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## Homosexuality: Looking Through Two Lenses

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In this day and age, one of the new norms is the increasingly popular LGBTQIA+ movement. Years ago, most children in America would not be hearing about this in school, let alone embracing it. Today, every American knows what homosexuality is and it is a common word in our vocabulary. Millions of people are watching as others across the world are coming forward and associating themselves with this movement, everyone wants to know what you think about gays and lesbians, and whether or not you support them. It seems like everywhere you turn, activists are waiting for you to say something for or against homosexuality so that they can attack you and your family. As Christians, it can be very difficult to know what to think and say regarding this issue. It is such a controversial topic that many pastors and church leaders ignore it altogether as if that will make it go away and protect them from controversies. The ones who do speak out are either against it and proclaim it unbiblical, like most conservatives, or embrace it and call it showing the love of Christ, like most liberals. Now, whether you are conservative or liberal, all Christians need to base their views on the Bible, our daily guide to life. That's why, in this essay, I will compare and contrast what the Bible says with popular conservative and liberal views to help one figure out how to address homosexuality on their own.

According to the Christian Bible Reference, there are at least seven passages in the Old and New Testaments that mention, or specifically speak, about homosexuality (“What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?”). In the Old Testament, there are about four passages that address it, the first appears in Genesis 19 and the second is in Judges 19. Both stories are about some men who tried to gang-rape a man (or, in the case of the second, gang-rape two men). The “gangs” use almost the same wording—“Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally [or sexually]” (Genesis 19:5, King James Version). In the first story, the wicked city, Sodom, and its sister, Gomorrah, were destroyed by God because of this and other sins. In the second story, after being blocked from raping the man, some of the townsmen brutally raped the man’s concubine instead. Sadly she dies from this abuse, causing all of Israel to become enraged and destroy the town. After this, the Old Testament only refers to homosexuality twice, in Leviticus. This book contains the laws regarding the Levites’ jobs and the sacrifices they make to the Lord. In chapter 18, the Lord gives Israel a series of laws regarding sexual morality, He commands them not to “lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (v. 22). In chapter 20, God also said that “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (v. 13). Despite their clear meaning, many people disregard these verses because they are part of the Mosaic covenant and Jesus replaced that covenant; yet, these laws do tell us what God felt on the topic. The

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other three passages about homosexuality are located in the New Testament, unsurprisingly, two of them being the words of the apostle Paul.

The New Testament is where Christianity truly began, with the life of Jesus Christ and the spread of His teachings across the region. Jesus Himself never specifically mentioned homosexuality; but in Mark 7:20-23, He condemns all forms of sexual immorality including adultery (a married individual having sex with one who isn't his spouse), fornication (sex outside of marriage), and lewdness (obsessed with sex and sexual desires). In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul wrote: "For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Romans 1:26). Another translation says, "Because people did those things, God left them and let them do the shameful things they wanted to do. Women stopped having natural sex with men and started having sex with other women" (Easy-to-Read Version). Paul says more on the topic when he addresses the Church in Corinth: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators [those who have sex with people they are not married to], nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [men who show more womanlike qualities than manly ones] . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, KJV).

All these verses seems to say that God does not support homosexuality and considers it a sin. However, the Bible has been translated hundreds of times and it can be difficult to understand its true meaning if you don't read the original Hebrew, Arabic, and Greek translations. This is why many different church

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denominations and faith groups have differing views on simple topics. Take, for example, the differences between conservative Christians and liberal ones. In his lengthy 3-part essay titled “Six reasons why the Bible is not against gays,” Anthony Ashford goes on to boldly state that there were other couples in the Bible—Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and even Jesus and John—who had loving homosexual relationships that were openly shown and never condemned. Ashford even stated that Jesus, the “social rebel,” also supported homosexuality. Examples of this are in Matthew 8:5-13 when He healed the Roman soldier’s beloved servant and in Matthew 19:11-12 when He said that eunuchs (highly-ranked, typically celibate men who cared for female royalty, tended to have more feminine personalities, and had very little to no sexual interest in women) were exempt from the marriage rules. As Ashford wrote, “Jesus Christ tells his disciples that people born without the innate attraction to the opposite sex should not marry people of the opposite sex”. These can all be seen as one’s own opinion, or interpretation, of the Bible, not factual evidence.

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Speaking of factual evidence, perhaps the most used argument by liberals is that the Greek words Paul used in 1 Corinthians—*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*—do not mean homosexual, that’s just the interpretation of biased anti-homosexuals passed down through translations. Again, this is a big example of how the original translations were changed over time and through languages. According to Rick Brentlinger, “...Scripture cannot mean now what it did not mean then. Translating *malakoi* as *homosexuals* imposes a twenty first century cultural meaning on

the text which *malakoi* did not mean in the first century. [...] If *malakoi* was not understood as a reference to gays and lesbians in the first century when Paul used it...then *malakoi* does not mean homosexual today” (“Malakoi is NEVER used in the Bible to mean homosexual”). In another article, Brentlinger goes on to say the following:

Many modern Christians have embraced false teaching about 1 Corinthians 6:9.

They arrive at their false teaching by assuming that the Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* mean ‘homosexual’. ...

In the first century AD, no one would define *malakoi* to mean homosexual. The Greek word *malakoi* was rarely, if ever, used in the first century to indicate homosexual men and was never used to indicate lesbians.

Based on the extant Greek manuscripts available to us today, the Greek word *arsenokoites* was rarely, if ever, used to indicate homosexual men and was never used to describe lesbians.

Therefore, when someone quotes 1 Corinthians 6:9 or 1 Timothy 1:10 to ‘prove’ that God is against homosexuality, they are conveying nothing more than their opinion, without any basis in fact (“Does 1 Cor 6:9 mean I can’t be gay AND Christian?”)

Matthew J. Bell combats Brentlinger’s statements in his article entitled “Huffington Post: ‘The Bible Does Not Condemn Homosexuality’” by essentially stating three things: (1) we should not limit Paul’s meaning to that time, (2) he may have used a new or unpopular meaning to those words, and (3) what exactly did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 6:9? The first statement is pretty self-explanatory so I will keep it short; essentially, the Bible is meant to be the instruction manual for all Christians from the moment it was written to the point when Jesus returns so it

should be relevant for all of that time. Regarding the second statement, Brentlinger says several times that both *malakoi* and *arsenokoites* are “*rarely*, if ever, used to indicate homosexual men” (emphasis added), not that they are *never* used. This might be because either he hasn’t examined every Greek manuscript discovered or that he did find some that may have been referring to homosexuals. Furthermore, Matthew Bell also references another article when he wrote “with respect to the term ‘arsenokoites,’ ‘...the term ...[appears neither] in classical Greek literature... [nor] in the Septuagint.’ However, it then seems plausible to maintain that ‘...Paul could have been the originator of the term.’” The last statement Bell makes is a question that one should ask themselves whenever they read a passage in the Bible—what did the writer mean? For us to truly grasp the meaning of a passage, we must also examine the context and who is being addressed. In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul was speaking to the Greeks about their widespread sexual immorality, which was a sin before God. Among his list of sexual immoralities, Paul speaks about the relationships males have with younger males, otherwise known as *malakoi*. At that time, the Greeks considered men to be more superior than women and some men chose to have male partners because of that. Another type of male-with-male relationship is when older men took on younger boys as their proteges and taught them the ways of life, including sex. Paul was speaking out against both of these practices and other similar practices. There is *much more* that I discovered about the varying interpretations of these two terms and why Paul might have chosen, these are only a few.

To conclude, there isn’t anywhere in the New Testament where Jesus, or the teachers sent after Him, explicitly rebuked homosexuality. There are some places in Leviticus that openly condemn the act, but even that can be disputed today. Consequently, it can still be difficult to decide which side of the political spectrum we should align ourselves with, there are faults on

both the conservative and liberal sides. But, as Christians, we are not meant to “pick sides,” because, oftentimes, picking sides causes us to focus on those views instead of on Christ. However, with topics like politics or church denominations, it’s okay to choose the side that is the closest to what Jesus taught. Just be careful that your first priority is not which political party, or church denomination, you are a part of; your first priority should be what Jesus taught and encouraged. With that being said, even if Jesus openly and explicitly condemned homosexuality or not, our jobs are not to lash out at them and judge homosexuals. Many Christians are so quick to criticize and shun those who consider themselves homosexuals, including those who also claim to be gay Christians; but is this what Jesus would want us to do? During His ministry, Jesus was surrounded by sinners, some of which were considered so great that others avoided them at all costs. This was true love, further proving that no one is too sinful for forgiveness. He didn’t ignore anyone’s sin, as we shouldn’t either, but He didn’t label their whole worth on it either and neither should we. That is what it means to show the love of Christ.

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