

Canyon Hills Community Church

In light of the recent publicity about area churches which are affirming homosexuals in their sexual behavior, performing gay weddings, and seeking to be more inclusive in their membership and leadership, we feel that it is important to explain and reaffirm our commitment to biblical interpretation and biblical Christianity. For the sake of brevity, this response does not allow for an exhaustive exegesis of all that the Bible says about sexual immorality (including homosexuality). At the end of this paper there will be some resources provided for further study.

At the core of our church life is the authoritative, inerrant Word of God (II Tim. 3:16-17). It is the foundation of our teaching, our behavior, our mission, our outreach, and our worship. We believe that the Bible is the verbal and written revelation of the living God (II Pet. 1:19-21), telling us what God is like, what He has done, is doing, and will do.

It is the Word of God that tells us about His love, as well as His justice and holiness. It is the Word that tells us about our sin (Ps. 119:9; Romans 3:23; 6:23), about the sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation (Romans 5:6-11), about how to have our sins forgiven forever (Romans 10:9-10), how to have a new life in Him by repenting and believing in Him (Luke 13:3; John 3:16-17), about His coming Kingdom and our future in heaven (Colossians 1:19-23).

A Biblical Response to Homosexuality & Same-Sex Marriage

Creation (Genesis 1-2). While the creation accounts in the opening chapters of Genesis do not speak directly to the homosexual issue, they give us a general understanding of human relationships and sexuality. Created in the image of God, humanity is created to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...” (Genesis 1:28). The creation intent of God includes procreation between a man and a woman and a stable family structure where the character of God can be communicated and modeled to the next generation. Genesis 2:24 says, “A man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” God’s creation intent was that marriage and sexual relationships be between a man and a woman.

The Old Testament Law. In the Old Testament, there is a broad sweeping ban of homosexuality within the people of God. Leviticus 18:22 explicitly states, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13 states, “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death.” While we are no longer under the Old Testament Law, the fact that homosexual behavior warranted the death penalty (along with adultery, rape, extreme incest, and bestiality) argues strongly of God’s divine displeasure against this act in any time and in any culture.

Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus made no direct or explicit statements regarding homosexual behavior or same-sex unions in the gospels just as He made no direct comments about a lot of other important issues. However, Jesus would not have adopted any position contradicting those commands and prohibitions found in the Old Testament Law. In Mark 10:6, Jesus understood that heterosexual, monogamous marriage was God's creational intent "from the beginning" as evidenced by His appeal to Old Testament passages (Genesis 1:27, 2:24). As Jesus speaks of what defiles a person in Mark 7:21-23, he lists sexual immorality as one, and this definitely would have reminded his hearers of the forbidden sexual offenses listed in Leviticus 18 & 20. To Jesus, sexual behavior matters. It indicates one's desire to experience life and righteousness in relationship with the Creator.

Paul's Letters. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul shows us that homosexual behavior is an indication of our rejection of God and His creational intent. In vv. 26-27, "natural" behavior is seen as that which God designed. The "unnatural" behavior of homosexual acts is shown to be the antithesis of God's design and evidence that humanity is enslaved to our own passions. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10, Paul makes it clear that certain sexual behaviors, among which is homosexuality, cannot be a part of faithful Christian living. As with Jesus, Paul realized and taught that sexual ethics and morality are a vital part of our Christian life and experience. We are called to be "imitators of God" and in this pursuit, there "must not be any hint of sexual immorality" (Ephesians 5:1-3), which includes homosexual behavior.

In conclusion to the Bible's presentation of homosexuality and marriage, God's clear intent and design for marriage and sexual relationships is heterosexuality and monogamy. From the teachings and heart of Jesus and Paul, we see that our experience of God's life and righteousness is found as we faithfully live in His design and boundaries. The advocates of homosexuality and same-sex marriages within the church attempt to appeal to the authority of their personal experience. They argue that there are individuals who have loving, monogamous, and stable homosexual relationships. However, God's Word should interpret our experience, and His Word reveals to us that His heart and loving design for human relationships and sexual fulfillment is found in marriage between a man and a woman.

While it is not for us to ultimately judge sin, it is our loving responsibility to love all sinners with the love of Christ and to share the Gospel with them. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most inclusive message of hope in the entire world. *For God so loved the world that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16). At the same time, the Gospel of Jesus is also the most exclusive message of hope in the entire world. *Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few* (Matthew

7:13-14). We must pray that our unbelieving friends – both gay and straight, might come to repent and receive Jesus as their all-satisfying Lord and Savior. We can warmly welcome all sinners to our church services without affirming their lifestyle.

Resources:

- John R. W. Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships?: A Christian Perspective*. Fleming H Revell Co. 1998. ISBN: 0-8007-5674-6
- Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Truth About Same-sex Marriage: 6 Things You Need To Know About What's Really At Stake*. Moody Publishers, July 2004. ISBN: 0802491766
- Glenn T. Stanton, Dr. Bill Maier. *Marriage On Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting*. InterVarsity Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-8308-3274-2
- Ben Marshall, *Help! My Teen Struggles with Same-Sex Attraction*. Life-Line Mini Books
- Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? (Questions Christians Ask)*; The Good Book Company, 2013
- Gay...Such Were Some of Us: Stories of transformation and change
- Rosario Champagne Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts Of An Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey Into Christian Faith*, Crown and Covenant Publications, 2012
- Why Marriage Matters, a sermon by Dr. Steve Walker:
<http://www.canyonhillcommunitychurch.com/sermons/entry/why-marriage-matters>