

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue t-shirt and jeans, is sitting and reading an open book. He has a thoughtful expression, with his hand resting on his chin. He is wearing a black watch on his left wrist and a ring on his left hand. The background is a blurred wooden surface.

Biblical Answers to Modern Issues

BRIAN JAMES SIPE

Biblical Answers to Modern Issues
Unchanging Answers to an Ever-Changing World

A Bible Study Workbook

by

Brian James Sipe

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Dedication

First and foremost, I praise God for the grace that rescued me through Jesus Christ. Without him, I am nothing. I would like to thank my wife for her constant support & love for me. Your faith drives and challenges me to be a better husband, a better father, and a better servant of Christ. I would also like to thank the shepherds who oversee the church in Danville, Kentucky. The wisdom with which you lead this flock, as well as my soul, keeps me focused on walking worthy of our calling and staying focused on the work God has called us to do in this community. I lastly would like to thank the Allen family, Cain Atkinson, and Spiritbuilding Publishers for their tireless work in producing biblically based material to edify believers everywhere.

This book is dedicated to the young adult class from 2014–2017 at the church in South Salem, Oregon. I never would have thought that your desire to dig deep into challenging issues of the day would produce the following study guides for others. I especially want to thank Kevin Davidson and Jordan White for the long nights of discussion and prayer we would have together over many of these issues. Your study, your faith, and your work will benefit the lives of other inquiring minds for years to come. I am deeply grateful for each and every one of you, and pray that the Lord will bless you richly as you continue to strive for truth with love.

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Why This Study?

BEFORE WE BEGIN, “Biblical Answers to Modern Issues” is a term that needs some explanation. It is true when Solomon writes, “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Our ongoing struggle against the desires of the flesh is not unique to this generation. From the garden of Eden to today, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life capture the minds and hearts of people to do what they ought not do (1 John 2:16). The same tempter is at work, and his schemes have not changed. Therefore, in this manner there are no “modern issues” that are unique in a spiritual sense to us today. The Jew serving under the law, the first century Gentile Christian, and the 21st century disciple of Christ all fight against the same works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).

In each generation there is a unique way these sins are “packaged,” so to speak. Especially most recently with the rise of technological advancements, there are “new ways” to fall victim to the same sins & temptations. Furthermore, as cultural norms change with time, there perhaps might be greater pressure to “normalize” certain ungodly practices. As such, there become “pressing issues” with each generation that differ from the ones before it.

I never set out to write this if I’m being perfectly honest. As I was getting ready to teach another quarter with a high school & college aged group, I polled the class and asked them what issues they felt needed more teaching on where they felt ill equipped. The following topics are what was given back to me from a class of about 15 students. These were issues they felt were particularly relevant to their generation and challenged them daily in school, the workplace, and some even in their home life. As a result, each week we set out to tackle these subjects as best we could in a timely fashion. With each corresponding group I worked with after this, it became apparent that these same topics were of interest to the young people there as well.

It is my hope that as much good can be accomplished with whatever group you take through these studies as has been accomplished with mine over the years. It is also my hope that only the truth as revealed through Scripture has

led us to the conclusions we have arrived at in these lessons. Of all people, I quite frankly feel least qualified to write and publish anything. I am young in the faith and constantly doing my best to grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ. I pray then humbly that you participate in these lessons with an open mind, an open heart, and an open Bible. Many of the issues we will discuss in the proceeding lessons can be controversial in nature. May we lay aside our pride, presuppositions, and prejudices so that we may rightly discern the will of God concerning these matters.

Brian Sipe

March 8, 2021

Lesson 1

Forbearance vs. Tolerance

“TOLERANCE” IS THE MESSAGE preached by the world today. “Tolerance” is the only right and “intolerance” is the only wrong. All one needs to do is turn on the television or open a social media app to see Christians being labeled as “intolerant bigots” that “jam their religion down other’s throats!” How are we to respond to such a claim? Are Christians wrong for their faith? At what point is one “forcing” their religion down someone’s throat? Are we to say nothing? We must begin by understanding that the term “tolerance” is promoted by a particular worldview known as Postmodernism & Relativism. Let us begin by defining some terms:

- “Postmodernism assumes that there is no objective truth, that moral values are relative, and that reality is socially constructed by a host of diverse communities.” —Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times*
- “For postmodernists, morality, like religion, is a matter of desire. What I want and what I choose is not only true (for me) but right (for me). That different people want and choose different things means that truth and morality are relative, but “I have a right” to my desires. Conversely, “no one has the right” to criticize my desires and my choices.” (195).
- “Relativism says that truth isn’t fixed by outside reality but is decided by a group or individual for themselves. Truth isn’t discovered but manufactured. Truth is ever-changing not only in insignificant matters of taste or fashion, but in crucial matters of spirituality, morality, and reality itself.” —Dennis McCallum, *The Death of Truth*, 31.

In short, Postmodernism and Relativism hold there is no such thing as objective morality, but that right and wrong are determined on an individual, cultural, and societal basis. In rejecting any kind of objective morality or standard, the natural conclusion leads the postmodernist or relativist to assume that any one person’s beliefs or religious values are no more right than any other person’s beliefs or values. All spirituality and morality is subjective, meaning “what is true for you is true for you, and what is true

for me is true for me.” Though this defies the very definition of truth, it is nonetheless what the postmodernist and relativist believe.

This is why the message of “tolerance” is preached today. The term tolerance is defined today as the following:

- “Willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own.”
- “Sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one’s own.”
- Originally from the Latin, it means something quite different.
- Denoting an action of bearing hardship, or the ability to bear pain and hardship.

Biblical Occurrences of the Words “Tolerance” & “Forbearance”

To begin, one must understand that the Bible claims to be the source of all truth, in an objective sense. Truth is not relative, but comes from the words and person of Jesus Christ.

- John 14:6—“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- John 16:30—“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”
- John 17:17—“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”
- John 12:48—“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”

Understanding Christ’s Lordship changes everything. As the standard of right and wrong, Christ will dictate what things must be accepted and what things must be rejected. In other words, some things must not be tolerated

or condoned because they are objectively wrong. We see such an example in Revelation 2:18–29 in the words to the church in Thyatira.

I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you **tolerate** that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give each of you according to your works. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, **who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan**, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. (Revelation 2:19–25)

Let us take a moment to notice the following things. The term “tolerate” is from the Greek *ἐάω* which means “to let be, permit, or leave alone.” Those who left her alone, or chose not to address it were condemned along with the woman herself for her immorality! However, those who did not participate in her immorality and also called it for what it was, the deep things of Satan, they were blessed in their doing so from the Lord. The Lord is the only standard for right and wrong, and here we clearly see an instance in which tolerance was *not* to be practiced, but rather the exposing of the darkness by light (Ephesians 5).

Also consider:

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless,

ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:28–32)

Again, tolerance is preached by a world that practices all sorts of immorality that should not be tolerated. What is the source of such action? The rejection of God and his Lordship. When you remove the standard and the author of morality from the picture, then tolerance is the only thing left to be preached. However, in acknowledging God, we understand that some things must *never* be tolerated.

Does this give the Christian the right then to “jam his belief down the throat of others”? To begin, many claim that simply standing up for the truth or claiming to be a Christian is already pressing your beliefs on others. Such a claim is uncalled for and very hypocritical, seeing as those who preach tolerance and subjective truth are very objective in being intolerant of Christian theology. Nevertheless, the biblical text does speak of the *manner* in which one is to handle those who are engaged in actions that must not be tolerated. We will now look at the term “forbearance” found in Ephesians 4:1–2.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

The term bearing with, or forbearance, in the Greek is ἀνέχομαι. Such a term means to hold oneself up against; that is, to endure. Quite literally, it also means to delay payment. For example, if you owe a company money and you cannot make that payment, they might “bear with you” or show you “forbearance” in delaying payments that you owe them. It does not remove your debt but delays action against you as you get your assets in order. They endure the hardship of waiting patiently while you get things together. This goes back to the original idea of the word “tolerance” from the Latin.

A similar term is also used of Paul to Timothy:

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting

his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24–26)

The term “patiently enduring evil” in the Greek is ἀνεξίκακος and uses the same root word as forbearance. It is literally as it says, to be patient and endure the evil. The text very clearly states what they are taking part in is evil, and that their soul is in a lost state captured by Satan. They are not doing the will of the Lord, but the will of Satan. How are we to address such a one who participates in such intolerable actions? With forbearance, that is, with kindness, patience, and a willingness to teach. If we come across with harsh judgments and harsh words, we perhaps will not lead that soul to repentance and to life in Christ. However, if we approach a soul with love and kindness and humility, then perhaps they might humble themselves and see the error of their ways.

This does not mean discipline is never necessary. Remember Galatians 6:1—“if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” Again, discipline is necessary, but to be done in a spirit of gentleness and kindness. Remember, at once we were all apart from the Lord, and someone loved us enough to kindly point out the error of our ways. Simply because someone sins differently than you does not make them any more lost than we ourselves are apart from Christ. The answer is not tolerance and doing nothing, but rather to move towards a loving, righteous, and just God who demands a transformed life.

Perhaps the most misunderstood text in the New Testament is Matthew 7:1—“Judge not, that you not be judged.” Such a passage has been twisted and adapted to fit the message of “tolerance” preached in the world today. However, let us consider the rest of the passage:

Judge not, that you not be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your

eye,” when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. (Matthew 7:1–5)

The passage is to combat hypocrisy; if I were to go to my brother who is perhaps in some “small” sin or trespass while I have much sin in my life that I refuse to deal with. The standard with which we judge others (harshly) will be how the Lord will likewise deal with us. The passage is not telling us not to judge, but to make *right* judgments! Is that not the conclusion of the passage, to address our “log” so that we might see properly to remove the speck from our brother? It does not say ignore the speck, or not to call it a speck, but to go ahead and address it and remove it!

There is also a difference between the unbeliever and the Christian. In the case of the unbeliever, we share the same thoughts as Paul did to Timothy earlier in 2 Timothy 2:24–26. In the case of the Christian, we are called to make judgments.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy or swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church who you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:9–13)

The Lord gives us different conditions for judgment that we are to use, in the case of the unbeliever and the believer. In the case of the unbeliever, God will be their judge. We are to bring them to repentance and a knowledge of the truth through patience and kindness and love. However, in the case of those who are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to make righteous judgments and not to tolerate those who continue in sinful passions of the flesh. The judgment we are called to make is to withdraw ourselves from such a one. This does not mean to act unkindly, or unlovingly, or without

patience—it merely is a different and further judgment that we are to participate in than with that of an unbeliever.

Conclusion

“Tolerance” as preached by the world is not tolerated within the biblical text. As the Word will be our judge upon the last day for all man, it is also our standard for that which is right and wrong as Christians. Though the world is ignorant of the truth of God’s word, we must be patient and kind yet teach the truth of Christ in hopes to lead others to a knowledge of the truth and the salvation of their souls. At the same time, within the church there are things that must not be tolerated or permitted. In truth and love, with all forbearance, we are to make righteous judgments in order to help one another in our walk with the Lord.

Study Questions

1. Explain the difference between forbearance & tolerance. Why is one of these supported biblically while the other is not?
2. How would you respond to the claim that because you are not tolerant of certain behaviors that you are unloving? How can you approach something that should not be tolerated in love?
3. How is saying “There is no such thing as truth” or “What’s true for you is true for you, what’s true for me is true for me” self-defeating?
4. What are measures that we can take as a church to show better forbearance towards one another? How are patience, kindness, and gentleness key to doing this?

Lesson 2

Same-Sex Marriage and Homosexuality

OVER THE PAST DECADE, “traditional marriage” has been under attack by Satan. Marriage is defined in Scripture as exclusively between one man and one woman. However, today that definition is rejected by the vast majority. It is argued that so long as two individuals are lovingly committed to one another, gender should have no bearing in the marriage. Jimmy Creech, a former United Methodist Pastor of 30 years, says the following:

Consequently, the biblical concept of marriage is not appropriate today. We no longer accept the inferiority of women and superiority of men. We no longer accept marriage to be a property transaction. The concept of marriage has evolved throughout history. Today, we understand it to be a voluntary spiritual relationship based on love, respect, mutuality and commitment. What really matters is the quality of the relationship, not the gender of the persons involved.¹

He also goes on to say that marriage itself is of no special significance:

I hasten to add that marriage should never be understood as a requirement for two people in relationship. Intimate relationships must not always create a marriage commitment. Marriage is a lifelong commitment that not everyone is willing to make or should make. Being single in an intimate relationship is an honorable choice.²

In contrast, the author of life & marriage, Jesus Christ, defined marriage very clearly:

But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (Mark 10:6–9)

1 <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/what-does-the-bible-say-about-homosexuality>

2 *Ibid.*

Christ specifically defines marriage to be between one man and one woman. It has been like this from the beginning of time (Genesis 1–3) and will remain so for the rest of time. Despite this, the world will continue to combat the biblical definition of marriage either through discrediting the Word of God or by twisting it. Some have concluded that the Biblical text has nothing to say regarding same-sex marriage or homosexuality. Daniel A. Helminiak, an ordained Roman priest, theologian, psychotherapist, and author of “What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality” says the following:

We now face religious jingoism, the imposition of personal beliefs on the whole pluralistic society. Worse still, these beliefs are irrational, just a fiction of blind conviction. Nowhere does the Bible actually oppose homosexuality.³

Is this truly the case? Does the Bible really have nothing to say regarding homosexuality? In the next few pages, we will set out to explore three different things: 1) What the Bible does say regarding homosexuality; 2) Expose the claims held by many in the LGBT community regarding the Bible; 3) Discuss what is the proper Christian response to the latest pushes regarding same-sex marriage.

What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?

The biblical text is very clear regarding the nature of homosexual actions in both the Old and the New Covenant. In absolute, there are 4 Old Testament passages that speak of homosexuality, and 3 (likely 4) passages in the New Testament that address the issue. Let us begin by looking at the passages in the Old Testament.

Two very similar accounts are recorded for us in Genesis 19:1–13 and Judges 19:16–30. In both cases, men of each city (Sodom & Gibeah) demand that guests to the cities (men) might be brought out that they might “know them” (Gen. 19:5; Judges 19:22). What does the term “know” mean? In the Hebrew the word is *yada*, and is the same word used to denote sexual

3 <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/05/15/my-take-what-the-bible-really-says-about-homosexuality/>

intimacy between a husband and a wife (e.g., Genesis 4:1, Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore a son). How can we be sure that the men of the city were demanding sexual intercourse with these guests?

If you look at the context of both stories, an alternative is offered in both Genesis 19 and Judges 19—both involve sexual intimacy with a woman that is offered instead of the men (not that this was the correct response either).

Let us look first at the Genesis account:

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” (Genesis 19:4–8)

Now let us look at what has been written in Judges:

As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, “Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.” And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing.” But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. (Judges 19:22–25)

Notice the text regards these men as worthless men, who were requesting to do a wicked and vile act. What act was it that these men were demanding?

Given the context of both passages, the alternative is that these men were offered the master of the houses' own daughters or/and a concubine to "know." Judges 19 confirms that this was to sexually know and have intercourse with another individual. Therefore, the wicked and vile act that was almost to have been committed in both the cases of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 was a sexual act (in this case, also rape) from one man to another.

Two other instances in the OT that speak of same-sex acts are found in Leviticus:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
(Leviticus 18:22)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Leviticus 20:13)

Here the texts are very clear and self-explanatory. The laws regarding sexual purity to the Israelites considered same-sex acts and homosexuality as an abomination. Not only was it a despicable act, but one that was punishable by the death penalty. Now let us consider the New Testament passages surrounding homosexuality.

The first, and lengthiest, is found in Romans:

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (Romans 1:26–28)

Paul here describes the acts of such godless men & women: shameless, dishonorable, unnatural actions that were to receive due penalty vs. 32 says is death. What are these unnatural actions? Women burning in desire and having sexual relations with other women; and likewise, men for men. Paul speaks of these as unnatural desires, thereby showing that men & women are

not “born” as a homosexual but practice such things by choice as a result of not recognizing the authority of God in their own lives. Therefore, God gave them up to a “debased” mind to do what ought not to be done!

The second passage is found in 1 Corinthians:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

Such men who practice these things are called unrighteous and are prohibited from inheriting the kingdom of heaven. Included in this list of idolaters and adulterers are “men who practice homosexuality.” The word in the Greek used here is ἀρσενοκοίτης which literally means “a sodomite: an abuser (defiler) of self with mankind.” The word comes from two other words in the Greek:

- ἀρσεν— which means male or man lifting.
- κοίτη— which means a couch; by extension cohabitation, & by implication, the male sperm.

The word is undoubtedly used to describe unnatural sexual relations of that between one man and another man. Such activities are unrighteous and those who practice them will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The third passage is found in 1 Timothy:

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:8–11)

Those who practice such things as listed here are considered lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy, profane, and contrary to sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel of glory. Notice, “men who practice homosexuality” is once again listed. Again, the term ἀρσενικοίτης is used as it was in 1 Corinthians 6:9. The term is coupled with sexual immorality, implying that this action is a specific form of sexual immorality. Any man or woman that lies with another of the same gender is committing sexual immorality. Such action is lawless, disobedient to God, and therefore ungodly, sinful, unholy, and profane.

A fourth and final verse (which is not recognized by the LGBT community because it contradicts one of their foundational arguments surrounding Genesis 19) is found in Jude 1:7.

... just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

What are these “unnatural desires” that fall into the category of unnatural desire? The original Greek reads as the following: ἕτερος σὰρξ (*heteros sarx*). The term literally means “strange flesh” or “different bodies.” Given the context of sexual immorality, what we know of Jewish law, and what is described as happening in Sodom in Genesis 19—the passage undeniably is speaking of homosexual activity that was practiced in Sodom & Gomorrah. Those who practiced such things are recorded as “undergoing a punishment of eternal fire,” in other words, condemnation.

Some might say at this point, “I know that God says it is wrong, but why is it wrong?” For starters, who are we to question God? God who is perfectly just, righteous, and loving (Jeremiah 9) as the creator of this life has ultimate authority in that which is morally right and wrong. However, just to answer a few “whys” consider the following:

- Homosexuality eliminates the ability to have children. After Adam & Eve are created, they are told to “be fruitful and multiply” in Gen. 1:28. Such a task is not physically possible for two men or two women to accomplish. Jeremiah even asks in Jer. 30:6, “Can a man bear a child?”

- Nature teaches us that men and women are not to participate in sexual activities with those of the same sex. LGBT supporters in response to this point out that because there are “asexual” animals in nature that nature teaches us it does not matter what gender you are. However, the same group will not accept that because we see animals eating their children in nature that we also should do the same (which I agree but is inconsistent on their part). The male sex organs and female sex organs are meant for each other. Also, humans were not created to be asexual, we were created male & female. When man choses to act apart from what nature teaches him, diseases and physical ramifications follow (not to mention spiritual).
- When you remove God’s structure for the family (Husband, Wife, Children) then you open Pandora’s box to any other structure or action that man wants. Even now, pedophiles are pushing for the same rights as homosexuals, claiming that both homosexuality and pedophilia are simply a “sexual orientation” and “preference.” Such a dastardly claim the LGBT community swore would never happen, but now it is.¹
- All sin is “unloving.” Though same-sex marriage supporters will argue that the push for same-sex marriage is based on “love,” it is truly only based upon lust and sinful desires. What was told to Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:4 is true, “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” What is unloving about same-sex marriage? What harm does it do? For starters, it separates one from inheriting the kingdom of heaven unless they repent. That is the most unloving thing one can do. Secondly, it destroys the family structure that children so desperately need (as designed by God). Consider the following from the Oregon Family Council regarding marriage:

Marriage between a man and a woman is the optimal environment for raising children. Studies by the Institute for American Values have shown that, compared to non-married or single family forms, children raised in intact married families are physically and emotionally healthier, are more likely to attend college, have a decreased risk of being physically or sexually abused, are less likely

1 <http://www.greeleygazette.com/press/?p=11517>

to become statistics of teen pregnancy, are less likely to use drugs or alcohol and to commit delinquent behaviors, are less likely to get divorced, and are less likely to be raised in poverty. Other studies have shown that children also receive gender specific support from having both a mother and a father, which are important for their development as boys and girls.²

Why do studies show such things? Because they are in accordance with God's plan.

Claims of the LGBT Community Surrounding the Bible

To combat the biblical teachings surrounding the issue of same-sex marriage and homosexuality, proponents of same-sex marriage, particularly the LGBT community, seek to do one of two things: 1) discredit the biblical text or 2) twist the biblical text to say something it has not. Because of this, you need only google “what does the Bible say about homosexuality” to be thrown lie upon lie surrounding these biblical passages. We will examine only a few of these claims, though there are many more.

In the work entitled “*Unfair: Christians and the LGBT Question*” put out by the LGBT community, they claim that:

Reconciling the Bible with unqualified acceptance and equality for LGBT people does not necessitate discounting, recasting, or deconstructing the Bible.³

In other words, they claim the Bible condones and accepts homosexual practices and same sex-marriage. This is a direct contradiction with what we have already discovered the biblical text to say surrounding the issue. The only way such a claim can be made is by twisting the biblical passages to say things they do not, or by simply ignoring passages found in the biblical text.

For starters, the LGBT community accuses Christians of “clobbering” those who practice homosexuality with the passages that have been used above.

2 <http://www.oregonfamilycouncil.org/issues/marriage/>

3 <http://notalllikethat.org/taking-god-at-his-word-the-bible-and-homosexuality/>

Regarding this, the same publication “*Unfair: Christian and the LGBT Question*” says the following:

Homosexuality is briefly mentioned in only six or seven of the Bible’s 31,173 verses. (The verses wherein homosexuality is mentioned are commonly known as the “clobber passages,” since they are typically used by Christians to “clobber” LGBT people.) The fact that homosexuality is so rarely mentioned in the Bible should be an indication to us of the lack of importance ascribed it by the authors of the Bible.¹

There are two fallacies in the statement above. First, it assumes that Christians use these passages to “clobber” LGBT people. This statement is vague in its use and must be clarified. If by “clobber” they mean cited to show that the biblical text speaks of these actions as ungodly and sinful, then this is a poor use of the term “clobber”. There has been no more clobbering done than when one in the LGBT community proclaims they have a right to same-sex marriage. It is simply a statement of moral right or wrong, and any judgment that has been made has been done so by God, not man.

The second fallacy is that because homosexuality is only mentioned 7 times it is not important. The language used surrounding homosexuality sure seems important: abomination, ungodly, sinful, shameful, eternal punishment, etc. If we were to use this same logic for any other issues, the LGBT community would surely reject it. For example, the Biblical text only speaks of the abomination of sacrificing your children for worship in only 10 or 11 passages out of the 31,173 verses in the Bible. Does this mean that the biblical authors do not really care whether we sacrifice our children and kill them to worship God or idols? *Of course not!* Such an argument is unsound and simply built on straw.

Another claim regarding the Bible and homosexuality is that the authors of the Bible would have had no knowledge of what homosexuality is. Consider the following from Jimmy Creech and again from “*Unfair*”:

“There is no word in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek for “homosexual” or “homosexuality.” These words were invented near the end of

1 *Ibid.*

the 19th century when psychoanalysts began to discover and understand sexuality as an essential part of the human personality in all of its discoveries. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that the Bible says anything about it at all. The writers of the Bible had neither the understanding of it nor the language for it.”²

It is critical in our reading of the New Testament’s three clobber passages to understand that while Paul would have known about sex acts that took place between persons of the same gender, he would have had no concept whatsoever of homosexual persons. Virtually no one in Paul’s time was “out”; no one lived, or in any way publicly self-identified, as a homosexual. Paul had no reference point for an entire group of people who, as a fundamental, unalterable condition of their existence, were sexually attracted to persons of the same gender, and not sexually attracted to persons of the opposite gender.³

To begin, assuming that because the word “homosexuality” in the English language was coined in the 19th century does not dictate that “homosexuals” first came into existence in the 19th century. The biblical accounts as far back as Genesis 19 clearly show that people understood what homosexuality was. Though there is not a specific word for “homosexuality” in the Hebrew, it is very clearly described in Leviticus 18 and 20 and does not need a special word to describe its actions. The claim that there is no word in the Greek for it is simply false, seeing as the word ἀρσενικοίτης is used twice to describe men who practice homosexuality.

Also, to assume that Paul had absolutely no understanding of what a “homosexual was” is also false. Paul very clearly describes homosexual actions between both men and women in Romans 1, and explains that they not only practice such things, but give hearty approval to those who practice them (v. 32). Secular history confirms, that within Rome, homosexual activity was not uncommon towards boys and slaves, described as “ephebic love.” Yet even though it was not socially acceptable, homosexuality was practiced in the first and second century. Going into the second century,

2 <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/what-does-the-bible-say-about-homosexuality>

3 <http://notalllikethat.org/taking-god-at-his-word-the-bible-and-homosexuality/>

consider the following excerpt describing sexual philosophy in the 2nd century:

Sometimes doctors themselves did not recommend homosexual relations for reasons of physical and mental health rather than on the basis of moral values. Soranus, a second-century physician, considered homosexuality the disease of a corrupt mind (Cantarella, p. 260). Even if philosophers, the true spiritual guides of the age, and famous doctors were addressing society's upper class, nevertheless a common tendency to asceticism and self-control was spreading. In this context Christian preaching, which in sexual matters was rooted in the Jewish tradition, was most successful. In the fourth century times and sensitivities had undergone a profound change and imperial legislation—it is hard to know whether or not this was due to Christian influence—began to intervene heavily in the area of homosexuality.¹

Paul knew very well what homosexuality was, and even by AD 342 laws were passed in Milan regarding passive homosexuality (not the 19th century as is claimed).² To believe that Paul had no understanding of homosexuality is simply an outright lie that is promoted to discredit what Paul says in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 2 Timothy 1.

Piggybacking on this, others claim that this “ephebic love” described above by Romans (which was non-consensual rape) is what is described by Paul in Romans 1 and following. Therefore, what is being condemned is non-consensual sex between men and boys, not two “loving” homosexual people engaging in “love making.” Daniel A. Helminiak makes the following claim:

Jesus never mentioned same-sex behaviors, although he did heal the “servant”—*pais*, a Greek term for male lover—of the Roman Centurion.³

1 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/humanity/homo2.htm>

2 Codex Theodosianus, 9. 7. 3.

3 <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/05/15/my-take-what-the-bible-really-says-about-homosexuality/>

Here Daniel assumes that the servant of the Centurion is abused by his master sexually, claiming that the Greek term *pais* means a male lover. This is the same claim that is used of the LGBT community regarding Romans 1. However, this is false in two ways. First, the term *pais* is one of two words used for servant in Luke 7, the other is δούλος. Δούλος is used three times, meaning a slave or bondservant. Παῖς is only used once, and its true definition is a young boy or girl slave. Daniel misleads his reader to assume παῖς is the primary word used, and then creates his definition and meaning without any support.

Regarding Romans 1, Paul describes both men and women participating in homosexual activities and condemns them for it. If he includes women, how can this passage only be describing such an action like “ephebic love” practiced by Roman officers in Ancient Rome? It cannot, and again is another assumption to try to justify homosexuality biblically.

Another claim by same-sex supporters is that in Genesis 19 and Judges 19, homosexuality has nothing to do with the condemnation of Sodom & Gomorrah. Helminiak claims that, “Nowhere are same-sex acts named as the sin of Sodom.”⁴ Similarly, David Lose, president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, says the following:

There is broad consensus among scholars on both the left and the right (except for the very most conservative) that these passages have nothing to do with homosexuality per se, but rather with hospitality and justice. That is, both scenes represent hosts protecting their guests from severe humiliation and outrageous injustice. Some other parts of the Bible interpret these passages just this way. Ezekiel, for instance, refers to the sin of Sodom not in terms of sexual immorality but rather justice: “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom; she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (16:49).⁵

Where it is true that one of the many sins of Sodom was a lack of hospitality, proponents of this belief conveniently leave out Jude 1:7 that does cite the

4 *Ibid.*

5 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-lose/what-does-the-bible-reall_b_990444.html

sin of Sodom being sexual immorality and desiring “strange flesh.” Jude makes it very clear that one of the many reasons for the condemnation of Sodom & Gomorrah was sexual immorality, specifically homosexuality. Therefore, to claim that the biblical texts make no such claim against Sodom as being sexually immoral is simply untrue.

One final claim we must address that is promoted by the LGBT community in “UNFAIR: Christians & the LGBT Question” is:

The Bible routinely, clearly, and strongly classifies all sex acts outside of the bonds of marriage as sinful. But, because when the Bible was written there was no concept of gay people – let alone, then, or gay marriage—the Bible does not, and could not, address the sinfulness of homosexual acts within the context of marriage. By denying marriage equality to gay people, Christians are compelling gay couples to sin, because their intimacy must happen outside of marriage, and is therefore, by biblical definition, sinful. Christians, in other words, cause gay people to sin, and then blame the gay people for that sin. By any decent standard of morality that is manifestly and egregiously unfair.¹

We have already shown it is simply untrue that those living in biblical times had no concept of homosexuality. Christ defined marriage as being between one man and one woman (Mark 10), and as they themselves admit, any sexual activity that takes place outside of the bounds of marriage is sinful. This necessarily includes “marriage” as instituted by man (*not* God) for homosexual couples. To claim that Christians “cause” gay couples to sin is a dastardly maniacal claim. James 1 clearly teaches that we as individuals are responsible for our own sinful actions, and when desire gives birth it conceives sin and when it is fully grown brings forth death (James 1:14–15). They also assume that the homosexual cannot help but to “be gay” and cannot help but to act upon those desires. Romans 1 clearly teaches that by nature no man is to be with another man, and by nature no woman is to be with another woman. But when one denies God, they then act upon their sinful and unnatural passions and bring judgment upon themselves. The blame game simply will not work. Marriage is only between one man and

1 <http://notalllikethat.org/taking-god-at-his-word-the-bible-and-homosexuality/>

one woman. Anyone who acts upon sexual desires outside of that definition of marriage has committed sexual immorality, including homosexuality. Sexually immoral people will stand before the judgment seat of God and give an account for their actions done in the flesh, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10).

How Is the Christian to Respond?

There are many Christians that are saying “this issue is no different than any other sin, and therefore we need to stop making such a big deal out of it.” To begin, if we are to conclude from this statement that any sin, not simply homosexuality, if practiced and unrepented will separate someone from God, then *yes!* Paul says that sexual immorality is differentiated from all other sin because of the nature of the sin. Consider his words in 1 Corinthians 6:

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Be it heterosexual or homosexual in nature, Paul separates sexual immorality from all other sins because it is committed against one’s own body that has been reserved as a temple and dwelling place for God’s Spirit. It would be like Ezekiel’s record of Judah bringing idols into the temple of the Lord and worshipping foreign gods in his house. What blasphemy! What outright and deliberate disobedience to God! Such is the nature of all sexual immorality.

Many Christians believe that we are simply to ignore the matter altogether; that to speak out is to put our nose in other people’s business. Based on this logic they claim that we should promote same-sex marriage, and simply “give people their right.” We must be reminded that no right is given to us except that which comes from God. Paul says the following in Ephesians 5:3–14:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Homosexuality and same sex marriage would fall under the category of sexual immorality. Paul says that such acts are the “unfruitful works of darkness” and God’s wrath will come upon the “sons of disobedience” who practice such things. We are not to be deceived regarding that matter. Paul says not only are we not to become partners with such actions (by agreement or by participation), but that we are to expose them. Exposing darkness means shining our light! Shining our light cannot happen if we simply remain silent. It does not mean “clobbering” the LGBT community and personally condemning those who practice such things to hell—only God alone will judge, but he will do so by his Word (John 12:48). The most loving thing one could do is gently and kindly share the truth about God and what He says regarding marriage and sexuality to those around us. And when the truth is preached, it reveals the darkness for what it truly is – evil and sinful, leading to death.

Therefore, Christians must speak out! We are motivated by love to do so, not by hate (2 Cor. 5:14).

Finally, the words given to Timothy must be considered again:

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:23–26)

To begin, we are to have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant controversies. Often there will be things that are claimed or stated by the LGBT community and its supporters that is simply to stir up trouble. Such statements are meant to cause division and are not an honest question of one seeking the truth. Such controversies are to be ignored and avoided (ex. the claim that Jesus was gay). However, in all circumstances, we are to be kind and forbearing (patient with evil), all the while gently teaching others who do not know the truth. If we can speak the truth with such love, we can only hope that the gospel will root itself in a good heart and lead someone out of the clutches of Satan and into a knowledge of the truth and repentance.

We are to treat those who practice homosexuality with the same kindness and patience that we would with the heterosexual who is sexually immoral. The same kindness is to be extended towards them. Therefore, unkind and foul speech that are derogatory and label those who practice homosexuality are *not* to be used by the Christian (you know what I mean)! But instead, speak the truth in love, for you might very well be speaking to someone who will be impacted by the gospel, repent and stand next to you as your brother or sister in Christ! May the Lord grant us wisdom, kindness, patience, and courage as we endeavor evermore through Christ to preach the truth surrounding marriage and sexual purity as designed by our loving Father.

Study Questions

1. How would you respond to the claim that as a culture we have evolved past the traditional definition of marriage, or that the Scriptures are no longer relevant because they were written long ago in another culture?
2. How would you respond to the claim that “Jesus never spoke about homosexuality”? How does our understanding of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19 help us to define marriage in God’s sight?
3. It is said in defense of same sex marriage that “love is love.” How is this a deviation from how love is defined in Scripture, particularly in 1 Corinthians 13?
4. How have Christians dealt with this issue in unhelpful ways? Explain how Christians should address these issues in a loving yet truthful manner?