical argument against homosexual relationships. However, in this one instance it probably does not "prove the case." That being said, the fact that this one passage does not prove the case against homosexuality does not overcome the fact that plenty of other passages do.

### Genesis 18:22-19:13

<sup>22</sup> The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. <sup>23</sup> Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

<sup>26</sup> The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

<sup>27</sup> Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, <sup>28</sup> what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?"

"If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

<sup>29</sup> Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"

He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it."

<sup>30</sup> Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"

He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

<sup>31</sup> Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"

He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it."

<sup>32</sup> Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?"

He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it."

<sup>33</sup> When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

<sup>1</sup> The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. <sup>2</sup> "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the

night and then go on your way early in the morning."

"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."

<sup>3</sup> But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. <sup>4</sup> Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup> They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."

<sup>6</sup> Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him <sup>7</sup> and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. <sup>8</sup> 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."

<sup>9</sup> "Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

<sup>10</sup> But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. <sup>11</sup> Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

<sup>12</sup> The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, <sup>13</sup> because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."

### **How to deal with homosexuality**

In any discussion of homosexuality the following verses are incredibly important, but unfortunately often forgotten. We learn from these passages that homosexuality is sin, but so are many things you have done in your life (you could probably even come up with a few examples of things you have done today). Never take a "holier than thou" approach to anyone caught in homosexuality. First, Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-5 guide us in relationships with people outside the church. After all, if someone is not even a Christian, why should we expect them to care that the Bible condemns homosexual behavior? To them the Bible is just an antiquated book of fiction. For those people our priority should be bringing them the gospel, not judging them.

Unrepentant homosexual activity within the church is a different matter, though. As Paul tells us, we are supposed to help those within the church abide by God's Word. But even here we must restore our brother gently.

Matthew 7:1-5

<sup>1</sup>"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup>For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

<sup>3</sup>"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Matthew 18:15-17

<sup>15</sup>"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'<sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

John 8:7

<sup>7</sup>When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Romans 3:10-18

<sup>10</sup>As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

<sup>11</sup>there is no one who understands,

no one who seeks God.

<sup>12</sup>All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one."

<sup>13</sup>"Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

<sup>14</sup>"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

<sup>15</sup>"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

<sup>16</sup>ruin and misery mark their ways,

<sup>17</sup>and the way of peace they do not know."  
<sup>18</sup>"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

### 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

<sup>9</sup>I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— <sup>10</sup>not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. <sup>11</sup>But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

<sup>12</sup>What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? <sup>13</sup>God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

### Galatians 6:1

<sup>1</sup>Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

### 2 Thessalonians 3:6

<sup>6</sup>In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

### 1 Peter 3:15-16

<sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

*All Bible quotations are from the New International Version.*