

Sexual Orientation and the Bible

A Sunday School Class for Dayspring Baptist Church

led by Pastor Chris Fillingham

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Week: 1 – The Traditional Interpretation

6 Verses that reference same-sex acts:

- Genesis 19
- Leviticus 18:22
- Leviticus 20:13
- Romans 1:26-27
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- 1 Timothy 1:10

How to discern good from false teaching: Jesus, Sermon on the Mount

- Matthew 7:15-19: "... Every good tree produces good fruit, and every rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit. And a rotten tree can't produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, you will know them by their fruit."

Fruit of the Church's traditional teaching and interpretation:

- Psychological Damage:
 - Destructive Therapy know as "Reparative Therapy"– Failed. Leaders apologized for "false hope," pain and trauma it caused.¹
- Spiritual Damage:
 - Pushed people away from Jesus, God, the Church, and the gospel.
- Physical Damage:²
 - Center for American Progress Stats on Homeless Youth:
 - 2.4M-3.7M Homeless Youth in America. LGBTQ young people are vastly over represented. – About 40% of homeless youth identify as LBGTO
 - Why? – Most common reason cited as "Family Rejection" often religiously motivated. In the name of faithfulness to scripture, parents create despair and destroy their families.
 - Leaving home because of family rejection is the greatest predictor of ending up in the juvenile justice system for LGBTQ youth.
 - Family Acceptance Project:
 - There is a direct correlation between higher levels of rejection by family and higher levels of health and mental illness developing. The converse is also true.
 - Kids from highly rejecting families are:
 - more than 8x's as likely to attempt suicide at least once
 - more than 6x's as likely to report high levels of depression
 - more than 3x's as likely to use drugs
 - more than 3x's as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STD's

¹ Melissa Steffan, "Alan Chambers Apologizes to Gay Community, Exodus International to Shut Down," Gleanings, *Christianity Today*, June 21, 2013, referenced in Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 2.

² David Gushee, "Ending the Teaching of Contempt." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2o3ZGwzZvk&t=2544s>

How Traditionalists Connect the Biblical Dots³

by David Gushee

The essentials of the traditionalists' reading of scripture on same-sex relationships can be rendered by this formula, though of course there are variations:

Genesis 1-2 + Genesis 19 + Leviticus 18:22/20:13 + Judges 19 + Matthew 19:1-12/Mark 10:2-12 + Romans 1:26-27 + Corinthians 6:9/1 Timothy 1:10 [+ Ephesians 5:22-23 and all other biblical references to sex and marriage assuming or depicting male + female] = a clear biblical ban on same-sex relationships.

Here I summarize these references in as balanced a manner as I can:

Genesis 1-2 offers creation accounts in which 1) God makes humanity male and female and commands/blesses them to be fruitful and multiply and 2) God responds to the man's loneliness by creating woman, then giving her to the man, with the narrator connecting this to marriage.

Genesis 19 and Judges 19 both tell stories of perverse local city men seeking to sexually assault male guests receiving hospitality in local households.

Leviticus 18:22 commands men not to lie with men as with women; Leviticus 20:13 prescribes the death penalty for this offense. The Hebrew word *toevah* used in these passages has generally been translated as "abomination."

Matthew 19:1-12/Mark 10:2-12 are the main texts depicting Jesus responding to questions about the morality of men divorcing their wives. He appeals to the two creation texts noted above to ground his rigorous response, setting strict limits on initiating divorce. A teaching about eunuchs is appended to the end of Matthew's version.

Romans 1:26-27 is part of an argument Paul is making about why everyone needs the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. Possibly in an effort to illustrate the idolatry and sinfulness of the Gentile part of the human community, Paul apparently makes negative reference to same-sex sexual acts on the part of both men and women. Later, he lists 21 further illustrations.

1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 both offer vice lists as part of moral exhortations to Christian living. The Greek words *malakoi* and especially Paul's neologism *arsenokoitai*, used in these passages, have sometimes been translated into English as "homosexuals" (*New American Standard Bible*) or "sodomites" (*New Revised Standard Version*). These translations, though they vary widely in many English Bibles, have been formative for many Christians.

Other texts in which it is solely men and women having sex, and men and women marrying, could also be and sometimes are listed on the traditionalist side.

If we take the most commonly cited texts on the issue from the traditionalist side, they are derived from 11 of the 1,189 chapters in the Bible. But it is not unusual to hear the broader claim that whenever the Bible mentions licit sex, it is exclusively heterosexual.

³ David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind* (Canton: Read The Spirit Books 2015), pp. 54-56.