

A Christian Perspective on Homosexuality

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SUMMARY

A frank attempt to deal with the question of whether a homosexual lifestyle is immoral. First published in *Hard Questions, Real Answers* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003). Medical data updated by Dr. Peter May MRCGP, 2019.

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

One of the most volatile and important issues facing the Church today is the question of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. The Church cannot duck this question. The collision between LGBT concerns and concerns of religious freedom, exemplified in the case of the Colorado baker who refused on grounds of conscience to supply a wedding cake carrying a message endorsing same sex marriage, along with the U.S. Supreme Court's re-definition of "marriage" to include same sex unions, have thrust this question to the front and center of American culture.

Christians who deny the legitimacy of a homosexual lifestyle are routinely denounced as homophobic, intolerant, even hateful. There is thus tremendous intimidation concerning this issue. Some churches have moved away from the historic Christian position and endorsed the homosexual lifestyle and even ordain those who practice it to serve as their ministers.

This shift is occurring not only in liberal churches. Evangelicals Concerned is a group of people who are to all appearances born-again, Bible-believing Christians, but also practicing homosexuals. They claim that the Bible doesn't forbid homosexual activity or that its commands aren't valid for today, but were just a reflection of the culture in which the Bible was written. These persons can be orthodox about Jesus and every other area of Christian teaching; but they think that it's biblically permissible to be a practicing homosexual. I recall hearing one New Testament scholar at a professional conference relate the following story of his speaking at one of their meetings:

"Folks were really concerned about what you were going to say," his host said with obvious relief after the meeting.

"Why?" he asked in surprise. "You know I'm not homophobic!"

"Oh, no, that wasn't the concern," his host reassured him. "They were afraid you'd be too historical-

critical!”

So who are we to say that these apparently earnest Christians are wrong?

Now that’s a *very* good question. Who are we to say that they are wrong? But this question raises an even deeper question, which we’ve got to answer first: do right and wrong really exist? Before you can determine *what* is right and wrong, you have to know that there really *is* right and wrong.

Finding the Basis of Right and Wrong

Well, what is the basis for saying that right and wrong exist, that there really is a difference between these two? Traditionally, the answer has been that moral values are based in God. God is by His very nature perfectly holy and good. He is just, loving, patient, merciful, generous—all that is good comes from Him and is a reflection of His character. Now God’s perfectly good nature is expressed toward us in the form of moral commandments, which constitute our moral duties. For example, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength,” “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” “You shall not murder, steal, or commit adultery.” These actions are right or wrong based on God’s commandments, and God’s commandments are not arbitrary but flow from His perfect nature.

This is the Christian understanding of right and wrong. There really is such a being as God, who created the world and made us to know Him. He really has commanded certain things. We really are morally obligated to do certain things (and not to do others). Morality isn’t just in your mind. It’s real. When we fail to keep God’s commandments, we really are morally guilty before Him and need His forgiveness. The problem isn’t just that we *feel* guilty; we really *are* guilty, regardless of how we feel. I might not *feel* guilty because I have an insensitive conscience, one that’s dulled by sin; but if I’ve broken God’s law, I *am* guilty, regardless of how I feel.

So, for example, if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in brainwashing or exterminating everyone who disagreed with them, so that everybody would think the Holocaust had been good, it would still have been wrong, because God says it is wrong, regardless of human opinion. Morality is based in God, and so real right and wrong exist and are unaffected by human opinions.

I’ve emphasized this point because it’s so foreign to what many people in our society think today. So many people think of right and wrong, not as matters of *fact*, but as matters of *taste*. For example, there isn’t any objective fact that *broccoli tastes good*. It tastes good to some people, but tastes bad to others. It may taste bad to you, but it tastes good to me! People think it’s the same with moral values. Something may seem wrong to you, but right to me. There isn’t any real right or

wrong. It's just a matter of opinion.

Now if there is no God, then I think these people are absolutely correct. In the absence of God everything becomes relative. Right and wrong become relative to different cultures and societies. Without God who is to say that one culture's values are better than another's? Who's to say who is right and who is wrong? Where do right and wrong come from? Richard Taylor, a prominent American philosopher—and not a Christian by the way—, makes this point very forcefully. Look carefully at what he says:

The idea of . . . *moral* obligation is clear enough, provided that reference to some lawmaker higher . . . than those of the state is understood. In other words, our moral obligations can . . . be understood as those that are imposed by God. . . . But what if this higher-than-human lawgiver is no longer taken into account? Does the concept of a moral obligation . . . still make sense?^[1]

Taylor thinks the answer is “No.” I quote: “The concept of moral obligation is unintelligible apart from the idea of God. The words remain, but their meaning is gone.”^[2] He goes on to say:

The modern age, more or less repudiating the idea of a divine lawgiver, has nevertheless tried to retain the ideas of moral right and wrong, without noticing that in casting God aside they have also abolished the meaningfulness of right and wrong as well. Thus, even educated persons sometimes declare that such things as war, or abortion, or the violation of certain human rights are morally wrong, and they imagine that they have said something true and meaningful. Educated people do not need to be told, however, that questions such as these have never been answered outside of religion.^[3]

Do you catch what even this non-Christian philosopher is saying? If there is no God, no divine lawgiver, then there is no moral law. If there is no moral law, then there is no real right and wrong. Right and wrong are just human customs and conventions that vary from society to society. There is no transcendent vantage point from which they are to be judged. Even if everyone agreed on such customs and conventions, they would still be no more than human inventions, arising perhaps from biological evolution and societal conditioning..

So if God does not exist, objective right and wrong do not exist either. Anything goes, including homosexual behavior. So one of the best ways to defend the legitimacy of the homosexual lifestyle is to become an atheist. But the problem is that many defenders of a homosexual lifestyle don't want to become atheists. In particular, they do want to affirm that right and wrong exist. So you frequently hear them making moral judgements, for example: “It is wrong to discriminate against homosexuals.” And these moral judgements aren't meant to be just relative to a culture or society.

They would condemn a society like Nazi Germany which imprisoned homosexuals in concentration camps, along with Jews and other alleged undesirables. When Colorado passed an amendment a few years ago prohibiting special civil rights for homosexuals, Barbara Streisand called for a boycott of the state, saying, “The moral climate in Colorado has become unacceptable.”

But we’ve seen that these kinds of value judgements cannot be meaningfully made unless God exists. If God does not exist, anything goes, including discrimination and persecution of homosexuals. But it doesn’t stop there: murder, rape, torture, child abuse—none of these things would be wrong, because without God objective right and wrong do not exist. Everything is permitted.

So if we want to be able to make moral judgements about what is right or wrong, we’ve got to affirm that God exists. But then the same question we started with—“Who are you to say that a homosexual lifestyle is wrong?”—can be posed to the gay activist: “Who are you to say that a homosexual lifestyle is right?” If God exists, then we cannot ignore what *He* has to say about the subject. The correct answer to the “Who are you. . . ?” question is to say, “Me? I’m nobody! God determines what’s right and wrong, and I’m just interested in learning and obeying what He says.”

So let me recap what we’ve seen so far. The question of the legitimacy of the homosexual lifestyle is a question of what God has to say about it. If there is no God, then there is no right and wrong, and it doesn’t make any difference what lifestyle you choose—the persecutor of homosexuals is morally equivalent to the advocate of homosexuality. Everything is relative and subjective. But if God does exist, we can no longer proceed just on the basis of our own opinions. We have to find out what God thinks on the issue.

The Argument Stated

So how do you find out what God thinks? The Christian says, you look in the Bible. And the Bible tells us that God forbids homosexual acts. Therefore, they are wrong.

So basically the reasoning goes like this:

- (1) We are all obligated to do God’s will.
- (2) God’s will is expressed in the Bible.
- (3) The Bible forbids homosexual behavior.
- (4) Therefore, homosexual behavior is against God’s will, or is wrong.

Now if someone is going to resist this reasoning, he's got to deny either that (2) God's will is expressed in the Bible or else that (3) the Bible forbids homosexual behavior.

Does the Bible Forbid Homosexual Behavior?

Let's look at point (3) first: Does the Bible in fact forbid homosexual behavior?^[4] Now notice how I put that question. I did not ask, does the Bible forbid homosexuality, but rather, does the Bible forbid homosexual *behavior*? This is an important distinction. Being homosexual is a state or an orientation; a person who has a homosexual orientation might not ever express that orientation in actions. By contrast, a person may engage in homosexual acts even if he has a heterosexual orientation. Now what the Bible condemns is homosexual actions or behavior, not having a homosexual orientation. The idea of a person's being a homosexual by orientation is a feature of modern psychology and may have been unknown to people in the ancient world. What they were familiar with was homosexual acts, and that is what the Bible forbids.

Now this has enormous implications. For one thing, it means that the whole debate about whether homosexuality is something you were born with or is a result of how you were raised really doesn't matter in the end. The important thing is not how you *got* your orientation, but what you *do* with it. Some defenders of a homosexual lifestyle are very anxious to prove that your genes, not your upbringing, determine if you're homosexual because then homosexual behavior is normal and right. But this conclusion doesn't follow at all. Just because you're genetically disposed to some behavior doesn't mean that behavior is morally right. To give an example, some researchers suspect there may be a gene which predisposes some people to alcoholism. Does that mean that it's all right for someone with such predisposition to go ahead and drink to his heart's content and become an alcoholic? Obviously not! If anything, it ought to alert him to *abstain* from alcohol so as to prevent this from happening. Now the sober truth of the matter is that we don't fully understand the roles of heredity and environment in producing a homosexual orientation. But that doesn't really matter. Even if homosexuality were completely genetic, that fact alone wouldn't imply that such a lifestyle is morally acceptable and should be indulged.

If any case, whether a homosexual orientation results from genetics or upbringing, people don't generally choose to be homosexual. Many homosexuals testify how agonizing it is to find oneself with these desires and to fight against them, and they'll tell you they would never choose to be that way. And the Bible doesn't condemn a person because he has a homosexual orientation. What it condemns is homosexual acts.

So it is perfectly possible to be a homosexual and be a born-again, Spirit-filled Christian. Just as an alcoholic who is dry will still stand up at an AA meeting and say, "I am an alcoholic," so a

homosexual who is living straight and keeping himself pure ought to be able to stand up in a Christian prayer meeting and say, "I am a homosexual. But by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, I'm living chastely for Christ." And I hope we'd have the courage and love to welcome him or her as a brother or sister in Christ.

So, once more, the question is: Does the Bible forbid homosexual behavior? Well, I've already said that it does. The Bible is so realistic! You might not expect it to mention a topic like homosexual behavior, but in fact there are six places in the Bible—three in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament—where this issue is directly addressed—not to mention all the passages dealing with marriage and sexuality which have implications for this issue. In all six of these passages homosexual acts are unequivocally condemned.

In Leviticus 18.22 it says that it is an abomination for a man to lie with another man as with a woman. In Lev. 20.13 the death penalty is prescribed in Israel for such an act, along with adultery, incest, and bestiality. Now sometimes homosexual advocates make light of these prohibitions by comparing them to prohibitions in the Old Testament against having contact with unclean animals like pigs. Just as Christians today don't obey all of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, so, they say, we don't have to obey the prohibitions of homosexual actions. But the problem with this argument is that the New Testament reaffirms the validity of the Old Testament prohibitions of homosexual behavior, as we'll see below. This shows they were not just part of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, which were done away with, but were part of God's everlasting moral law. Homosexual behavior is in God's sight a serious sin. The third place where homosexual acts are mentioned in the Old Testament is the horrifying story in Genesis 19 of the attempted gang rape of Lot's visitors by the men of Sodom, from which our word *sodomy* derives. God destroyed the city of Sodom because of their wickedness.

Now if this weren't enough, the New Testament also forbids homosexual behavior. In I Cor. 6.9-10 Paul writes, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God." The words in the list translated "men who practice homosexuality" refer in Greek literature to the passive and the active partners in male homosexual intercourse. (As I said, the Bible is very realistic!) The second of these two words is also listed in I Tim. 1.10 along with fornicators, slave traders, liars, and murderers as "contrary to the sound teaching of the Gospel." The most lengthy treatment of homosexual activity comes in Romans 1.24-28. Here Paul talks about how people have turned away from the Creator God and begun to worship instead false gods of their own making. He says,

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Liberal scholars have done acrobatics to try to explain away the clear sense of these verses. Some have said that Paul is only condemning the pagan practice of men's sexually exploiting young boys. But such an interpretation is obviously wrong, since Paul says in verses 24 and 27 that these homosexual acts by men were committed "with one another" and in verse 26 he speaks of lesbian homosexual acts as well. Other scholars have said that Paul is only condemning heterosexuals who engage in homosexual acts, not homosexuals who do. But this interpretation is contrived and anachronistic. We've already said that it was only in modern times that the idea of homosexual or heterosexual *orientation* developed. What Paul is condemning is homosexual acts, regardless of orientation. Given the Old Testament background to this passage as well as what Paul says in I Cor. 6.9-10 and I Tim. 1.10, it is clear that Paul is here forbidding all such acts. He sees this behavior as the evidence of a corrupted mind which has turned away from God and been abandoned by Him to moral degeneracy.

So the Bible is very forthright and clear when it comes to homosexual behavior. It is contrary to God's design and is sin. Even if there weren't all these explicit passages dealing with homosexual acts, such acts would still be forbidden under the commandment "You shall not commit adultery." God's plan for human sexual activity is that it is reserved for heterosexual marriage: any sexual activity outside of the security of the marriage bond—whether pre-marital sex or extra-marital sex, whether heterosexual or homosexual—is forbidden. Sex is designed by God for marriage.

Someone might say that if God intended sex for marriage, then just ratify same sex marriage and then those who engage in such activity would not be committing adultery! But this suggestion seriously misunderstands God's intention for marriage. The creation story in Genesis tells of how God made woman as a suitable mate for man, his perfect, God-given complement. Then it says, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh." This is God's pattern for marriage, and in the New Testament Paul quotes this very passage and then says, "This is a great mystery and I am applying it to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5.32). Paul says that the union between a man and his wife is a living symbol of the unity of Christ with his people, the Church. When we think about this, we can see what a terrible sacrilege, what a mockery of God's plan, a homosexual union is. It flies in the face of God's

intention for humanity from the moment of creation.

The above also shows how frivolous it is when some homosexual advocates say, “Jesus never condemned homosexual behavior, so why should we?” Jesus did not specifically mention many things which we know to be wrong, like bestiality or torture, but that doesn’t mean he *approved* of them. What Jesus does do is quote from Genesis to affirm God’s pattern for marriage as the basis for his own teaching on divorce. In Mark 10.6-8, He says, “From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become one flesh. Consequently, they are no longer two, but one flesh.” For two men to become one flesh in homosexual intercourse would be a violation of God’s created order and intent. He created man and woman to be indissolubly united in marriage, not two men or two women.

To recap, then, the Bible clearly and consistently forbids homosexual activity. So if God’s will is expressed in the Bible, it follows that homosexual behavior is against God’s will.

Is God’s Will Expressed in the Bible?

But suppose someone denies point (2) that God’s will is expressed in the Bible. Suppose he says that the prohibitions against homosexual behavior were valid for that time and that culture but are no longer valid today. After all, most of us would probably agree that certain commands in the Bible are relative to the culture. For example, the Bible says that Christian women should not wear jewelry and men should not have long hair. But most of us would say that while these commands do have a timelessly valid core—like, say, the injunction to dress modestly—that core principle may be differently expressed in different cultures. In the same way, some people say that the Bible’s prohibitions against homosexual behavior are no longer valid for our day and age.

But I think this objection represents a serious misunderstanding. There’s no evidence that Paul’s commands concerning homosexual acts are culturally relative. Far from being a reflection of the culture in which he wrote, Paul’s commands were downright counter-cultural! Homosexual activity was as widespread in ancient Greek and Roman society as it is today in the U.S., and yet Paul stood up against the culture and opposed it. More importantly, we’ve seen that the Bible’s prohibitions against homosexual activity are rooted, not in culture, but in the God-given pattern for marriage established at creation. You can’t deny that the Bible’s forbidding homosexual relations expresses God’s will unless you also reject that marriage itself expresses God’s will.

Well, suppose someone goes the whole way and says, “I believe in God, but not the God of the Bible. So I don’t believe the Bible expresses God’s will.” What do you say to such a person?

It seems to me that there are two ways to respond. First, you could try to show that God has revealed Himself in the Bible. This is the task of Christian Apologetics. You could talk about the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus or fulfilled prophecy. Scripture actually commands us as believers to have a such defense ready to share with anyone who should ask us about why we believe as we do (I Pet.3.15).

Or secondly, you could try to show that homosexual behavior is wrong by appealing to generally accepted moral truths (grounded in God) which even people who don't believe in the Bible accept. While this approach is more difficult, nevertheless I think that it is crucial if we as Christians are to have an impact on our contemporary culture. We are living in a society which is more and more post-Christian, more and more secular. We can't just appeal to the Bible if we're going to influence our culture because most people don't believe in the Bible anymore. We need to give reasons which have a broader appeal.

A Non-Sectarian Appeal: The Damaging Effects of a Homosexual Lifestyle

For example, I think many people would agree with the principle that it's wrong to engage in self-destructive behavior. For such behavior destroys a human being who is inherently valuable. Thus, many people, I think, would say that it's wrong to become an alcoholic or a chain-smoker. They would say that it's good to eat right and stay fit. Moreover, I think almost everybody would agree with the principle that it's wrong to engage in behavior that harms another person unjustifiably. For example, we restrict smoking to certain areas or ban it altogether so other people won't have to inhale second-hand smoke, and we pass laws against drunk driving so innocent people won't be hurt. Almost everybody agrees that in the absence of some overriding moral justification you have no right to engage in a behavior that is destructive to another human being.

But it's not hard to show that homosexual behavior carries enormous risks of damage to individuals and their partners. These facts are not widely publicized; it has been called "The Hidden Epidemic."^[5] Hollywood, Gay Pride celebrations, and the media are relentlessly bent on putting a happy face on homosexuality, whereas in fact it is a lifestyle with very real dangers and can be just as addictive and destructive as alcoholism or smoking. Surely everyone "should have the opportunity to make choices that lead to health and wellness."^[6] So we all need to be informed about these risks.

Greater Promiscuity?

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in 2017 that following a historically low level in 2001, rates of early syphilis infection have increased almost every year since, increasing 10.5% during 2016-2017. Men accounted for almost 90% of all cases, 68% being in

men who have sex with men (MSM), where that information was known. Where HIV status was also known, 45% of these MSM were HIV positive.

Why should this happen? Are homosexuals more promiscuous than heterosexuals? A recent study revealed several contributing factors.^[7] MSM are more likely to start sexual relationships at an earlier age and are also more likely to continue making new partnerships at a later age. They have an increased incidence of forming relationships with significantly older partners, who are at greater risk of carrying sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They are two or three times more likely to report concurrent partnerships than heterosexuals. When measured in terms of the number of new partners in the previous year, the study found that of MSMs aged 18-24yrs, 86% had a new partnership in the previous year, compared with 56% of heterosexuals. However, for those aged 35-39yrs, the comparable figures were 72% of MSMs, compared to 21% of heterosexuals. The number of MSMs who experience lifelong, monogamous fidelity to a partner

appears to be so small as to be almost zero.

Loneliness

An important consequence of multiple partnerships is loneliness in the long term. For homosexuals, this is aggravated in old age by the absence of children and the web of close family bonds.

Mental Disorders, Drug and Alcohol Use

Associated with promiscuity and loneliness, international studies report various mental disorders occur significantly more often among homosexuals. These include anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, alcoholism and drug dependence. One detailed study^[8] showed homosexuals to be, in general, *twice as likely* to be depressed, to suffer phobic disorders, to be dependent on drugs, to be dependent on alcohol, to have experienced self-harm and to have needed psychiatric help than the general population, while their happiness ratings were halved.

This study also looked at discrimination to see if these mental health problems could be attributed in part to social stigma. However, they found “the absolute level of discrimination was comparatively low.” An interesting and unexpected finding was that the heterosexual group also reported discrimination against them on the basis of their sexual orientation, albeit at a reduced prevalence. These findings are significant, as the mental health problems in the gay community are often attributed to social stigma and “minority stress.” Such stresses no doubt exist, but other lifestyle factors appear to be far more damaging to their well-being.

Attempted Suicide

It is difficult to know how many suicides are directly related to homosexuality, as sexual orientation is not recorded on death certificates. However, we do know from an extensive study that attempted suicide among homosexuals is twice as common as for heterosexuals.^[9]

Risks to Physical Health

Another well-kept secret is how physically dangerous homosexual behavior can be. Our bodies, male and female, are designed for sexual intercourse in a way that two male bodies are not. The anal sphincter can be torn and permanently damaged by trauma leading to chronic incontinence, especially evident when suffering from diarrhea. The lining of the rectum is very thin and vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections. The human papilloma virus (HPV) increases the risk of anal cancer and is the cause of nearly all cervical cancer. Other risk factors for this include having many sexual partners. Every year in USA, more than 33,000 men and women are diagnosed with cancers caused by HPV^[10] and in recent years there has been a steep rise in the incidence of colorectal cancer in young adults.

In general, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are greatly increased in the homosexual population. These include bacterial infections like gonorrhea and syphilis.

As we have noted, prior to 2001 syphilis had been in steady decline across the western world. According to the CDC, the current change was primarily attributable to increases among men and, specifically to men who have sex with men (MSM),^[11] among whom there are also comparable increases in gonorrhea and HIV.^[12] These have been attributed to high risk behavior among MSM^[13], while the incidence of these diseases among heterosexuals has remained stable.

The CDC concluded that the *majority* of primary and secondary cases of syphilis occurred among MSM. To understand the significance of this statement, we need to realize that MSM account for less than 2% of the population, yet this very small group accounts for more than 50% of all the cases of syphilis.

Syphilis is important because it is not easily diagnosed and often remains untreated. It may present as a sore that appears to get better spontaneously but then it quietly affects other parts of the body, including the brain and nervous system. Furthermore, it can be passed down to new born children. Since 2013, the rate of this congenital syphilis has increased each year. In 2017, there were 918 reported cases in U.S., including 64 syphilitic stillbirths and 13 infant deaths, a 43.8% increase over 2016, and a 153% increase over 2013.^[14]

Gonorrhea has reached epidemic levels in the gay community, and there are growing fears that these bacteria will become immune to all known antibiotics. Chlamydia is the commonest STI in the U.S. and accounts for almost half of all STIs in England, especially among young adults. It can cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy, arthritis, and an increased risk of contracting HIV.

Life Expectation

Due to the dramatic advances in treating HIV infections, and the availability of HPV and HBV vaccinations, life expectation in the LGBT community has improved significantly. It was commonly stated early in this millennium that gay and bisexual men could expect to die prematurely by some 20 years, with AIDS due to HIV being the biggest killer. If that virus is detected early, it can now be treated, and life expectation may come nearer to normal. But that is a big “if.” Many people infected with HIV live for years before it is ever suspected, let alone diagnosed and treated. Currently, figures for overall life-expectancy among homosexuals are hotly disputed, while preventive measures and treatments to improve their life-expectancy consume huge amounts of money from Health Care budgets. The estimated lifetime treatment for HIV per person in the U.S. costs \$379,668 in 2010.^[15] In the UK in 2015, it was £380,000 per person.^[16] To look at it another way, to prevent *just one person* from being infected with HIV would save the health service that sum of money.

So a very good case can be made out on the basis of generally accepted moral principles that homosexual behavior should be avoided. It is likely to be injurious to both the individuals, their partners, and the wider community. Thus, wholly apart from the Bible’s prohibitions, there are sound medical and social reasons to regard homosexual activity as being wrong due to the damage it may inflict on oneself or others.

Now this has very important implications for public policy concerning homosexual behavior. Public laws and policies are based on generally accepted moral principles. That’s why, for example, we have laws regulating the sale of alcohol in various ways or laws prohibiting gambling or regulations which restrict smoking. These restrictions on individual freedom are imposed for the general good.

In some cases, laws concerning homosexual activity might be proposed, and Christians will have to think hard about these on an individual basis. For example, a Christian might see good reason to support laws guaranteeing equal opportunities in buying or renting housing to persons who are homosexuals. But I could well imagine that a Christian might oppose a bill granting special civil rights for homosexuals beyond what is accorded to all persons generally. For some jobs might be inappropriate for homosexual persons. For example, would you want a practicing lesbian to be your daughter’s physical education teacher at school? Would you want your son’s coach to be a

practicing homosexual, who would be in the locker room and showers with the boys? I, for one, wouldn't support such a bill, which could force public schools to hire individuals for positions where children might be put at risk.

A host of questions arise. Should health classes in public schools be required to teach that homosexuality is a normal, healthy, and legitimate lifestyle? Surely not! Should inquisitive young children be encouraged to imagine and fantasize about sexual functions? Should they be given reading like *Heather has Two Mommies*? Should homosexual unions be recognized as being on a legal par with heterosexual marriages? Should homosexual couples be allowed to adopt children, denying them an upbringing with both male and female adoptive parents? In all these cases, one might argue for restrictions on the basis of the general public good and health. This is not a matter of imposing one's personal values on others, since it is based on the same general moral principles that are used, for example, to ban drug use or pass gun laws. Liberty does not mean the license to engage in actions that harm other people.

To sum up, we've seen, first, that right and wrong are real because they are based in God. So if we want to find out what is right or wrong, we should look at what the Scriptures say about it. Second, we saw that the Bible consistently and clearly forbids homosexual acts, just as it does all sexual acts outside marriage. Third, we saw that the Bible's prohibition of such behavior can't be explained away as just the reflection of the time and culture in which it was written, because it is grounded in God's divine plan for man-woman marriage, as Jesus affirmed and made explicitly clear.^{[17](#)} Moreover, even apart from the Bible, there are generally accepted moral principles which imply that homosexual behavior is wrong.

Now what practical application does all this have for us as individuals?

First, if you are a homosexual or feel such inclinations, while you did not choose those *desires*, as a Christian you must not choose those *behaviors* or put yourself in the way of those temptations by the company you keep, the films you choose to watch, or the fantasies you allow yourself to indulge in. Temptations, by definition, are to be resisted. If you are a Christian and single, you should practice abstinence from all sexual activity. This is difficult, but really what God is asking you to do is the same thing that He requires of *all* single people. That means not only keeping your body pure but especially your mind. Just as heterosexual people should avoid pornography, you, too, need to keep your thought-life clean. Resist the temptation to rationalize sin by saying, "God made me this way." God has made it very clear that He does not want you to indulge sexual desires outside of heterosexual marriage, but to honor Him by keeping your mind and body pure. It has been wisely said that the body is not a playground for sexual amusement but a temple in which to worship and serve God.^{[18](#)}

Finally, if you are troubled by unwanted sexual desires, seek professional Christian counselling. Sexual desires are by nature very addictive. Whether those desires are adulterous, pornographic, or homosexual, in a country which respects freedom of speech, you should be free to pursue “talking-therapies” to help you. With time and effort, it may well be possible for you to come to enjoy normal, heterosexual relationships with your spouse.

Recent statistics show that 96.6% of adults identify as straight, 1.6% identify as gay or lesbian and 0.7% identify as bisexual, while 1.1% “don’t know”.^[19] This implies that some 3% of the population do not identify as straight, but only half that number identify as gay or lesbian, with perhaps 1% as gay.

There is always hope for change. Sexual “orientation” is no longer thought to be fixed and is not rigidly determined by our genetic makeup. There is no “gay gene.”^{[20][21]} Homosexual persons can develop heterosexual desires, just as heterosexuals, who have had a wife and children, can develop homosexual desires. For many people, their desires become fluid, which calls into question the whole idea of having a fixed “orientation.” Neuroscientists are now telling us that nerve connections in the brain remain “plastic” throughout adult life. This means that they are changing: new cells and connecting pathways are developing all the time. We all know this happens in young people, as evidenced by the way they can master a musical instrument, learn a new language, or develop computer skills. We now know that this potential for change in the neuro-pathways of the brain continues to some extent throughout life. This is crucial for adolescent learning when their brains develop rapidly. The neurological connections, emotional responses, and patterns laid down and reinforced during adolescence will have a lasting impact -- for good or ill. So adolescents need to guard themselves through this most vulnerable time. When homosexual patterning is laid down early before heterosexual patterning has been established, subsequent change may prove a real struggle, but it remains a possibility for those who are committed to change.

For those of us who are heterosexual, we need to remember that being homosexual, as such, is no sin. Most homosexuals did not consciously choose such an orientation of their desires and many would like to change their desires if they could. We need to welcome and lovingly support Christian brothers and sisters who are struggling with these problems and not dismiss them when they experience a setback. As the apostle Paul put it, we are to “weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15). We are not called to stand in judgement on *anyone* but to extend God’s love, welcome, and patient friendship to everyone. Vulgar words or jokes about homosexuals should never pass the lips of a Christian. If you find yourself feeling glad when some affliction befalls a homosexual person or you find feelings of hatred welling up in your heart toward homosexual people, then you need to reflect long and hard on the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew: “it will be more tolerable

on the Day of Judgement for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you” (Mt. 10.15; 11.24).

^[1] Richard Taylor, *Ethics, Faith, and Reason* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), pp. 83-4.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

^[4] For a thorough treatment of this question, see Thomas Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).

^[5] *The Hidden Epidemic: Confronting Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Institute of Med. (US) 1997

^[6] Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Overview of STDs, 2017.

^[7] Glick S. Et al. *A comparison of sexual behaviour patterns among men who have sex with men and heterosexual men and women*. J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr 2012 May 1; 60(1): 83-90.

^[8] Chakrabarty A. et al. *Mental health of the non-heterosexual population of England*. BJP 2011, 198:143-148.

^[9] King et al. *A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people*. BMC Psychiatry 2008; 8:70

^[10] American Cancer Society website.

^[11] CDC National Overview of STDs, 2017.

^[12] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Annual epidemiological report for 2016.

Available from: <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/annual-epidemiological-reports-2016>.

^[13] Jansen K et al, Increased incidence of syphilis in men who have sex with men and risk

management strategies, Germany 2015 Euro Surveill.2016 Oct 27:21(43)

^[14] CDC National Overview of STDs 2017

^[15] <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/programresources/guidance/costeffectiveness/index.htm>

^[16] <http://www.aidsmap.com/news/may-2015/high-lifetime-costs-treating-hiv-show-importance-investing-prevention>

^[17] Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9.

^[18] See 2 Cor 6:16-18.

^[19] National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) 2013, collected from 34,557 adults aged 18+

^[20] Melinda C.Mills. *How do genes affect same-sex behaviour?* Science 30 August 2019.Vol 365. Issue 6456, p869 <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6456/869.full>

^[21] Ganna A et al. *Large-scale GWAS reveals insights into the genetic architecture of same-sex sexual behaviour.* Science 30 Aug 2019. Vol 365, Issue 6456, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6456/eaat7693>