

Do You Remember When “Gay” Meant Happy?

A Biblical Perspective on Sexuality

I Corinthians 6:9-11

The word “gay” was once readily associated with joy and good times. Remember, “Don we now our gay apparel”? Today the word causes the once common usages, when spoken, to be accompanied by giggles. Things have changed!

Consider the following comments and observations:

The Metropolitan Community Church provides an answer to that question in an article posted at its Web site titled “On Being Christian and Gay.” The article states that it is indeed possible to be both Christian and gay, and lists several biblical references supporting this assertion.

The church bills itself as “a Christian church serving the gay male, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and straight communities of Knoxville and East Tennessee” and lives up to that billing by, among other things, providing a “safe,” welcoming, supportive and inclusive place to worship where sexual orientation is not an issue among members.

J. Brian Long (Knoxville News Sentinel)
Saturday, September 8, 2007

***They can be baptized but not ordained.
They can be tolerated but not welcomed for who they are.
They can sing God's praises but don't deserve His blessings***

Last week in New Orleans, Episcopal leaders, under pressure from conservatives in the global Anglican family, reaffirmed an earlier stand to exercise restraint in approving another gay bishop and to forbid official prayers blessing same- sex couples.

So I hope clergy of all denominations and congregants in all churches who oppose leaving gays outside the communion of saints will, as a matter of conscience and spiritual courage, speak up in support of them.

Ina Hughs (Knoxville News Sentinel)
Thursday, October 4, 2007

I have taken this very long and circuitous side journey to get the reader to the end of my journey to Desmond Tutu’s side because this is the intellectual journey that I took to get there. At the end of my reading and soul-searching I came to believe that it did not matter whether my hunch was correct that there is

a slight, circumstantial, tangential case to be made that Scripture forbids homosexuality. This possible biblical proscription simply does not matter, the point is moot.

The fact that the Scripture, and generations of Christians, have historically been so consistently wrong about birth control and remarriage, and more importantly, about slavery and women, allowed me to step back and come to believe that we also must jettison our historic views about gay and lesbian people and sexuality. Being intellectually convinced that we, and I, have been wrong about homosexuality, I then, again by stages, came to change about homosexuality emotionally.

I close with the words of Bennett Sims. He has been one of the voices calling for full inclusion for gay and lesbian people in the Episcopal Church which I serve, including creating rites through which God can bless their unions and removing the barriers to ordination. He is quoted as saying:

Fear not schism. Fear only continued infidelity to the call of compassion and justice in Jesus Christ by straining the patience and long-suffering of our homosexual sisters and brothers.

I believe it is time.

An Unexpected, Yet Bidden, Journey
Edward J. Mills III

Eye-opening, would you not agree? The perceptions of our culture, even large segments of our religious culture, have changed dramatically over the past very few years. What, however, does the Bible say? For those of us who do not think biblical teachings are “moot,” the voice of Scripture is still the authoritative conclusion of the matter.

Sexuality and Sexual Relations

- Adultery, sexual activity with a person other than ones marriage partner, is a sin (Ex. 20:14; I Cor. 6:9-10).
 - Human sexuality is to be expressed in marriage (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:24; Matt. 19:5)
 - It was, after all, Adam and Eve—a man and a woman.
- Fornication, sexuality without benefit of marriage, is a sin (I Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; Eph. 5:3).
- Homosexuality, sexual activity between people of the same sex, is a sin (I Cor. 6:9-10; Lev. 18:22; Deut. 23:17; cf. Gen. 19:1-5).
 - The essential problem is that of being against the natural way—the way God made things to function (Rom. 1:26-27).
 - Departures from God bring grave consequences (Rom. 1:21, 24, 26, 28).

Evasions

- With such a clear record biblically, the case would seem to be settled for Bible believers—not so.
- Objections are raised.
 - Cult prostitution is said to be the thing condemned, not ordinary homo sexuality.
 - Greek words are called into question as to their actual meaning.
 - Older men with boys is said to be the issue.
 - The Bible is said to praise supposed homosexual relationships between Naomi and Ruth, and David and Jonathan.
 - Jesus is charged with being a homosexual love with John.
 - Sodom's problem was not homosexuality—merely inhospitality!
- I have more respect for Edward J. Mills III (cited above) for just admitting the Bible condemns homosexuality, but that the Bible is wrong.
 - At least in this case the Bible is allowed to speak its true message.
 - The clear words of Scripture teach homosexuality to be a sin.
- The summations of David E. Malick in his insightful studies of various evasive arguments attempting to support biblical endorsements of homosexuality are telling.

While Paul's choice of the words allows for an application to the abuse of pederasty (men with boys) in his day, the words actually denote a broader field of reference including all men who have sexual relations with men. The illogical presuppositions that (a) all sexual relationships are equal before God, (b) Paul's descriptions are of excessive practices, and (c) homosexuality is a biblically approved expression of sexuality, are necessary prerequisites to the popular conclusion that Paul was discussing only "abuses" in homosexual behavior. The Apostle Paul condemned all homosexual relationships in his vice-list in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as he addressed the need for the Corinthians to judge those within their midst.

A contextual and exegetical examination of Romans 1:26–27 reveals that attempts by some contemporary writers to do away with Paul's prohibitions against present-day same-sex relations are false. Paul did not impose Jewish customs and rules on his readers; instead, he addressed same-sex relations from the transcultural perspective of God's created order. God's punishment for sin is rooted in a sinful reversal of the created order. Nor was homosexuality simply a sin practiced by idolaters in Paul's day; it was a distorting consequence of the fall of the human race in the Garden of Eden. Neither did Paul describe homosexual acts by heterosexuals. Instead he wrote that homosexual activity was an exchange of the created order (heterosexuality) for a talionic perversion (homosexuality), which is never presented in Scripture as an acceptable norm for sexuality. Also Hellenistic pederasty does not fully account for the terms and logic of Romans 1:26–27 which refers to adult-adult mutuality. Therefore it is clear that in Romans 1:26–27 Paul condemned homosexuality as a perversion of God's design for human sexual relations.

Genetic and Environmental Concerns

- Are homosexuals just born that way?
 - While genetics can make a person more disposed to a certain abnormal or unacceptable behaviors, there are no absolutes.
 - No study, and efforts have certainly been made, has ever found the “homo sexual gene.”
 - The facts are that the genetic makeup of heterosexuals and homosexuals do not vary in absolute ways.
- What about environmental factors?
 - Yes, various links have been established between homosexuality and the influences under which a person is raised.
 - The place of a father and mother as influences in sexual development are recognized.
 - But even these are not absolutes—siblings raised in the same homes turn out differently.

Concluding Observations

- Homosexuality is a very serious sin, in the theocracy of Israel it was so fundamentally disruptive to the stability of the nation it was a capital offense (Lev. 20:13).
- Today, it remains a sin, but with a different context from which to work.
 - Those outside the church who practice sin are in a different situation for those within (I Cor. 5:9-10).
 - Inside the church, cessation of religious fellowship is required for those who practice sinful behaviors (I Cor. 5:11-13).
- The Gospel is for all (I Cor. 6:11).

We must be loyal to truth, compassionate to all, and intent on allowing the Gospel to free us and all men and women from whatever sin might entangle us. Jesus saves!

Edwin S. Jones
November 4, 2007 (pm)