

## Introduction:

This sermon has been harder to write than I could possibly imagine. When I first put it down on my sermon schedule, I thought I would simply reuse an old sermon I had written on this topic. Then I began to review some of them and realized I needed to make some adjustments, but I didn't think that would be so hard. So, I announced in last week's program what my topic would be tonight. Then I started working on the actual sermon and realized I wanted to do something completely new. But I had an idea in my head about an approach and worked on it and thought it would all flow nicely, so I got on Facebook and let the world know what the topic would be. Big mistake. Now it is set in stone. The more I worked on the sermon the more it just didn't work. The more worried I became. I started and scrapped, started and scrapped. I even wrote an entire seven page outline that I had Marita read and sign off on. Her lackluster reaction just confirmed what I knew in my heart: it just wasn't working. I had no idea this was going to be this hard.

Here's the problem. I know in this lesson I'm speaking to all kinds of people. Even within this room I'm talking to different groups of people, but especially since it is going to be online there is a spectrum of people that I'm talking to. Think of some groups that I can identify.

1. Those who claim to be Christian that hate homosexuals, looking down on even those who might confess that they struggle with the temptation let alone those who admit they've participated in it and of course those who have given themselves over to it.
2. Those who claim to be Christian who don't hate those who have participated in homosexuality but simply don't understand those who have and simply can't fathom why they would want to.
3. Those who claim to be Christian who believe homosexuality is wrong but have a loved one, a child, a sibling, a parent, perhaps even a spouse, who has in one way or another embraced homosexuality as okay, perhaps even pursuing it in their own lives and practice, and they have no idea how to respond.
4. Those who claim to be Christian who believe homosexuality is sinful, but have struggled with those attractions trying to keep them under control, feeling pain, isolation, sorrow, and anxiety, wanting desperately to fit in, but believing they are like men and women without a country. They don't fit in to the homosexual community because they believe it is wrong, but neither do they fit in to the Christian community because they believe they can't be honest about their temptations and struggles.
5. Those who claim to be Christian who aren't sexually attracted to the same gender and have never participated in that activity, but are convinced the general teaching of the Bible is okay with it.
6. Those who claim to be Christian who feel strong sexual attraction to the same gender, have determined God is okay with it and have openly decided to embrace it and act it out.
7. Those who don't claim to be Christian but are wondering what this whole Christianity thing is about, and want to know whether homosexuality does or doesn't fit within it before they give it a shot.
8. Those who don't claim to be Christian who are disgusted by homosexuality and while they don't want to follow Jesus they want someone somewhere to get all those homosexuals in line and if it can be in a church, then okay.
9. Those who don't claim to be Christian who believe homosexuality is okay and that Christians need to get off their high horses and butt out of peoples' bedrooms because it's not like Christians as a class have made a great showing when it comes to morality.
10. Those who don't claim to be Christian and don't care what Christianity says, they just want to find another reason to hate Christians and this sermon sounded like it might provide fodder for them to soundbite their way into proving Christians are backwards, ignorant, haters.

I'm sure there are others, but you get the point. I'm talking to lots of different people. If I could separate you all out into nice neat little groups and write 10 different sermons, that would be easier. But I can't. And so, after struggling to write this sermon for days and hours and after thinking I was going to present a different sermon to you. I wrote on a sheet of paper. "What do I want to accomplish?" And the resounding answer that came first was, "I want to show the gospel." That didn't make this sermon any easier, but it provided direction. Here goes.

## Discussion:

### I. A confession.

- A. I want to start with a confession. I know this sounds odd, but I believe it is the right place to begin. I need to make a confession, an apology, and seek the forgiveness of everyone who has ever experienced homosexuality at any level, whether participating in it or simply wanting to.
- B. First, a little background. I have never experienced sexual desire for someone of the same gender. That is not to say I've never had any thoughts connected with homosexuality enter my mind. But I've never had any desire for that activity. I don't know what it is like to be intrigued by it, desire it, or pursue it. And I certainly don't know what it is like to only desire that expression of sexuality. I don't know what it is like to think that I'm not ever allowed to have sex with anyone ever. I don't know what it is like to think that means I'm unable to have a family or pursue love. So, I struggle to empathize with the pain some feel.
- C. Now for the confession: Based on that, to everyone who has experienced that temptation and especially to those who have acted on it, I confess that I have thought I was better than you. I have looked down on you. I have, at times, hated and despised you. At other times, I have been afraid of you. I have been exceedingly angry at you for even existing and questioning what I believe. On numerous occasions, you have been the butt of jokes. I have laughed at you, ridiculed you, mocked you. And perhaps the worst part of it, unknown to you, I have used you as justification for my own sins.
- D. There was a time after I was a Christian and even while a preacher that I was caught up in the sin of lust and pornography, to the point I would even call it an addiction. I hated myself for my sin. I hated myself even more because I couldn't seem to stop that sin. And I hated myself even more because each Sunday I was presenting myself as a righteous person people should emulate. But through all of that, one thing that made me feel better was at least I hadn't committed homosexuality. At least I wasn't "that bad." Yours was not the only behavior I felt that way toward, but it was the strongest I felt that way toward.
- E. **Every bit of that attitude is wrong and sinful. I apologize and ask you to forgive me.** I know I don't have a right to your forgiveness, and if you cannot forgive me, I will simply pray that in time you will be able to.
- F. But there is a reason I used the phrase "There was a time." I have to be careful, because part of this story is not mine to tell. But ten years ago, God brought me into a relationship with a brother for accountability. In my hypocritical naiveté, I thought I was there to help him, but I was in no shape to help him. In the end, despite great amounts of pain and the feeling of being betrayed, he helped me. It took more than two years of our relationship to get to this point, but like Nathan and David, there was a moment when this man essentially looked at me and said, "You're the man, Edwin." I was put in a situation where I finally had to do what part of me had wanted to do for a long time. I had to confess to my family, my shepherds, and my congregation. It was frightening for me and my family. I had no idea what would happen. But even in the midst of my anger at that brother I was certain it was the right thing to do. And I developed the peace that I needed to do whatever it would take to turn my back on my sin. It would be better for me to be dumped by my wife, fired by my shepherds, and reviled by my congregation than to continue another day in my sin. And in those days, I finally knew the gospel in more than cerebral and intellectual ways. I learned what it was like to experience the gospel, not just know about it. Though pained, my wife was gracious. Though concerned, my shepherds were forgiving and patient. Though shocked, my congregation was supportive and kind. I remember the experience of grace after I read my letter to the congregation; one of the elders got up and read a gracious letter, and as I was sitting on that front pew crying, Clayton Wise came up, sat beside me, and put his arm around me. I knew grace right then.
- G. I tell you this part of my story because in the weeks surrounding that Sunday morning, I realized there was no one worse than me. No mass murderer. No liar. No hypocrite. No fornicator. Neither were you who were tempted by or committed same-gender sexual behavior. I am a sinner in need of a Savior, and even while I was proclaiming that Savior, for part of my time in His kingdom, I was holding Him at arm's length. But praise God, His gospel is saving me.
- H. I want to share that gospel with you. But old habits die hard. I am a work in progress. By that I mean, when I wrote on that paper, "What do I want to accomplish?" My first response was, "I want to show the gospel." My second response was, "I want to avoid belittling, mocking, minimizing, ridiculing." Before I could write a third response, my wife called me and I had to go home. But I know that when there is disagreement it is super easy to slip into belittling and condescending to those I disagree with. I have absolutely no desire to do so. While there is disagreement, I want to show nothing but respect and love for those I disagree with. If I say something that seems disrespectful or condescending, please forgive me and give me the benefit of the doubt that is not how I feel and not what I want.

- I. I want to show you the gospel. But before I can make that clear, I have to show you the law. I want to share with you the good news. But before I can do that, I have to share with you the bad. It took me two years after my Nathan/David moment to be able to claim I loved my Nathan. Even though I was glad for how it turned out, I was angry at him. I didn't ever want to see him again. But eventually, I grew to love him even deeper than I had before our "moment." Even if I anger you with the rest of this sermon, my prayer is that eventually you can see me as your Nathan and grow to appreciate me. And even if that never happens, I hope you can at least see that I'm only teaching this because I love you.
- J. Right up front. Allow me to let the cat out of the bag. I'm not going to try to bait and switch you. I'm not going to try spring it on you. I'm not going to try to carry you down a path with me and surprise you. I do believe the Bible teaches homosexual acts and behavior are sinful. My goal in this sermon is to convince you that is the case. Not to make anyone feel more pain. Not to get folks on my side to pat my back. I want to convince you of that so I can share the gospel of Jesus Christ with you. Of course, I could be wrong. Perhaps I have misunderstood everything the Bible teaches on this subject. But I have listened to and read several things said by those who claim the Bible actually supports loving, committed homosexual relationships and unions and I have been unconvinced. I simply ask that you listen to me patiently and give consideration to what I want to share with you. Though we are not having any public question and answer time or public discussion forum, I am happy to discuss any aspect of this with you privately at any time.

## II. Faulty foundational perspectives.

- A. One of the biggest problems for us today, is that before we even get to discussing the difference between homosexual promiscuity and loving, committed homosexual relationships, before we even begin to discuss the difference between homosexual behavior and homosexual orientation, we have some underlying, foundational perspectives that are faulty. I don't mean by that folks who believe homosexual behavior is okay have faulty perspectives, I mean all of us. We have all been brought up in a culture that has conditioned us with outlooks that are faulty. The books we read, the songs we sing along too, the movies we are entertained by have all conspired against us in this discussion. Allow me to explain a few of these faulty perspectives.
- B. *Marriage is for those who fall in love:* We have all been weaned on the notion that we are to marry the person we fall in love with. From the earliest princess movies to the chick flicks to the action movies that still have to have a love story arc, we are taught that the end all be all is to fall in love and ride off into the sunset with the person who swept us off our feet. We are certain that if we miss out on that, we have missed out on the greatest thing life has to offer. And almost every single one of us believes it. The problem is that is just not true. It is the product of the romanticism of the past few hundred years, but is simply not what marriage has been for most of history. And is not how marriage is presented in the Bible. Look at the very first married couple. In **Genesis 2**, God didn't provide a companion or a soul-mate. He provided a helper. He didn't parade a group of women by to see which one would tickle Adam's fancy. He didn't make a woman and say if you fall in love, get married. It was an arranged marriage. Interestingly enough, have you noticed Moses's commentary on the whole situation? He didn't even mention love. He said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (**Genesis 2:24**, ESV). The Bible does not teach us to marry who we fall in love with. It teaches us to love who we marry (**Ephesians 5:22-23**). The Bible even teaches that this love often has to be taught after marriage (see **Titus 2:4**).
  1. Do not misunderstand. I'm not suggesting that romantic love that leads to marriage was completely foreign to the Bible. Obviously **Song of Solomon** seems to present romantic love leading to marriage. And I don't deny that it presents it as a wonderful thing. But to my knowledge, the main story in Scripture that presents this kind of romantic love leading to marriage is between Jacob and Rachel (cf. **Genesis 29**). I think it can be argued that their marriage was full of trouble and the relationship between Jacob and Rachel ended up not being that great. And in the end, Jacob buried Leah in the family tomb and left Rachel out of it. Perhaps Boaz and Ruth is another example, but interestingly, nothing is said in the book about them loving each other. That story is not about their love, but about how God provided for Naomi and about the lineage of David. Of course, there is Samson and his love for Delilah in **Judges 16**, but I don't think any of us would say that was such a great thing.
  2. While romantic love is not completely foreign, it is not the norm, and it is not presented in the Bible as the amazingly end all be all accomplishment and goal for every person (or, for that matter, any person).
- C. *Being yourself is the highest goal:* Whether it is the often mistaken perspective of the ancient phrase "know thyself" or the oft repeated Shakespearean advice, "to thine own self be true," we independent Americans think the greatest goal is to figure out who we are and live according to that. Even Doritos this week has announced a special edition package of their chips that will boldly say, "There's nothing bolder than being

yourself.” My first memory of this idea was when I was a little kid (perhaps Trina’s age—she’s 8 by the way) my family and I visited my uncle in prison. When my dad tried to bring up spirituality, my uncle said something like, “I have to find myself first.” That sticks in my memory because I didn’t understand at all what it meant and had to ask my dad. I don’t remember his explanation because the whole concept simply didn’t make sense to me. The Bible however takes a completely different approach. **Romans 3:9-18, 23** demonstrates the problem with this. If we truly get to know ourselves, what we will discover is we are sinners. We can spend all of our time trying to search out our deepest desires and find that when our desires are conceived they give birth to sin (**James 1:15**). In actuality, that phrase “know thyself” in some of its ancient contexts didn’t mean, “Figure out who you are on the inside and let that be your guiding star.” It often meant, know your limitations and sometimes it even meant to know your place before the gods. Perhaps we should accept this perspective on the phrase. We need to know our place before God as sinners in need of His mercy and grace and salvation. Then, instead of being true to ourselves, we must learn to be true to Jesus. In fact, all three of the synoptics quote Jesus as explaining that much of His path is that we deny ourselves and take up a cross (see **Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**). Our culture says “know yourself,” Jesus says, “deny yourself.”

- D. *Marriage is the end all be all of bliss and blessing:* Don’t get me wrong, when done properly, marriage can be a great thing. I don’t want to act like marriage is awful and that if you don’t get married you aren’t missing out on anything. There are a lot of blessings that come with a good marriage. However, I think many who are single idealize and fantasize about marriage so much that they simply think it will be the answer to every emotional struggle they ever have. Therefore, those who experience same-gender sexual attraction think that the answer to all their emotional stress is if they were simply allowed to marry the person they are attracted to. Let me share with you that I’m married to someone I’m attracted to, and it is tough. Usually because of me, not her. But it is hard. Marriage is about responsibility, not benefits. The fact is married and single people alike often misunderstand that the relationships that will last into eternity are not the civil relationships, but the spiritual. When we walk in the light, we have fellowship with others who are also walking in the light (**I John 1:7**). Those relationships forge bonds that will last into eternity. And while the marriage relationship can be great and the parent/child relationship that often comes from it also, the deeper, more lasting, more eternally significant relationships are the ones forged by the blood of Christ. As shocking as it is, while marriage is for life, it was never intended for eternity. In **Matthew 22:23-33**, Jesus explains to the Sadducees that we will not be married in eternity. As foreign as that is to us, we need to grasp it.
- E. *If it causes pain or suffering, it must be wrong:* In our American prosperity, we automatically think Jesus died so we could escape pain and suffering. In fact, on March 8, 2012, Matthew Vines offered an in depth presentation of why the Bible supports loving, committed homosexual relationships.<sup>1</sup> The most gut-wrenching and moving part of his entire presentation is his explanation of the pain a homosexual person feels when considering they are not allowed to experience romantic love with someone they most naturally feel that kind of attraction to. He turns to **Matthew 7:17-18** and sees Jesus’s parable about good trees and good fruit and bad trees and bad fruit. Then with conviction and passion he explains what he sees as the bad fruit of the traditional view of the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality. He talks about those who have suffered and the pain they’ve endured trying to stop being homosexual or considering a life of celibacy. And I admit that if there is anything in his speech that came close to moving me, it is that. I don’t want anyone to hurt. But there are two problems with that.
1. First, he has taken these two verses out of their immediate context. Read **Matthew 7:15-20**. Jesus is not talking about teachings, but teachers. He is not saying that if a person suffers pain because of a teaching, the teaching must be wrong. He is saying you can tell a false prophet or a false teacher by his fruit. Jesus is capitalizing on Old Testament prophecies like **Ezekiel 34** and **Zephaniah 3:3-4**. Notice especially **Ezekiel 22:23-31**. These passages demonstrate those who would present themselves as sheep and shepherds, but they are more like wolves who feed themselves on the sheep they are supposed to be leading or in the flock with. How can you tell who they are? They profane what is holy. They do violence to the law. They make no distinction between what is holy and what is common, between what is clean and what is unclean. They shed blood and destroy lives for dishonest gain. They oppress the poor and needy and extort the sojourner and commit robbery. These are not the only passages that speak about how to

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Vines, “The Bible and Homosexuality,” presented at the College Hill United Methodist Church in Wichita, Ks, March 12, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezQjNjUSraY>. Please be aware that I reference this presentation multiple times in this lesson. However, I never refer to Vines’s Expository Dictionary in this lesson. Do not be confused when I reference Vines as making an assertion. In this lesson, I am always referring to Matthew Vines’s lesson and never to the dictionary so commonly referenced in sermons.

tell if someone is teaching error. Further, Jesus does not mean every false teacher produces every one of these fruits. Rather, His point is when you see these kinds of things, you know you are dealing with a wolf rather than a fellow sheep. Sadly, there are some who have taught against homosexuality who are exactly what these prophecies and Jesus are speaking against. But the teaching itself is not the bad tree with bad fruit.

2. Second, he has neglected the fact that following the gospel is in and of itself signing up for suffering. While the gospel promises an eternity of joy, peace, bliss, it promises a temporal life on this earth that is painful. Do not forget that our Savior and greatest example of the “Christian life” went to a cross for following the commands of His Father. Paul, the apostle most of us look up to, describes a life that was filled with suffering for the sake of Christ (see **II Corinthians 11:23-29**). Consider all that Paul gave up when he decided to follow Jesus as expressed in **Philippians 3:5-11**. Consider the family members that turned their backs on him when he turned to Jesus. Consider the sacrifice and emotional turmoil that meant by giving up all the connections he had with his Jewish peers, turning his back on the traditions of his family (**Galatians 1:14**). The people who had been his closest confidants and friends became the very people who wanted him dead. Further, the gospel has a completely different take on suffering than our modern view. **Romans 5:1-5** and **James 1:2-4** show that suffering is actually an integral and necessary part of the Christian walk. If we don’t experience it, then we aren’t going to grow properly. And while there is certainly more than one way of experiencing pain and suffering for Christ, and not everybody experiences all the same aspects of it, a teaching is not wrong or questionable merely because following it causes some to suffer.

### III. What the Bible positively condones.

- A. Everyone agrees; when it comes to what the Bible explicitly says about sexual relationships, the only thing it positively condones is sex between a man and a woman. And we all admit it even provides limitations on that relationship. Everyone agrees; when it comes to what the Bible explicitly says about marriage, the only thing it positively condones is marriage between man and woman. Everyone agrees; there is not one single mention of homosexual behavior or same-gender sexual activity presented in a positive light and that every explicit mention of those things found in the Bible is in a negative light. Everyone agrees on these things.
- B. Let’s go all the way to the beginning. In the beginning, God created the earth. On the earth, He planted a Garden. In that Garden, He placed man. He saw it wasn’t good for man to be alone, so He created woman. But notice, according to **Genesis 2:7**, the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. Do you find it interesting that when God created woman, He did not create her from the dust of the ground? According to **Genesis 2:19**, God had done that with every creature He created. Every bird, every beast had been formed out of the ground. But not woman. According to **Genesis 2:21-22**, God caused a sleep to fall over Adam and He took one of Adam’s ribs and fashioned that into the woman. Then Adam said: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (**Genesis 2:23**, ESV). Please note, the flesh of man was divided in two to make man and woman.
- C. Based on this account, Moses then provides commentary saying, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (**Genesis 2:24**, ESV). What is Moses saying is supposed to happen in marriage? Please understand that this is so much more than saying married couples are supposed to have sex. In fact, if that is all you see from “one flesh” here, you have completely missed the point. What happened in the creation of woman? Man, who was one flesh, had been divided into two, man and woman. In marriage, husband and wife are to grow to behave in such a way as to restore that idea of one flesh that was there before the creation of woman.
- D. Let me ask you this. Why couldn’t Adam do this with the beasts of the field or the birds of the air? Because they were from the ground like he was. Man can only accomplish this with woman because woman is originally from the flesh of man. Please don’t miss this. While it may be physically possible for a man to be involved in sexual behavior with another man, man cannot become one flesh with another man anymore than he can do so with a beast of the field or a bird of the air. And since woman was not taken from the flesh of woman, woman cannot become one flesh with another woman. Only a man and a woman can fulfill this goal of one flesh in marriage. By the way, if more husbands and wives would actually work on this goal, there would be less room in our day for folks to believe same-gender marriage can work just as well as different-gender marriages.
- E. May I refer again to a moving part of Matthew Vines’s presentation. He asks us to keep this whole story in the context of **Genesis 2:18**, in which God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him

a helper fit for him” (ESV). Again, with passion and conviction Vines explains that for most men the woman whom God made is a helper fit for them, but for a portion of the population she is not. For a portion of men who simply are not sexually attracted to women, but to men, another man is a fit helper. And for a portion of women who are not sexually attracted to men, but to women, another woman is a fit helper. And again, as I hear the pain in his voice, I am moved and almost want to endorse the teaching because I don’t want anyone to be lonely. But as I try to consider the passage for what it says, his explanation falls short for a few reasons.

1. First, he is begging the question. That is, he is assuming what he is trying to prove. The whole purpose of his presentation is to prove that in some cases a man can be a proper helper to a man and a woman can be a proper helper to a woman in this **Genesis 2:18** sense. Yet, what he actually does is assume it is true, and because he assumes it is true, believes that is the reason we need to question the traditional understanding of the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality.
2. Second, he misses the entire thrust of this narrative. God parades numerous options before Adam and there is no helper found for him. But God doesn’t leave it up to Adam to decide what helper would be fit for him. God decides. God makes the woman and essentially says, “This, Adam, is the helper fit for you.” Vines’s approach would have us believe the man or the woman gets to decide based on internal feelings of attraction. But God didn’t wait to see if Adam was attracted to Eve (or vice versa). He didn’t wait to see if Adam felt feelings of love for Eve (or vice versa).
3. Third, he misses that Moses actually makes a limiting command out of this narrative. That command is that a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh. And while I understand that this Old Law is not our covenant we should remember that both Jesus and Paul hearken back to this narrative as the guide for God’s ultimate goal for marriage (see **Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:28-31**).
4. Fourth, Vines makes a mistake that most of us make as we examine this text. Due to the dominance of romanticism for the past few centuries, when we look at **Genesis 2:18**, we mistake what it says. God did not say, “It is not good for man to be lonely, I will make a companion for him.” Rather, this statement about being alone was in the context of the job God had given man, not in the context of the emotions man was feeling. God had given the man the job of working and keeping the Garden and then says it isn’t good for him to be alone. Then He provided a helper. And while marriage often provides emotional support, the text doesn’t say that was why she was given to Adam. And while marriage does include sex, the text doesn’t say that is why she was given to Adam. Woman is a helper fit for man by God’s decree.
- F. Finally, this is not the only passage that demonstrates this unique position of male/female relationship. In **I Corinthians 6:12-7:4**, Paul explains that God has made an arrangement to avoid sexual immorality. Notice explicitly that we must avoid sexual immorality because in Christ “you are not your own.” That is, your fleshly desires should not dictate your sexual practice, but God’s will. What is God’s will for your sexual practice? Each man may have his own wife and each woman her own husband. Remaining single is lawful. But if you want to pursue sexuality, God’s decree is to do so by a man with his wife and a woman with her husband. And that is the only relationship that is approved.
- G. Before we leave this point. I think it is important to address two arguments made in support of loving, committed homosexual relationships in this vein.
  1. Argument #1: The Bible doesn’t present loving, committed homosexual relationships in a positive light because it wasn’t until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that we scientifically understood homosexual orientation. In other words, the Bible doesn’t mention that kind of relationship for the very same reason it doesn’t mention planes, trains, and automobiles—the Bible authors didn’t know it could exist.<sup>2</sup>
    - a) First, be aware that this argument only holds water if you deny inspiration. If an all-knowing, external Creator is the ultimate author of the Bible, and there really is a homosexual orientation that makes loving, committed same-gender sexual relationships lawful, then the Bible Author did know it could exist, and He simply didn’t say anything about it. Maybe the Bible isn’t the inspired word of God. Numerous people argue against it. In fact, the authors of [religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org) demonstrate that this really is the fundamental difference between most people who differ on the Bible’s stance on same-gender sexual relationships.<sup>3</sup> You may choose to believe the Bible is not inspired. I just want to make sure you understand what choice you are making when you accept this argument.

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<sup>2</sup> My reference to planes, trains, and automobiles is not meant flippantly or to treat the issue lightly. Rather it is actually a reference to a statement made at <http://www.religioustolerance.org/hommarrbibl.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.religioustolerance.org/homconlib.htm>

- b) Second, those who believe the Bible supports loving, committed same-gender sexual relationships and marriage unions do so based on the idea that the Bible constantly lifts up the oppressed and under-privileged. It seeks to protect the minorities and the misunderstood. They go to great lengths to demonstrate that in the Greek and Roman culture, their views of homosexuality were vile and off-base as they most often saw it in terms of making one man subservient and subject to another. What a great opportunity the Bible authors had to spell out the need to release those with a homosexual orientation from this mistreatment. But the Bible authors are completely silent on that. Of course, those who take the more liberal approach think they were silent because they don't believe in the inspiration of the Bible.
- c) Third, and this is utterly important, the idea of a sexual identity or orientation is completely foreign to the Bible. Everyone agrees to this. No one denies it. In modern terms, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality are believed to be orientations and identities that we discover about ourselves much the same way we discover if we are right-handed, left-handed, or ambidextrous. The Bible however does not view sexuality as an identity or an orientation, but as an activity and a behavior. Our culture would define you by your desires and your temptations. The Bible only defines us by our actions. We must understand that the Bible sees a difference between desire/temptation and action/behavior. According to **James 1:14-15**, temptation comes from desire and if not resisted, temptation will lead to action, but they are not the same thing. Please consider Paul's own description of his temptation to covetousness found in **Romans 7:14-24**. This isn't about sexual sin, it is about covetousness. The temptation to Paul seemed overwhelming. He wanted to turn his back on it, but couldn't. Does that sound familiar to you? Does that sound like your experience with any sins? If you are tempted to same-gender sexual activity, does that sound like your experience with that? Please understand what this means. If you are sexually attracted to people of the same gender, that doesn't mean you are a pervert, a sicko, or even a bad person. All it means is you are a person who, like every other person in the world, is tempted by something that will separate you from God. The Bible does not treat sexuality as an orientation and the fact that some people desire different forms of sex greatly doesn't provide a solid basis for us to treat sexuality that way either.
2. Argument #2: The Bible positively condones 8 different kinds of marriages and not just monogamous male/female marriages. This argument is taken from a commonly distributed picture on the internet.<sup>4</sup> You may have seen it yourself. It presents pictorial representations of some different kinds of relationships that are presented in the Bible, including the Leviratic marriage found in **Genesis 38** (also governed in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**), polygamy, and concubines seen perhaps most dramatically in the life of Solomon (**I Kings 11:3—700 wives and 300 concubines**). The most shocking images on the picture are the ones that relate to an unbetrothed rape victim being married to her rapist (**Deuteronomy 22:28-29**) and a woman captured in war being married to her captor (**Deuteronomy 21:11-14**). We do not have time in this lesson to address individually each one of these scenarios, but I would like to share with you some principles that I think address this argument.
- a) First, please be aware this picture is not actually intended to provide a real look at what the Bible condones and approves. It is not intended to help us understand how to please God in marriage based on the Bible. It is actually intended to horrify us and claim the Bible is completely inconsistent about marriage, so we should dismiss anything the Bible might possibly say about homosexual marriage. As such, it does not present complete Biblical information about these situations.
- b) Second, this argument comes from those who do not appreciate the difference between the Old and New Covenants. They do not appreciate the principle demonstrated by **Matthew 19:7-8**. Jesus explains that under the Old Covenant law, God allowed some things regarding marriage that were not part of His ultimate plan for marriage because of the hardness of the Israelites hearts. Jesus then points back to the original marriage between Adam and Eve as God's ultimate guideline for His ultimate plan for marriage.
- c) Third, similar to the last point, those who make this argument do not appreciate the progressive nature of God's revelation over time, especially as it relates to moving from the Old to the New Covenant. When God introduced Himself to Israel, He was ultimately planning on leading them to the Gospel and all it meant for our lives. But they were already a people raised up in the cultures around them who could not grasp all of those ultimate plans from God. Thus, they had been raised in cultures that believed a prisoner of war could be taken as a wife. Though that was not God's ultimate plan for

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.religioustolerance.org/mar\\_bibl0.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/mar_bibl0.htm)

gaining a wife, His law in **Deuteronomy 21:11-14** was not intended to eternally sanction capturing women in war as a means to get married, but was rather a limitation on what the Israelites had witnessed in the nations around them. It was given to make sure they treated a wife gained this way with respect instead of treating her as a sex slave or any kind of slave for that matter. While this seems reprehensible to us, it was actually a step up from what was common in the world at that time and was a step towards teaching God's ultimate plan for marriage.

- d) Fourth, I do want to directly address the law about the unbetrothed rape victim as seen in **Deuteronomy 22:28-29**. I admit that this law shocks me. There is a part of me that is repulsed by it as I'm sure you are too. However, we need to consider what the purpose of this law was and not just our knee-jerk reaction to it. While the Bible, even under the Old Testament, is not nearly as anti-woman as moderns would have you believe, the Hebrew culture was patriarchal. A daughter stayed under the authority of her father until she was given to a man in marriage. Further, though there were exceptions, women were unable to financially provide for themselves apart from a patriarch, either in the form of a father or a husband. This was not because women were considered less than men, but simply because that wasn't their role in the Hebrew families. However, this system did provide an inherent danger for women. If no man would cast his protection and care over them, most women would be destitute. When a man raped an unbetrothed woman, he put her in an awful position. Though it was no fault of her own, he made it unlikely that anyone would want to marry her. When her father died, she would be destitute. Since we think marriage is for those who fall in love, this idea is abhorrent to us. But we've already demonstrated that simply wasn't the main mindset of our biblical counterparts. For this woman, the marriage wasn't about love. It was about financial protection. Further, I think a strong argument can be made that the purpose of this law wasn't even actually to marry a rapist and his victim, but was intended, along with the law for raping a betrothed woman (**Deuteronomy 22:23-27**), to keep rape from happening. If you raped a betrothed woman, you would be executed. If you raped an unbetrothed woman, you were financially responsible for her for the rest of her life. You had better think twice before you allow your sexual urges to push you to force yourself on any woman. And while this whole thing completely shocks our modern sensibilities, trained by the romanticism of our day. There is actually a Bible story that exemplifies how an Israelite woman lived in this law. In **II Samuel 13:1-22**, Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. Notice Tamar's response to all of this. When Amnon's intentions become clear in **vss. 11-13**, Tamar doesn't consider it awful to marry Amnon, but suggests it as the alternative. When he rejects that and rapes her, Tamar doesn't actually want to flee his presence based on how awful it would be to be around the one who violated her. Actually according to **vs. 16**, she saw being sent away from him as a worse wrong than the rape. I admit that this seems strange to me. But nevertheless, we see that the Israelite culture simply didn't view this as we do.
- e) Fifth, this chart is subtly dishonest. While it intends to open the door for homosexual marriages and same-gender sexual unions and relationships by showing the Bible actually positively condones more than just one kind of marriage relationship and family, it actually misrepresents this entire picture. Of the 8 supposedly biblically condoned kinds of marriages and family, one of them is the traditional picture of marriage that we are saying we support. Four of them are not different kinds of marriages or families, rather they are different paths to getting married. We may not like those paths (taking a woman captured in war as a wife, a slave being given to another slave as wife, the Leviratic marriage, and especially the rape of an unbetrothed woman), but these are not different kinds of marriages and families. They are the same kind, they are just entered into in ways different from what we like. The other three refer to various forms of polygamy. But two things should be noted about these.
- (1) While God allowed various forms of polygamy under the Old Covenant, not one single instance of it is presented in a positive light. Every time it is described, problems abound starting with Abraham with Sarah and Hagar and the hurt and pain caused by that relationship, to Jacob with Rachel and Leah and their constant in-fighting and struggling and causing Jacob all kinds of grief, all the way to Solomon with his many wives and concubines who led him to idolatry. Though God allowed the polygamy, probably for the very same reason He allowed certain divorces according to **Matthew 19:7-8**, He never presents it in a positive light.
  - (2) Even in these cases, a same-gender sexual relationship was never permitted or presented.
- H. What is the conclusion then? The only marriage or sexual relationship positively condoned in the Bible is between a man and woman.



#### IV. What the Bible condemns.

- A. There are 7 passages that seem to deal with same-gender sexual actions commonly used to support the traditional view that the Bible condemns same-gender sexual relationships (though two of them must be used together). For many, all you have to do is read them and you believe the argument is closed. However, for some, as represented by Matthew Vines in the aforementioned presentation, these passages are not as open and shut as they seem to others. With that in mind, I cannot simply read these passages to you, but must address objections made against them.
- B. Additionally, I need to address a subtle attack made at this point. Almost everyone who says the Bible actually supports loving, committed same-gender sexual relationships makes a jab that there are only 6 or 7 passages in the Bible that address this issue. Surely, if it were so bad, we would find more passages than that.
  1. I would point out that bestiality is only condemned four times in Scripture: **Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:23; 20:15-26; Deuteronomy 27:21**. And it is never explicitly condemned in the New Testament.
  2. Further, incest is only condemned in three passages: **Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:11-21; Deuteronomy 27:20-23**. And it is never explicitly condemned in the New Testament. Further, are you aware for all the detail those particular passages go into about the incestuous relationships prohibited, unless I've simply missed it, I can't find one that explicitly prohibits uncovering a son or daughter's nakedness. Of course, I do believe by a logical extension of **Leviticus 18:10**, we can easily see it is prohibited.
  3. Finally, as far as I can find, rape is only explicitly condemned in one passage: **Deuteronomy 22:25-29**. Once again, it is not at all addressed explicitly in the New Testament. There are examples of it in other passages, though they simply tell the story and do not actually address the moral rightness or wrongness of it. Of course, none of the examples picture rape in a positive light (e.g. **Genesis 34; Judges 19; II Samuel 13**).
  4. The point to see is the number of times a sin is condemned is not the point. It only takes being condemned once to be unlawful and sin. Further, the specific kinds of sexual immorality described in the Old Testament do not need to be specifically repeated in the New but are condemned under the heading of sexual immorality.
- C. **Genesis 19:4-11**
  1. This is the well-known story of Sodom and Gomorrah. God's angelic messengers enter Sodom to see if the outcry that has risen up to God against these cities is true. Lot presses them to stay in his home. Then the men of the town seek to rape the messengers.
  2. I'm going to say something here that I fear will upset many of my Christian friends. However, I'm not interested in maintaining party lines, but in being honest with the biblical text and going where it leads us. While this passage is seen by most who hold the traditional views on homosexual activity as the greatest argument against same-gender sexual activity and same-gender sexual relationships, it is in fact, I believe, the weakest and worst. A host of flawed and bad arguments come from this passage.
  3. If I counted correctly, Sodom or Gomorrah are mentioned in 39 places other than this story in **Genesis 18-19**. They become a byword and a standard of judgment. When God wants to describe a complete judgment and wiping out of any nation, He explains that He will make them like Sodom and Gomorrah. In **Genesis 13:13**, the text explains that the men of Sodom were wicked, but when God names their sin, it isn't actually about homosexuality. In **Ezekiel 16:49-50**, when God explains that Judah had actually committed worse sin than Sodom and her daughters. To my knowledge, God never accuses Judah of allowing any kind of homosexual behavior. I'm not saying it was never committed in Judah, I'm just pointing out we can't find a text that says they did allow it or it was common, yet their sins are greater than Sodom's and they make Sodom appear righteous in comparison (**Ezekiel 16:51**). This text explains that the great sin of Sodom was that she "had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy" (ESV). The text goes on to say that Sodom committed a great abomination before God. That may very likely refer to the events of **Genesis 19**. However, I think we need to be honest in admitting that an attempted gang rape, no matter what gender lines it pursues, is a great abomination and hardly warrants condemning every other kind of sexual expression that may be similar. For instance, when this exact same thing occurs in **Judges 19**, but between violent men and a woman, none of us would say that suddenly makes all heterosexual activity unlawful.
  4. All that being said, there is one passage that tells us something about Sodom and Gomorrah that needs to be considered. And this is why I earlier said two of the seven passages have to be taken together. **Jude 7** says, "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"

(ESV). Note the ESV footnote that explains the literal translation of “unnatural desire” is actually “other flesh.” This translation is demonstrated by other translations such as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, and ASV where it is translated “strange flesh.” We might want to argue it was “strange flesh” because the men they sought relations with were angels, but the men of Sodom didn’t know that. They were seeking relations with what they thought were simply other men and Jude describes that as “strange” or “other flesh.” I think it is ironic that the Greek word translated “strange” is “heteros,” the word that gives us the first part of our term “heterosexual.” In an interesting twist, this passage demonstrates that the appropriate flesh for men to pursue is the flesh of a woman, but when they are going after the flesh of men, they are pursuing a different flesh than they should, or a flesh that is strange or other than what they should.

5. Thus, while **Genesis 19** all by itself is a rather weak argument, **Jude 7** does explain that men going after the flesh of men for sexual purposes was wrong and was part of the reason Sodom and Gomorrah were condemned and judged.

#### D. **Leviticus 18:22; 20:13**

1. Though in one sense, these two passages need to be considered separately, because of the arguments made against them, we’ll take them together.
2. Some try to suggest that these passages do not condemn any and all same-gender sexual activity, but only the activity that was practiced in connection with paganism and idolatry. It seems to me that this falls short in very short order. While child sacrifice to Molech is mentioned in the contexts of each of these statements (**Leviticus 18:21; 20:1-6**), there is absolutely no indication that the sexual laws in these passages have anything to do with idolatry. Should we dispense with the lists of incestuous activities claiming they were only sinful if practiced in conjunction with idolatry? Surely not.
3. However, others recognize them as blanket statements that simply cannot be avoided. Matthew Vines in his presentation demonstrates this. In fact, I truly appreciate his argumentation because it demonstrates that he understands something many modern evangelicals don’t. He explains that these passages actually don’t provide much ground for Christians because we aren’t under the Old Covenant. As **Ephesians 2:14-16** teaches, this Law was abolished by Jesus in His death on the cross. And we who argue greatly with our religious friends and neighbors that they cannot bind tithing or permit instrumental accompaniment to their worship because those things are under that Old Covenant must be very careful in trying pull one or two legal statements out of that same covenant and claim they are binding today.
4. And so, Vines asks a legitimate question. What good reason do we have to take these statements and believe they are still valid under Christ’s covenant? There are some good arguments. But first let me dispel some bad ones.
  - a) *It’s called an abomination:* I’ve heard some Christians claim that anything called an abomination under that Old Covenant must still be an abomination under the New. **Deuteronomy 14:3** claims that eating the unclean animals is eating an abomination. And while there are some pretty disgusting sounding animals on that list, the list of abominations includes bacon, sausage, pork chops, ham, shrimp, and catfish. But these things are not okay to eat merely because we like them. We know that Jesus made declared all foods clean (**Mark 7:19**).
  - b) *It’s punishable by death:* I’ve heard Christians claim if God was going to make it punishable by death under that Old Covenant, that proves He is eternally against it even under the New Covenant. Keep in mind that Sabbath breaking was punishable by death (**Exodus 31:14-15**). This was done in **Numbers 15** over a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath. But under the New Covenant we are not to allow anyone to pass judgment on us regarding keeping or breaking the Sabbath because Christ is the substance and the Old Covenant Sabbath law was merely a shadow (**Colossians 2:16**).
5. However, there are good reasons to believe these passages should apply today. Consider the **Acts 15** Jerusalem council. In this chapter, Christians gathered in Jerusalem and debated the place of the Law for Gentiles who would be Christians. The conclusion of that council was, in general, we Gentiles do not have to keep the Law. We do not have to be circumcised or keep the feasts and pilgrimages or a myriad of other legal requirements under that Law. However, the council also wanted to make it clear that this did not mean every statement found in the Law was void for us Gentiles. After all, surely we don’t think murder or theft or adultery are allowed for us just because they are condemned in the Law, do we? The Jewish Christians who wanted to encourage the Gentile Christians made this point by saying, “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality” (**Acts 15:28-29**, ESV). Did James and the Jewish Christians mean every other legal

requirement under the Old Law was fair game for breaking by Gentile Christians? Of course not. But do you realize this list is not merely a list of four prohibitions? It is actually a loose outline of **Leviticus 17-18**, which combines two distinct sections of God's communication in the holiness code to Moses and Israel. The Jews were not telling the Gentiles that here are four mere prohibitions and everything else is lawful for you. They were calling to mind these two sections of the Law and all they included. **Leviticus 17** deals with things sacrificed to idols, that is, things sacrificed in places other than the temple of Jehovah. It also addresses drinking blood and the concept of things strangled is the idea of eating something with the blood in it. And **Leviticus 18** lists a host of sexual immorality, all of which are included and signified by the letter's statement that the Gentiles should abstain from these forms of sexual immorality. This immorality includes the prohibition of same-gender sexual activity of **Leviticus 18:22**. (Some will try to play this down by referring to **Leviticus 18:19** which condemns sex with a woman during her menstrual uncleanness. In fact, Vines says we shouldn't take **Leviticus 18:22** as prohibitory because no one takes **Leviticus 18:19** as sinful today. But once again, this is assuming what is to be proven. Just because no one believes it is sinful, doesn't mean it isn't. For many, this is a largely moot question. They don't want to pursue this activity anyway. One thing to consider, however, is under the New Covenant as far as I can tell, there is no menstrual uncleanness. That is, menstruation doesn't make a woman unclean because that concept is not part of the covenant.)

6. There is a good reason to also believe **Leviticus 20:13** as well, however, we will deal with that when we look at the New Testament passages.

#### E. **Romans 1:19-32**

1. This is an important passage because it is the only passage that specifically mentions not only male homosexual behavior, but also female.
2. Vines provides two lines of argumentation to call the traditional view of this passage into question.
  - a) First, he draws a parallel between the idea of nature in **vss. 26-27** and the idea of God's nature in **vss. 20-23**. The argument is that in **vss. 20-23** the reason they will be judged for their idolatry is because they first knew the true divine nature and rejected it. Therefore, he claims **vss 26-27** this only applies to men and women who first know their heterosexual nature and rejected their heterosexual nature to pursue homosexual activity. This falls short for two reasons.
    - (1) It ignores that **vss. 20-23** is not talking about a subset of people who knew the divine nature and therefore would be judged while others are not aware of the divine nature and will not. Paul explains that all people know the divine nature and are held accountable to it. If Vines's parallel holds, then all people are aware of the heterosexual nature and anyone pursuing homosexual activity is violating this law.
    - (2) This argument contradicts the claim that undergirds every other aspect of these arguments against the traditional view of the same-gender sexual behavior. That is, Vines and nearly all others who claim the Bible actually supports loving, committed same-gender sexual union and relationships claim that the Bible authors had no concept of a homosexual nature or a heterosexual nature. They didn't think in terms of orientation, they only thought in terms of behavior and action. We simply can't have it both ways. If the Bible authors had no concept of sexual orientation, they can't be arguing that what makes this particular action wrong is it goes against the person's known sexual orientation.
  - b) Second, he simply plays on the word "natural" in **vss. 26-27** and wants to go to other passages to see how the word translated "nature" is used and bring those definitions back into this passage. He especially turns to **I Corinthians 11:4-7**. He says this is the passage in scripture that is most parallel to **Romans 1** because it mentions both "nature" and "dishonor." That makes it the go-to passage for defining what "nature" means in **Romans 1**. He claims that in **I Corinthians 11:4-7**, "nature" refers to practice and custom. Therefore, all Paul is referring to in **Romans 1** is practice and custom. He then explains that the Roman custom when it came to same-gender sexuality wasn't really about same-gender issues because the Romans (and the Greeks) actually view some same-gender sexual behavior as okay. Rather, their custom was that it was wrong to allow a man to be the receiving or submissive partner in sexuality and it was wrong to allow a woman to be the dominant or active partner in sexuality. Of course, today, now that we know of homosexual orientation, this custom is no longer valid. Therefore, when those who identify as having a homosexual orientation participate in these activities, it is okay. This argumentation falls short for a couple of reasons.

- (1) It is true that the word translated “nature” in the phrase “contrary to nature” in the ESV in **Romans 1:26** is also translated “nature” in **I Corinthians 11:14**. Further, the word translated “dishonorable” in **Romans 1:26** is also translated “disgrace” in **I Corinthians 11:14**. The problem is as scholarly as it sounds to say this is how you figure out what a word means in a given context, it just isn’t. Without trying to get too technical, all words have a range of semantic meaning. Even our English word “nature” has a range of semantic meaning. When we say “nature” sometimes we mean the “natural world.” Sometimes we mean “the animal kingdom.” Sometimes we mean “something we are born with.” And other times we mean “something we’ve learned through repeated practice and habit.” And while examining all the places a word is used is helpful in letting us see the wide range of semantic meaning, picking out one place where it is used and saying the meaning there is automatically the same as the meaning in another place is just not true. And while I do personally believe that “nature” in **I Corinthians 11:14** does refer to the established practice and custom of that region, there is absolutely no reason to take that passage as the defining guideline for what Paul means in **Romans 1** no matter how many similar words he uses. After all, why can’t we say that in **Romans 1** it clearly means “nature” by birth, so in **I Corinthians 11:14**, it must also mean “nature” by birth no matter what our desire for it to mean is?
- (2) Before we go looking for the meaning of a term in another passage, we should consider how the immediate context defines the words. In **Romans 1:26** there are actually two different but related words for “nature/natural.” They are connected in the context because they are opposed to each other. There is the “natural relation” and then there is that which is “contrary to nature.” We don’t need to go to **I Corinthians 11** to figure out what the meaning of “contrary to nature” is, we just need to contrast it with how “natural relations” is used. The important thing to note is the word “natural” modifies “relations” (ESV) or “function” (NASB). It doesn’t modify either the woman or the man. That is, Paul isn’t talking about the nature or orientation of the man or woman. He is talking about the nature of the action. One action is natural and the other is contrary to nature.
- (3) Finally, Paul cannot mean they traded what was customary for what was uncustomary. After all, his whole point is that it became their custom to do this unnatural action. If we are to believe that today, because our customs have changed it is okay, then the whole argument is self-defeating. Paul claims it was common for these folks to exchange this natural relation for what was unnatural. If our new customs today make it okay, why didn’t their new custom make it okay for them? Because Paul simply didn’t mean “custom” or “established practice” in **Romans 1:26-27**.

#### F. **I Corinthians 6:9; I Timothy 1:10**

1. These passages can be considered together because the issue surrounds the definitions of the word that is used in both passages.
2. In **I Corinthians 6:9**, the ESV cheated. The translators that worked on that version believe two different words went together to describe two different aspects of homosexual behavior. If you have the ESV, you can read their footnote that says, “The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts.” Other translations translate these two terms separately. The NASB speaks of the effeminate and homosexuals. The NKJV speaks of homosexual and sodomites. The KJV says effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind. The argument is that the first term, which translates a form of the word “μαλακός/malakos,” has such a wide range of meaning it is hard to nail down what it exactly means in this context. Its basic meaning is “soft.” The only other time it is used in Scripture is in Jesus’s question about John the Baptist recorded in both **Matthew 11:8** and **Luke 7:25**. And it describes “soft” clothing. According to Liddell Scott, one use in ancient Greek was to refer to those who were weak, cowardly, and lacked self-control.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, while we may be tempted to connect it with the word used after it as if they refer to opposite sides of the same action, it could just as easily connect with the words before it and refer to people who can’t control their sexual appetites at all. And to be perfectly honest, while someone who understands Greek better than I do might be able to make a good argument out of this word, I simply can’t. I obviously want to tie it to the next term and make it opposite sides of the same act, but I simply don’t know the language or the use of that term well enough to make that argument. However, I don’t believe I have to. It is the next term that I think clinches our point.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82&la=greek#lexicon>

3. In **I Corinthians 6:9** and in **I Timothy 1:10**, Paul uses forms of the word “ἀρσενοκοίτης/arsenokoites”. The struggle with this word and defining it is that it simply isn’t used very often. In the New Testament, it is only used in these two passages. And in ancient literature it is apparently used very infrequently. In fact, Vines suggests that Paul coined this phrase and some others pick up on it later. Matthew Vines claims this word comes from the combination of two words. “ἀρσεν/arsen,” meaning “male” and “κοίτης/koites,” meaning “bed.” He then explains that we can’t simply define this word by considering these meanings together. And he is correct. We know that “butterfly” does not refer to airborne dairy and to “understand” does not literally mean to “stand under.” Vines also argues, though doesn’t provide his evidence, at least not in the lesson I watched and listened to, that when others used this term they frequently categorized it with sins that dealt with financial exploitation, therefore he is certain it cannot refer to any and all same-gender sexual activity, but only to activity that included exploiting money, like prostitution. This is all a smokescreen. If Paul coined this term, we should ask how he came up with it before we see how others used this term after him.

(1) In **I Timothy 1:8-11**, Paul is talking about how to use the Law lawfully. He mentions several things that are prohibited in the Law, that is, in Moses’s Law. **Exodus 21:15** condemns those who strike their parents. **Exodus 20:13** condemns murder. We’ve already seen great lists rebuking sexual immorality (see **Leviticus 18**). **Exodus 21:16** condemns kidnapping or enslaving. **Leviticus 19:11** condemns lying. And **Leviticus 19:15-16** speaks against perjury. So we ought to be able to find “ἀρσενοκοίτης/arsenokoites” somewhere in the Law.

(2) I hate to get into the Greek. But it is absolutely necessary here. Consider the LXX/Septuagint translation of **Leviticus 18:22**. The literal English of the LXX is “and with a man you shall not lie lyings of a woman.” Here is what it looks like in the Greek. I will print it here in transliterated form to draw out the point. “kai meta arsenos ou koimethesei koiten gunaikos.” Do you see again the terms “arsenos koiten” in that phrase? Though not immediately next to each other in this sentence, the concept is still there. Do you remember when I said there was a good reason to believe **Leviticus 20:13** should be considered as still applicable under the New Covenant? Let’s look at the LXX of it. The literal English translation of the first part of this verse is “and whoever shall lie with a man the lyings of a woman.” Here is what it looks like in the Septuagint. “kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gunaikos.” Do you see that phrase “arsenos koiten” right in the middle of that? So how did Paul coin this phrase in a list of expressions from Moses’s Law? He got it from **Leviticus 18:22; 20:13**. By the way, Matthew Vines admits that in these Levitical passages same-gender sexual activity is thoroughly condemned and the reason they don’t apply to us is because they are Old Covenant restrictions, not New. But Paul pulls this prohibition directly from these verses of the Law. Paul himself brings these restrictions directly into the New Covenant.

G. Brothers, Sisters, Friends, Neighbors, I have no wish to simply cause pain and hurt. I have no wish to isolate anyone or increase their burden. I have no desire to cause anyone sorrow. However, in the same vein as Paul stated in **II Corinthians 2:4**, I preach this “out of much affliction and anguish of heart and even with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.” As **Proverbs 10:12** explains, “Love covers all offenses” (ESV). And **James 5:19-20**, explains, “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (ESV). Even if you disagree with my assessment of these passages, I hope you can see that my desire is to love you and show my love by following in the footsteps of my own Nathan. As he essentially said to me, “Edwin, you are the man.” If you are or have engaged in same-gender sexual activity, “You are the man/woman.” This is the bad news. But there is good news.

## V. The Gospel

- A. Sadly, our culture has gotten used to mediocre news. Sadly, even Christians have gotten used to mediocre news. Regrettably, most people today, including many Christians think the good news is “You’re a rotten sinner but if you try really hard, and give up enough of your sins, you just might get to go to heaven.” Sadly, for many who experience same-gender sexual attraction, you’ve gotten used to news that says, “If you quit being attracted to people of the same gender and start being attracted to people of the opposite gender, you just might make up for all your sins and maybe you’ll get to go to heaven.” But none of this is the good news.
- B. Please notice **Romans 5:6-10**. This is the good news. At the right time, Jesus Christ died for you. What was that right time? The same time it was for me. While we were still weak, ungodly, sinful enemies. He didn’t wait for us to straighten ourselves out. He didn’t wait for us to prove we deserve it. He took the initiative. I

know if you've participated in same-gender sexual activity some well-meaning (or perhaps not so well-meaning) Christian led you to believe that you are a special kind of sinner that has a special corner in hell that burns a little hotter. I know someone has probably led you to believe that God was just waiting around for a good time drop you into the fiery pits of hell. But that simply isn't true. God loves us even while we are in our sins. He does not delight in the death of sinners but wants us to be saved. As **I Timothy 2:3-4**, God desires all people to be saved no matter what their sins have been.

- C. Consider again **I Corinthians 6:9-11**. This passage contains the bad news. Those who commit sexual immorality, idolatry, and adultery as well as those who participate in same-gender sexual activity will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. However, it also contains the good news. "Such were some of you. 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" (ESV).
1. Let me tell you first what this passage does not say. And it took me a while to realize this. I've been wrong about this passage. This passage does not say, "Such were some of you. But you are no longer tempted by these things." It does not say, "Such were some of you. But now you have started being attracted to people of the opposite gender." God doesn't promise you that, and I can't promise you that.
  2. Certainly, God can remove any temptations if He wishes. I have no doubt with some people He does. But with others He doesn't. There is not a Christian in this room who isn't tempted by something. Let me use myself again. I'll be honest that sometimes I get completely angry. I've heard men tell the story that as soon as they decided to turn their lives over to Jesus it was like their temptation to lust, pornography, and immorality just vanished. They didn't want those things anymore. I try really hard to be thankful to God on their behalf. But it's hard. I've prayed for that over and over again, and it hasn't happened for me. I've known others who worked and worked and worked and surrendered to God and surrendered to God and surrendered to God who would now say that they have a level of victory over those sins that it doesn't seem to tempt them anymore or that they can't remember the last time they were tempted by it. Again, I've prayed for that over and over again. But it hasn't happened for me yet despite working and surrendering. In like manner, I'm sure there are some who experience same-gender sexual attraction who when they turn their lives over to God, the attraction vanishes. That may be you, it may not. I'm sure there are others who after years of work and surrender can say same-gender sexual attraction is no longer a temptation. That may be you, it may not. But there will also be those who face that temptation until the day they die and are taken to be with the Lord. That may be you. I do believe for all of us, as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, overcoming temptation becomes easier, but it doesn't mean there is no more temptation.
  3. Here is what you and I have to understand. When God saves us by the blood of Jesus Christ, sanctifying us, justifying us, washing us, cleansing us, He doesn't call us to no longer be tempted. He calls us to surrender to Him and let Him give us victory over the temptation. He is calling us to resist the temptation (cf. **James 4:7; 5:9**). Further, He is empowering us to resist temptation (**Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:14-16**). And He gives us one another to help us overcome temptation and sin (**Hebrews 10:24; James 5:16**).
  4. In other words, though normally I try to steer clear of it, if I can speak in our modern vernacular, God is not trying to convert you from homosexuality to heterosexuality. You don't have to become a person who is attracted to the opposite gender in order to become a Christian. But He does want you to convert to Jesus Christ and through Him become someone who is victorious over and resists all sin, including the sin of same-gender sexual activity.
- D. I know that if you have been involved in same-gender sexual practice, you've probably found a community that supports you and accepts you. I know you've probably found a place that feels comfortable. And I know when you hear what I'm saying you are scared to give that up. I get it. That makes sense to me. But I want to tell you about a way and a group I think you might find better. The way is Jesus. He is the way to God (cf. **John 14:6**). And when you have to let go of relationships that are close and have been supportive and accepting, I want you to remember **Luke 18:26-30**. Many when they become God's children are forced to leave "family." That old support group disappears. Those old friends aren't there anymore. But in Jesus Christ you will receive many more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life. I do admit it. Just as you struggle with the temptation of same-gender sexual activity, there are some Christians who struggle with the sin of being jerks. As you will stumble and slip while you grow, they will too. I can't promise you everyone will always treat you perfectly, but then I can't promise them you will always treat them perfectly. But I can tell you what I've experienced. I've experienced family to make up for what I had to give up. I invite you to turn to Jesus.

## Conclusion:

No matter who you are and what your sins, I'd like you to look around you. You want to know what you are seeing? You are seeing a bunch of sinners. There is not a single person here who is here because they deserve to be. There is not a single person who is here because they were good enough and therefore got invited. We're not even here because we just need a little help. The Gospel is not a divine assistance program, it is a divine rescue mission. Most of us are here because we need a Savior. And we know He gets proclaimed here. We know we can meet Him here. Sadly, many in our culture and society just can't bring themselves to say that. They think it is awful to claim we need a rescue mission from God because we just aren't good enough. But that is why we are here. No matter what your sin is, if you realize you need saving, can I recommend Jesus? If you know you need a Savior, Jesus says in **Mark 16:16**, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Don't wait until you've got your sin straightened out. Bring your sin to Jesus, let Him sanctify you, wash you, sanctify you, and justify you. Let Him empower you to overcome temptation. Let us be your support and help. If we can help you, please let us know.