

Introduction:

Before we get started tonight I have to tell you the craziest story. Just the other day I was eating out, and the hostess had seated me in sight of the bar. As I was eating, I saw the weirdest thing. There was this older guy hitting on a young lady. That probably isn't as weird as I'd like to think it. The weird part is she actually seemed to be getting a kick out of it. Then it got really messed up. I happened to look up at a moment when the young lady was turned away from the man, and I saw him sneak something into her drink. I was stunned. I couldn't believe it. I thought that only happens on television, right? But there it was right in front of me. What was I supposed to do? I should do something about it right? But about a dozen things ran through my mind. What if I was wrong? It was kind of dark in there. I'd look like an idiot if I was wrong, plus I'd tarnish the name of a potentially good fellow. What if she doesn't believe me? What if no one believes me? I don't want people to think I'm crazy. They might even kick me out of the restaurant for causing a fuss. What if the guy gets mad and attacks me? Whether I'm right or wrong, that guy is going to be livid—if I'm right, for being outed, and if I'm wrong, for being falsely accused. I was pretty close to convinced I needed to just mind my own business and not get involved. What do you think?

Brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, I am here to say as Nathan did to David, "You are the man!" Well, actually, in this story you are the young lady. Our culture is slipping something in your drink. It is trying to poison you. It is feeding you a message that is dangerous for your soul. The Bible very specifically says this issue will keep you out of the kingdom of God. But our culture, like an old man trying to seduce us, is telling us what God says through the Bible just isn't so. Then the culture is trying to make the Bible seem very confused on this issue so we will be afraid we are wrong and just mind our own business. Finally, if that doesn't work, the culture is attacking anyone who holds up what the Bible says, saying we are old-fashioned, backwards, and even haters.

If you haven't figured out what I'm talking about yet, I'm referring to the issue of homosexual behavior. From every corner of our culture, same-gender sexual behavior is being promoted. Even among some who claim to be Christian it is being defended as loving and godly. It is promoted in the shows and movies we watch, the articles and books we read, and even the songs we hear on the radio. Even Disney has chimed in by placing subtle (and some not-so-subtle) references to same-gender marriage and parenting. Often it is not actively promoted, but simply demonstrated as the new norm for our society. We are told today one of the bravest things a person can do is "come out of the closet." Even the recent documentary about Mr. Rogers, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" made a not-so-subtle argument that if you are going to be nice and love as God loves, you will approve homosexual behavior. And if anyone dares to swim upstream of this new cultural norm, the backlash can be horrendous, especially in our ever increasingly social-media driven society.

But all that being said. I agree with you. I should have stepped in and said something to that young lady. Up to and including knocking the drink out of her hand to protect her. In like manner, I have to share with you what the Bible says about this issue. In the end, you may disagree with the Bible and abandon it. That is your business, but at least you will do so with your eyes open. You will be making an honest, informed decision. With all that in mind, I'd like to read **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** and learn what Jesus offers those who practice homosexuality.¹

Discussion:

I. Jesus offers you a new perspective

- A. The most commonly expressed perspective today is that homosexuality is an identity you are born with. It is not a behavior, it is a state of being. Further, the modern perspective is the mere fact that the activity is attractive and appealing to you means it is a good and proper behavior. Some who claim to be Christian will co-opt this into a monogamous lifestyle, claiming as long as you really love someone and you are true to them, and now, if you marry them, it is lawful and loving to participate in same-gender sexual behavior.
- B. However, please notice what Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote about this in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**. "Do not be deceived," he says. Though others will try to deceive you, don't let them. Those who practice homosexuality are practicing unrighteousness and will not inherit the kingdom of God. The ESV translates this

¹ To be clear, the event described in this story regarding the man and the young woman did not actually happen. However, as Nathan used a fabricated story to convict David (**2 Samuel 12**) and "a certain man of the prophets" used a fabricated story about himself to convict Ahab (**1 Kings 20:35-43**), I have taken the liberty to do the same thing in this lesson. I pray it accomplished its purpose.

passage in just such clear terms. However, because I know there are arguments made against this, claiming it is a mistranslation, I do need to get just a little bit technical to remove deception.

1. The ESV has taken two Greek words and translated them together by this one phrase “men who practice homosexuality.” I would like to focus your attention on the second of the terms used here: “ἀρσενοκοίτης/arsenokoites.” The struggle with defining this word is it simply isn’t used very often. It is only used in two New Testament passages (the other is **1 Timothy 1:10**). And in ancient literature it is apparently used very infrequently. Some suggest Paul himself coined this phrase and others pick up on it later. It is a compound word from “ἀρσεν/arsen,” meaning “male,” and “κοίτης/koites,” meaning “bed.” However, we can no more determine the meaning of this word by combining the meanings of these two words than we can believe “butterfly” refers to an airborne dairy product or to “understand” means to actually stand under something.
2. Where did Paul get this word? We especially ask that if Paul coined it. Consider two Old Testament passages: **Leviticus 18:22; 20:13**.
 - a) **Leviticus 18:22**: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (ESV).
 - b) **Leviticus 20:13**: “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination...” (ESV).
3. Please consider the Septuagint (hereafter: LXX) of these passages. The LXX is the ancient Koine Greek rendering of the Old Testament which Paul often used and quoted.
 - a) **Leviticus 18:22**: The literal English rendering of the LXX here 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 in transliterated form, which means using our English letterings rather than Greek, to highlight the point better. “kai meta arsenos ou koimethesei koiten gunaikos.” Do you see the terms “arsenos” and “koiten” in that phrase? Though not immediately next to each other in this text, the concept is there. These are the words Paul strung together in **1 Corinthians 6:9**.
 - b) **Leviticus 20:13**: The literal English rendering of the LXX here is “and whoever shall lie with a man the lyings of a woman.” Here is what it looks like in the transliterated Greek: “kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gunaikos.” Do you see the phrase “arsenos koiten” right in the middle of that? That is the same phrase converted into a single word by Paul and described as unlawful sin and disobedience to God in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** and **1 Timothy 1:10**.
 - c) Where did Paul come up with this term? He got it straight from the Scriptures he studied. Scriptures that also declared this behavior is disobedient to God.
- C. You cannot be in covenant relationship with Yahweh of the Bible and continue practicing homosexuality. The Bible might be wrong. If so, toss it. But don’t pick and choose the bits you like. Be honest with it. Admit what it says and if you don’t want to abide by what it says, then let it go. But please, do not deceive yourself by trying to make what it says fit what you want to do.
- D. There is another aspect of the new perspective Jesus offers. Homosexual behavior is not the worst sin ever, it is merely one sin among many. If you have practiced homosexuality and you come to Jesus, becoming part of His church, you will merely be one forgiven sinner in the midst of millions of forgiven sinners. In fact, if you look at the context, in **1 Corinthians 6**, Paul has been correcting the Corinthians’ tendency to take one another to court. In **1 Corinthians 6:8**, he concludes that argument by rebuking them because “You yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers” (ESV). The purpose of **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** is not to say homosexual behavior is a really bad sin for which people will not inherit the kingdom of God. It does say that, but that is not the purpose of the passage. The purpose of the passage is actually to claim defrauding others is a really bad sin for which people will not inherit the kingdom of God. That is why this list builds up to rebuke theft, greed, reviling, and swindling. If you have been committing homosexuality or tempted to commit homosexuality, Jesus’s perspective is not that you are worse than everyone else. His perspective is you are just as sinful as everyone else and vice versa. We are all in this sin boat together. Your temptation may be homosexuality, mine may be drunkenness. Yours may be covetousness, mine may be pornography. Yours may be gluttony, mine may be selfishness. But we are in it together. We need something. We need Jesus and the rest of what He has to offer, which is explained in **1 Corinthians 6:11**.

II. Jesus offers you a new identity

- A. In the Bible, identity is not based on proclivities, temptations, tendencies, or desires. Identity is based on action. For all we know, a person may be born with a proclivity for lying or drinking or pride or anger. That is what it feels like when we deal with our temptations, doesn’t it? As if we were born that way. But, biblically, a person is not a liar, until he or she lies. A person may be raised in a home of idolaters and receive all kind

of nurturing upbringing toward that, but that person is not an idolater until he/she worships an idol. In like manner, for all I know, people may be born with a tendency or proclivity to be sexually and romantically attracted to folks of the same gender. But a person is not biblically a homosexual until he/she participates in same gender sexual activity. That is exactly what Paul is talking about when he says, "Such were some of you," to the Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). He is not saying some were born sexually immoral, idolatrous, adulterous, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers. He is saying that is what they became because that is how they acted. The same is true for homosexuality. Temptation does not determine identity. Proclivity, tendency, desire, appeal do not determine identity. In this context, behavior does. Some of these Corinthians were all of these things because they did these things.

- B. But! "But you were washed..." Paul says. Something has changed. You were these things, including practitioners of homosexuality. But you are now something else, because you have been washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. The word for "washed" here is found only one other time in all the New Testament in **Acts 22:16** where Ananias instructs Saul, who will become the apostle Paul, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (ESV). The Corinthians were washed in baptism. Their sins had been removed. As Jesus says of this in **John 3:3, 5**, they were born again. Whatever you want to say about their physical birth, they have been born again. They are new creatures. They have a new identity. No longer are they identified by their sin. They are identified by their Savior.
- C. That is what Jesus offers you. No matter what sins you have committed, He offers you a new identity.

III. Jesus offers you a new tribe

- A. Paul doesn't use the words "new tribe." But that is what he is getting at when he says some of the Corinthians were sanctified. I understand if you are sexually and romantically attracted to folks of the same gender, you have perhaps for most of your life felt like an outsider. You have felt like you didn't fit in. You were different. You were certain if people knew, they would ridicule, castigate, and cut you off. And, often that is exactly what they would do. When you found someone who would return feelings of attraction, it was comforting. You had acceptance. You had a group. You had a tribe. I also understand that the cultural shift that has been taking place over the past several years has felt really wonderful to you. You finally have a place in the greater society. You don't have to be an outsider. Your tribe is no longer located in out of the way places and secret hangouts. Your tribe is public and proud. I get that. I also get you may not at all be interested in a new tribe.
- B. However, I would like to let you know what Jesus offers. At some point, the novelty and thrill of this new acceptance of homosexual behavior in our society is going to wear off. At some point, it will become just like it was in Rome. Old hat. It will no longer be a thing to brag about or march about. It will just be another thing people in our society do. When that happens, and suddenly the tribalism of homosexuality no longer provides the comfort it does now and you are just left with yourself and the fact that your homosexual behavior is not actually solving the problems you feel, it is no longer providing you the escape from your fears, your struggles, your guilt, your doubts, your shame, can I suggest you try Jesus and His new tribe. Because that is exactly what He offers.
- C. Notice how the letter begins in **1 Corinthians 1:2**. Paul is writing "to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this letter, being sanctified is about being set apart from the world and being given a place among the people of Jesus Christ. No matter what your past sins have been, no matter what your present struggles and temptations are, Jesus has a place for you in His kingdom. He has a place for you among His tribe. No, that doesn't mean you can simply continue in unrighteous sin. But it does mean that you, like every other sinner, having been washed, forgiven, and given your new identity now have a tribe. You have a family. You have a place where you can feel at home. He has sanctified you. He has made you one of his saints among all of his saints. Having been washed in baptism, Jesus brings you into the fellowship of His people. And may I say, brothers and sisters, those of you who are not tempted by this sin, it is high time we lived out this sanctification in how we treat those who are tempted by homosexuality. No, it is not time for us to look the other way from any sin, including homosexuality. It is not time for us to wink at or be in fellowship with impenitent sin, including homosexuality. But it is high time we recognize that folks who have turned to Jesus to receive forgiveness for and freedom from homosexuality, despite their present struggles, despite their present temptations, despite even their falls and failures, need a tribe, just like the people who struggle with your temptations and sins need one. That is what Jesus is offering. We need to be that for all sinners who turn to Jesus to overcome their sin. Isn't that what we all want?
- D. That is what Jesus offers you. He offers you a new tribe.

IV. Jesus offers you a new pride

- A. Again, I know the text doesn't use the word "pride," but that is exactly what we need to see when Paul says these Corinthians, including the ones who had been practitioners of homosexuality, were "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). Justification is a legal term. It refers to a standing in court. When a trial is done the defendant is declared either guilty and condemned or innocent and justified. Justification is the idea of being declared innocent when on trial. Here is the problem we have. When I say "we," I mean everyone in this room, not just those who have practiced homosexuality. The problem we have is we are all actually guilty. We have not all committed the same sins, but we have all committed sins (**Romans 3:23**). We all stand guilty.
- B. Sadly, because even Christians have mistreated people who have struggled with this temptation and who have practiced homosexual behavior, the reaction has become to take pride in this behavior. There is now Gay Pride Month and Gay Pride Parades. #GayPride is everywhere online. This has become so prevalent, I've even heard from some teenagers that they wish they were gay because all the cool kids are gay. The fact is in the court of culture, the tides have turned regarding this behavior. Rather than producing guilt and shame that leads to repentance, it produces pride that leads to more and more involvement. Please notice the one other place in this letter to Corinth Paul mentions justification: **1 Corinthians 4:3-5**. Paul says the fact that he doesn't know anything against himself does not "acquit" him. That is, it doesn't justify him. Paul contrasts the courts of men and the court of Jesus. Brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, the court of men doesn't matter. The fact that men say there is nothing wrong or that practicing homosexuality is something to be proud of, we need to remember that God is the judge, men are not.
- C. Regrettably, many Christians have responded incorrectly. Too many of us have responded to the pride in sin with pride in our righteous behavior. But that is just as sinful a pride. We are not justified because of our righteousness. We are not justified because we quit practicing homosexuality or even because we never practiced it. We are justified by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. We can stand in the judgment. We can hold our heads high. Not with pride in ourselves, but in Jesus our Savior, in His death and resurrection. As Paul says in **Galatians 6:14**, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Let us not take pride either in our sin or in our righteousness, rather let us only take pride in our Savior and His sacrifice. That is our only boast. And when that is our only boast, our only pride, then we are truly humbled.
- D. That is what Jesus offers you. A new pride. A Godly pride. A pride anchored in true humility, pride not in ourselves, but in our Savior.

Conclusion:

Actually, this sermon is not about what Jesus offers those who practice homosexuality. This is what Jesus offers all of us. He justifies us, offering us a new pride not in ourselves, but in our Savior. He sanctifies us, bringing us into His family, offering us a new tribe. And He does this when we are washed, when we are baptized as He gives us a new identity. Would you like a new identity? What are you waiting for, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.