



*"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)*

## REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

MAY 2009

### What's Happening?

#### Time is Running Out!

Reserve your spot for the RTB Alaska Cruise Conference, sailing through Alaska's Inside Passage, August 8-15. This is a great opportunity to expand your knowledge, learn new reasons to believe, all while enjoying the fellowship of like-minded travelers. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/cruise> for information.

#### Help Make a Difference

The Seattle Chapter and Campus Crusade hope to do a "Skeptics Forum" at the UW next fall. To do this, we need to raise about \$5,000. If you, your church, or your group, would like to help sponsor this event, contact the chapter immediately at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org).

#### We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). We are also happy to help you with resources to support your personal studies and/or ministry efforts.

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## Testing the Truth Claims About Homosexuality - Part 2

GREG MOORE

[Note: The first part of this article appeared in the April newsletter.]

### IS HOMOSEXUALITY SINFUL?

Two decades ago, nearly 70 percent of Americans believed homosexuality was a sin.<sup>32</sup> Today, 48 percent of Americans hold that view. Even more striking are the statistics among Christian denominations, with 61 percent of Catholics, 39 percent of Protestants (Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, etc.) and 21 percent of born-again evangelical or fundamental Protestants not believing same-sex relationships are sinful.<sup>33</sup>



These statistics reflect the desire of many Christians to see God as loving and accepting, rather than intolerant of homosexuality. The question is whether God is really that accommodating. To answer this, it is important to examine the biblical foundation of the traditional Christian ethic towards homosexuality.

### What the Bible Says

There are the four primary verses in the Bible that deal with the issue of homosexuality—two from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. Here are the NIV translations:

Lev. 18:22, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."

Lev. 20:13, "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads."

Rom. 1:26-28, "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since

they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”

1 Cor. 6:9-10, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

These passages leave little doubt that the Bible condemns homosexual behavior. Furthermore, it is obvious from the penalty (capital punishment in the Old Testament, exclusion from the kingdom of God in the New Testament) that it is a serious infraction of God’s will. There are also numerous other Bible passages that explicitly or implicitly indicate an opposition to same-sex intercourse, leaving little doubt that was the consensus position of both Testaments, as well as of the historical communities out of which those texts arose.<sup>34</sup>

Why does the Bible condemn homosexuality? The Bible’s teachings are rooted in the fact that God created human beings male and female to fulfill his plan of a loving and life-giving union (Gen. 1:27, 2:24). This union is not simply biological, but a mystical “one-flesh” union involving the spiritual aspect of the human person and the complementarity of the two sexes. Seen in this context, homosexuality is sinful because it is contrary to God’s creative intent and also lacks the spiritual dimension that is so intrinsic to God’s plan for human sexuality.<sup>35</sup>

That being said, there are two principles that should guide our response to homosexuality. The Bible commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (e.g., Matthew 22:39). The Bible also tells us to “reprove” a neighbor who is engaging in sin so we will not share in their guilt (Leviticus 19:17). Simply put, we should love the person, but oppose the sin. Homosexuals are made in the image of God and deserve our love and respect. However, we should not approve of their sin. When we do, we commit a sin of omission because we fail to do what we ought to do—lead them to repentance and a new life in Jesus Christ.

#### Pro-Gay Theology

The pro-gay theology has emerged as part of the “gay Christian” movement in the Church and disputes the traditional Christian view of homosexuality. At the heart of this theology are two basic tenets. First, homosexuality is claimed to be created and ordained by God. Second, the traditional opposition to homosexuality is claimed to be unfounded and the product of prejudice, antiquated beliefs and faulty Bible interpretations.<sup>36</sup>

Implicit in the first claim is the contention that homosexuality is innate. As we have seen, the scientific data does not support the view that homosexuality is a genetically-inherited trait. However, suppose it was true. Would that mean homosexuality was not a sin? No, not if we take a high view of Scripture. If we believe the Bible is the written word of God, we cannot simply ignore or rewrite certain passages to accommodate our opinions about certain sins.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, “inborn” and “moral” are not necessarily the same. Scripture teaches we are a fallen race, born in sin. This sin nature we inherit corrupts us physically

## *In the* **NEWS...**

### [Missing Link - Ida](#)

Much is being made about the supposed missing link to human evolution that was recently announced. For those who want an objective perspective this finding, RTB addresses it with an informative podcast at: <http://www.reasons.org/missing-link.html>

### [God Did It!](#)

This Breakpoint article by Regis Nicoll argues that scientists who approach the world as a product of intelligence are more likely to push the envelope of investigation and discovery than those who don’t. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=11678>.

### [Why Darwinism is False](#)

In this Discovery Institute article, Jonathan Wells takes a critical look at a new book, “Why Evolution is True.” According to Wells, it is a good example of how evolutionists manipulate the evidence to support a theory that should have been abandoned long ago. Go to <http://www.discovery.org/a/10661>.

### [Helping Students “Get It”](#)

This Breakpoint article contends that we need to challenge students, rather than coddle them, if we expect students to take Christianity seriously. This includes a thorough education in worldviews and apologetics. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=11794>.

### [Learning to Pray](#)

This Focus on the Family article contends that the best way to learn how to pray is by looking at the prayer life of Jesus. He then identifies 10 lessons we can learn from Jesus’ example. Go to [http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/faith\\_in\\_life/prayer/learning\\_from\\_the\\_prayer\\_life\\_of\\_jesus.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/faith_in_life/prayer/learning_from_the_prayer_life_of_jesus.aspx).

and spiritually (Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12) and we are born physically imperfect (1 Cor. 15:1-54). We cannot assume then, that because something is inborn, it is desirable or pleasing to God. Clearly there are mental, psychological, physical and sexual aspects of our beings that are not God-ordained, but are a result of our fallen nature.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, it is important to recognize that the Bible's teachings are not based on a purely biological understanding of human nature. Instead, the Bible's vision of human sexuality is rooted in the fact that human beings are not simply animals, but embodied creatures in the unity of soul and body. Regardless of whether homosexuality is a biological inclination, it prevents individuals from attaining the spiritual personhood God desires. Thus, any argument that uses evidence from biology to justify homosexual behavior is flawed because it fails to recognize that fact.<sup>39</sup>

The second claim, that the traditional Christian view of homosexuality is unfounded, is supported by a variety of arguments. For the sake of brevity, we will examine several of the major ones.

#### Argument 1

Pro-gay theologians claim the Bible doesn't condemn "normal" and "natural" homosexual relationships. They say the sin the Bible speaks of is heterosexuals who engage in homosexual acts because that is "unnatural" to them.

Let's examine this in light of the Apostle Paul's statement in Romans 1:

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (Rom. 1:26-27)

Nothing in this passage suggests Paul is referring to sexual orientation. Rather, Paul simply describes homosexual behavior as unnatural, no matter who engages in it. The wording, in fact, is very specific. The Greek words Paul uses for men and women emphasize the biology of being male and female. Thus, what Paul is saying is the homosexual behavior committed by these people is wrong because it is biologically unnatural to them as males and females.<sup>40</sup>

There is also an unmistakable allusion to Genesis 1 in the introductory verses to this passage with Paul's words "since the creation of the world" (1:20) and "the Creator" (1:25). Paul's use of "male" and "female" also follows the style of Genesis 1. From this, it is clear Paul is using the creation model in the background of his critique. In other words, the contrast he is making is between the "natural relations" God intended by creating them male and female for the purposes of opposite-sex pairing, and homosexuality as an

"unnatural" symptom of a fallen humanity that is rebelling from what God desires.<sup>41</sup>

However, let's assume the pro-gay interpretation is correct. Aren't we then compelled to allow the other sins Paul condemns in Romans 1:18-32 (idolatry, murder, etc.) as long as they come naturally to those who commit them?<sup>42</sup> That doesn't make sense. Romans 1:18-32 is a condemnation of people who have gotten off the true path that God intended. All the behaviors Paul mentions are symptomatic of a fallen state and a rebellion from what God desires. Therefore, to argue any of these sins can sometimes be acceptable to God is simply not reasonable.

Lastly, it should be noted that the pro-gay argument hinges on the premise that homosexuality is indeed "natural" for some individuals. As we have seen, there's no compelling scientific evidence homosexual is simply genetic. In view of this, there really is no substantive basis to the distinction they try to make between "natural" and "unnatural" homosexual relationships.

#### Argument 2

Pro-gay theologians claim Jesus must have been neutral or even favorable toward homosexuality because he never specifically condemned it.

There is no historical basis for claiming Jesus was indifferent about homosexuality. Instead, Jesus' alleged silence needs to be seen in the context of the strong opposition to homosexuality in the Hebrew Bible and throughout early Judaism. Jesus was not shy about challenging erroneous beliefs. Had he wanted to overturn the prevailing viewpoint about homosexuality, he certainly would have told his disciples to do so.<sup>43</sup> Hence, the most likely reason Jesus didn't specifically condemn homosexuality is he simply didn't need to.

The notion of Jesus' silence also needs to be qualified. According to Mark, Jesus spoke out against sexual immorality (porneia) and accepted the commandment against adultery (7:21-23, 10:19). Porneia was universally understood in Judaism to include same-sex intercourse and the commandment against adultery was treated as a broad prohibition of all forms of sexual practice that deviated from the Genesis creation model, including homosexuality.<sup>44</sup> So, Jesus' opposition to homosexuality would have been clear to the audiences he was addressing.

It is also evident from Mark 10:6-7 that Jesus saw the male-female model as God's will for sexual relationships. In this passage, Jesus defines God creative intent for human sexuality by citing Genesis 1:27 ("God made them male and female") and Genesis 2:24 ("For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"). By repeating the Genesis

verses, Jesus stresses that God's plan for sexual relating is a "one flesh" union of male and female.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, there other sinful behaviors Jesus was silent about, such as incest and bestiality. Should they be considered acceptable because Jesus never specifically prohibited them? Of course not. No one would condone them for that reason alone because there are ample teachings in the Bible that instruct us that those behaviors are sinful. Homosexuality should not be held to different standard. Jesus' silence in no way negates the fact that there are very specific prohibitions against it in both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>46</sup>

#### Argument 3

Pro-gay theologians claim Christians are under no obligation to follow the Old Testament prohibitions against homosexuality.

This argument assumes all the elements of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 17-26) are no longer binding, including those addressing sexual behavior. To address this issue, it is important to understand the relationship of Old and New Testament regulations. According to the traditional rule of interpretation, where there seems to be a difference in regulations, New Testament instructions supersede Old Testament instructions. However, where New Testament instructions do not overrule Old Testament instructions, those earlier regulations remain in force.<sup>47</sup>

For instance, the Old Testament prescribes contain dietary regulations, while the New Testament opens the door for Christians to eat all foods (e.g., Romans 14:19). Based on the traditional rules of interpretation, Christian practice follows the New Testament instructions which supersede the Old Testament regulations. Thus, while eating pork was an abomination in Old Testament times, it is no longer regarded as such.<sup>48</sup> This doesn't mean the earlier prohibition was wrong, it simply reflects a reinterpretation as part of our New Covenant through Christ.

In the case of homosexuality, there is remarkable consistency between the Old and New Testament condemnations. Thus, the prohibition remains in force.<sup>49</sup> The fact that Jesus never specifically commented on homosexuality is beside the point. It also doesn't matter that pro-gay theologians interpret certain New Testament passages as supporting homosexuality. Without a clear statement in Scripture lifting the prohibition against homosexuality, there is no basis for abandoning this teaching.

#### Argument 4

Pro-gay theologians say Christianity should change its position on homosexuality because society is more accepting of same-sex relationships.

At the heart of this argument is the contention that the prohibitions

in Scripture are relative and do not apply to all people and times. Ultimately, the choice we have to make is whether we take the Bible to be God's inerrant and unchanging word, or whether we believe we are free to interject our beliefs into the text to make it more compatible with contemporary culture. Obviously, these two approaches lead to very different conclusions about what the Bible says about homosexuality.

Ancient Israel, early Judaism and early Christianity never took the position they should alter their ethical standards because the broader culture took a more accepting view of homosexuality. In fact, they all lived in environments where same-sex intercourse was often more accepted than it is in our culture. Yet, rather than capitulating on their position and reinterpreting Scripture to fit the times, they honored God's commands and maintained a code of conduct that was contrary to the practices of those outside the community of God.<sup>50</sup>

Likewise, if we believe the Bible is God's word, we cannot simply pick and choose the ordinances we want to follow. Indeed, this is what holiness is all about—being set apart for the exclusive use of God rather than conforming to the ways of the world. The view of Scripture against same-sex intercourse is pervasive, absolute and strong, and it is a core countercultural vision for human sexuality.<sup>51</sup> It may not be popular, but to reinterpret Scripture to suite our personal beliefs or preferences simply rejects the authority of Scripture.

#### Argument 5

Pro-gay theologians claim homosexuality must be acceptable to God because there are "born-again" Christians who are gay.

This argument is illogical because it assumes if someone is a Christian, everything they do is pleasing to God. The Bible tells us everyone sins and falls short of what God desires (Romans 3:23). Christians are no exception. No matter how strong in their faith or confident they are doing God's will, a Christian may be openly sinning. Therefore, the fact a Christian may be engaging in homosexuality proves nothing.

Let us remember that salvation has nothing to do with our righteousness. Rather, it is gift from God through the redemption that came from Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-26). Thus, it is a waste of time to argue about whether God can be active in a homosexual's life, or whether homosexuals they can truly be born again, because none of us deserve God's favor. Rather, the question we need to be concerned with is whether homosexuality is right or wrong in God's eyes.<sup>52</sup>

This is why God gave us the Bible—so we have an objective standard by which to judge our actions. As we have seen, Scripture places clear boundaries on human sexual relationships. If a form of sexual relating is wrong, it remains wrong regardless of who is engaging

in that behavior. Ultimately, it doesn't matter what we think or feel about homosexuality if it is against God's ordinances in Scripture.

### Final Comments

The "big picture" of the Bible is not some vague concept of tolerance of every form of consensual sex, but rather the universal restriction of acceptable sexual activity to heterosexual marriage.<sup>53</sup> This is the only model of human sexuality that is consistently praised in the Bible. Nowhere does Scripture state, or even hint, that homosexual behavior is acceptable. In fact, not once is homosexuality described in anything but negative terms.<sup>54</sup>

The claim that the traditional Christian ethic towards homosexuality is wrong does not sit well with serious Christians. This is because the Bible verses dealing with the issue of homosexuality are so clear and specific, they defy misinterpretation. Indeed, you really have to twist Scripture and employ questionable interpretative methods to make it say otherwise. All of which leaves conservative Christians highly skeptical of pro-gay theologians claim to respect Biblical authority.<sup>55</sup>

There is a growing tendency in the Church where "niceness" is taking precedence over Scripture. This is the power of the pro-gay theology. It offers what appears to be a biblical way to accommodate homosexuality, thus putting Christians on the side that our culture considers to be the most tolerant. The question we need to ask is what does God want? For those who choose to stand firm in the teachings of Scripture, the answer is obvious. Such a view is merely "conforming to the world" and the opposite of the "transformation by the renewal of the mind" that God desires (Romans 12:2).

### CONCLUSION

Science is often used to argue that the Church needs to revise its teachings on homosexuality. Instead, what the data indicates is many of the presuppositions accepted as dogma by gay activists may themselves need to be revised. At the time of this writing there is no conclusive evidence that homosexuality is a genetically-inherited trait.<sup>56</sup> Thus, there is no scientific basis to the popular claim that homosexuality should be fully accepted as an innate and immutable birthright.

It is also apparent that the claim that God smiles on homosexuality is false. The traditional Christian opposition to homosexuality is firmly rooted in Scripture and pro-gay theologians have not met the burden of proof that is necessary to overturn that clear biblical witness. For Bible-believing Christians this means approval of homosexual behavior is not an act of love and tolerance as pro-gay theologians contend, but a harmful disregard of God's loving guidance for an abundant life.<sup>57</sup>

In making these statements, I do not condemn homosexuals. We

are all sinners and only God knows what is in our hearts and is capable of judging our actions. Nor do I contend that homosexuality is merely a willful disregard of God's ordinances. If homosexuality stems from a combination of nature and nurture as many researchers believe, it's more complicated than that. No, my intent is to merely speak these things in love so that we can respond to these issues appropriately as we strive to be imitators of Christ, putting off our old self and putting on our new self in righteousness and holiness (Ephes. 4:21-23).

Ultimately, what each of us has to decide is whether we have the right to define for ourselves what we can do, or whether God has the right to demand that we behave in certain ways. Sometimes God demands things of us that are painful and contrary to our personal desires. But, if God loves us so much that he handed over his very Son to die for us, how can we believe that what he demands of us is not in our best interest? The truth is that God is trying to transform us into the image of Jesus and loving God means surrendering to his will.<sup>58</sup> My prayer is that each of us will walk in a manner that is worthy of our calling.

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## Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

### Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

### What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

## Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.