

## **Homosexuals, Christians, and the Church**

In recent years, society's attitudes on homosexuality have changed. Previously, people regarded it as an unmentionable topic, seldom, if ever, discussed among Christians or in the Christian Church. Even today, with increased awareness, many Christians refuse to discuss it. They respond with hatred or indifference toward homosexuals, who strive for full acceptance from Christians and the Christian church.

Because of the discord between homosexuals and the Christian Church, Christians must reassess their beliefs and practices. They must endeavor to recognize God's design for humanity. Christians and the Church need to respond in a loving, Biblical manner to those who suffer same-sex attractions. (1) The following steps, though not all-inclusive, outline the foundation for Biblical responses to homosexuality from Christians to this divisive issue.

### ***Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ must love and welcome homosexuals.***

Jesus did not offer an option to his followers whom they could love or reject. He taught them to love their neighbors and their enemies. (2) Sadly, the world frequently interprets this love as tolerance and blind acceptance and approval. The Bible does not teach love in this fashion. Nor did Jesus show love in this fashion.

In fact, in love Jesus confronted people with their sin throughout his ministry. The gospels provide ample evidence of it. Every time he interacted with the Scribes and the Pharisees Jesus identified their sins. Not even his disciples escaped his rebukes for their unbelief. In this vein, Jesus spoke against homosexuality and sexual perversions of all kinds as well as the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman. (3) The example of Jesus confirms that true love confronts wrong and seeks to correct it for the protection and enhancement of the one loved.

Therefore, Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ need to follow the example of Christ. We must speak the truth to homosexuals in love. Further, we ought to demonstrate Christ's love to them just as we should show it to any other person who needs to know his love. We must teach them the Biblical attitude toward their behavior and the victory that repentance and faith in Jesus Christ brings to those who trust him. (4)

### ***However, the Bible condemns homosexuality in all its forms and practices, calling it sin.***

The homosexual activists, along with consent from some professing Christians, assert its interpretations of the Bible regarding this volatile topic. Their explanations appear to provide Biblical support for same-sex practices. However, the gay apologists attempt to justify their beliefs upon flawed and speculative interpretations of key Biblical references. Their arguments fail to prove their assertions.

Sadly, tolerance and acceptance of homosexuals hurts them in the end

because it displays a lack of love and concern for those who desperately need help. Guenther Haas states it this way.

*"An examination of the Biblical passages from linguistic, historical and ethical-theological perspectives fails to support the revisionist ethic and reinforces the traditional Christian teaching that homosexual practice is morally wrong."* (5)

Further, non-Biblical historical and literary evidence contradicts the interpretations offered by homosexuals of the actual conditions of society in Biblical times. Same-sex enthusiasts attempt to prove the nonexistence of sexual inversion and homosexual relationships established upon love prior to modern times. (6)

Instead, these sources reveal the pervasiveness of homosexual practice during Biblical eras as far back as Noah. They confirm the existence of the current emphases of homosexuality based upon sexual orientation and love relationships. These evidences strengthen the Biblical condemnation of homosexuality by confirming the Bible's relevance not only to societies in Biblical times but also to today's emphases.

This description of homosexuality appears harsh. All of us initially respond adversely to hear our attitudes and behaviors described as sin. However, further reflection reveals that it contains the seed for relief from oppression.

***The Bible commands those overwhelmed by homosexuality to repent of their sin.***

All humanity descends from the original created humans, Adam and Eve. God placed them in the Garden in Eden to fulfill his purposes for them. As part of his commands to them, he told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden. They ate the forbidden fruit and became the progenitors of sinful mankind. (7) Every human being inherits their sinful natures from Adam and Eve, who willfully disobeyed God's command to them.

When God confronted Adam and Eve after their sin, he promised a champion, born of a woman, who would come and defeat the one who tempted them into sin, the devil. (8) In the process of time, God sent forth his son, Jesus Christ, as the promised champion. In his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus crushed the power of the serpent-tempter, the devil. (9) That same tempter, in combination with a person's sinful nature, leads one into the tyranny of sinful practices today, including homosexuality.

The gay activists frequently describe their acceptance of their same-sex desires, which God calls sin, as the beginning of freedom. However, the Bible presents a different description. The indulgence of sinful lusts results in bondage to those lusts. (10) In addition, the practice of homosexuality results in physical harm to the bodies of those who practice it. (11)

Contrary to their beliefs, homosexuals will find true freedom only when they turn from their sinful same-sex practices. When sinners repent from their sins and trust Christ, God's provision for sinners, they experience freedom from guilt, hopelessness, and despair. In addition, homosexuals can find supernatural power from God to enable them to reject their same-sex desires and practices.

The Bible provides an example of this kind of victory. The Apostle Paul wrote to his friends in Corinth and warned them that those who practiced sexual immorality, including homosexuality, would not inherit eternal life. He, then, explained that some of them had found relief from these sins through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. (12)

God provided a remedy for those trapped by sinful lusts, including those with same-sex desires and practices. When appropriate, Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ must present to homosexuals the message of God's provision for them in Christ. Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ need to speak this truth in love and compassion.

***All who repent of their sins, even homosexuality, and trust Christ to save them from their sins, become new creatures in Jesus Christ.***

The Bible clearly presents this certainty. It describes the one in sin before repentance and faith in Christ as the old person. All who come to trust Christ no longer live under the rule and reign of the old person. (13) They become new creatures in Christ. (14) God transfers the child of God from the powers of darkness into the kingdom of his son. (15)

Homosexuals need not suffer the bondage of sin, guilt, hopelessness, or despair. They can experience victory over their sinful same-sex desires and practices by the power of the Holy Spirit resident within them. God will enable them to walk in newness of life, not according to their old lifestyles. (16)

This newness of life in Jesus Christ does not mean the absence of temptation. The child of God faces sinful desires everyday. The presence of temptation does not make one a failure. (17) However, God promised his presence and power to enable his children to resist temptation and live in victory over it. (18)

***Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ must uphold Biblical directives regarding the Church.***

Churches apply discipline only occasionally. Sometimes they exhibit irregular attitudes toward certain sins. The Church's inconsistency in these regards results in deserved attacks of hypocrisy. All too often, the Church chooses leaders who fail to meet the specific requirements for church leadership as outlined in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

For example, Christians frequently select pastors and other Church leaders with children too young to prove themselves as followers of Christ. Others have older children, who fail to demonstrate by their lives a firm faith in Christ. Many of these leaders' children live sinfully, contrary to God's commands. These practices violate God's commands for church leadership. (19) Further, many rise to responsible positions in the

Church whose lack of personal holiness disqualifies them.

Church discipline seems to apply occasionally and targets irregular sins. Some churches practice no Church discipline at all, even for flagrant transgressions. Such behavior exposes the Church further to the charge of hypocrisy.

The Church correctly denies Church leadership to practicing homosexuals. No one who commits sexual immorality of any kind qualifies for pastor, elder, deacon, or other leadership roles. Throughout the New Testament, and even the Old Testament, God expresses his demands for personal holiness from his followers, especially of leaders. The Apostle Paul then adds to these requirements with specific qualifications for Church leaders.

The church errs gravely when it fails to follow God's directives in these selections. The Church cannot bar homosexuals from Church leadership for Biblical reasons and simultaneously fail to exclude others who also do not qualify biblically. The Church and Christians must repent of their hypocrisy and disobedience and meet God's prerequisites for their leaders.

### ***The Challenge***

Sadly, many Christians and Christian churches target the homosexual community. In the absence of Christian love and concern, they reject them. Yet, they openly accept others whom the Bible equally describes as sinners. This unchristian behavior grieves God and quenches the Holy Spirit's work.

Christians must reassess their beliefs and practices and repent of their sin. They must seek God's direction by the Holy Spirit on how to respond in a loving, Biblical manner to those who suffer same-sex attractions.

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