

TOPIC XXV - HOMOSEXUALITY

By Bob Stewart

Introduction

In our day and age (the 21st Century) homosexuality is a topic and a life style that engenders controversy, emotions and viewpoints from every angle and side. Homosexual activity, according to the written documents we have available, has been within the human drama for over five thousand years covering every continent and culture. Depending on the period of time, the culture, and the religious environment, those engaging in homosexual relations have experienced everything from execution to public acceptance and sometimes even applause. These responses are still evident in the world today.

Even within the Christian Church all of these levels and views of this subject are evident. It begs the question(s); As Christians with a Biblical ethic and theological perspective, how are we to grapple with this subject and the people who are actively engaged in it, even within the church? What should our thoughts be about the subject and what should our approach be toward those in the homosexual community and toward those who either support it or condemn it? What does the Bible say about it and what does it not say about it?

These are just a few of the questions raised in this study. As its author, I cannot speak from the view of the homosexual¹ but my only interest is to teach Christian believers what I find the Scripture teaches and addresses on this subject. I have been in the company of both "homosexual" and "straight" individuals with positive and negative experiences in both cases. I can say with some confidence that sexual orientation may or may not play a role in the character or public persona of any individual whether it be one manner or another. It depends on the person him or herself. I speak here of general interaction in a public or social context. What goes on privately is another matter.

However, I also find that homosexual and all non-heterosexual² activity to be an aberration from what is generally thought of as "normal," "natural" ("ordained by nature" or "God") sexual behavior. To attempt to call any of this "natural" forces us to redefine "nature" or "natural" and the purpose of for which the physiological

¹ I use this term and it includes the many terms now used to describe various aspects of this subject including, LGBTQ+, and any other terms used of non-heterosexual or straight sexual conduct. Further study may be amply found online at many sites.

² Such as bestiality or sodomy.

and biological structure of the genders is obviously created for.

But that is not the purpose of this study, just my position.

I. The Biblical position.

The following passages direct themselves to homosexuality and comment on this practice. For those practicing this activity, they are not welcome passages.

Genesis 19:4 ff. is the first instance in the Bible mentioned of overt homosexual activity and it is met with rejection and judgment. This is the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. This account is used several times in the Bible as a warning against immorality and the consequences thereof.³

In the Old Testament, prohibitions against this behavior and terms for its practice are found in: Leviticus 18:22-23 (where it is called an abomination); Leviticus 20:13; (where it is called detestable and those so engaged shall be put to death).

My opinion as to why this particular behavior is condemned may have to do with the nature of God Himself. In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created mankind in His own image, male and female. And He did so for the purpose of them procreating and having children thus continuing the creation process, enjoying and ruling over the creation God made for them. In committing sexual acts outside of this design is tantamount to denying the nature of God and His design and intention in a creation that reflects His own nature. Thus it is despicable in God's sight and an insult to Him.⁴ This is borne out in the New Testament in Romans 1:24-28,

24: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25: For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26: For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27: and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the

³ See: Isaiah 3:9; Ezekiel 16:49-50; Jude 1:7;

⁴ Genesis 13:13 notes, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD." Not against others but the Lord Himself.

due penalty of their error. 28: And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...."

"Gave them over" does not mean that God somehow caused them to engage in this behavior, it simply means He watched it happen and did not prevent it. This was the will and desire of people to whom He gave free will and so it occurred without interference from God.

New Testament passages addressing this subject are:

I Corinthians 6:9-10,

9: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10: nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."

I Timothy 1:8-10,

8: "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9: realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10: and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching..."

Jude 1:7,

7: "...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire."

Now there should be no question that this behavior is condemned by God in the Scriptures. However, those engaged in this conduct will inevitably find excuses, rationales, and all the "buts" to negate this simple fact. They will say things like, "It is not worse than the other sins mentioned in these passages." And that is true. But the motive for saying such things is to justify their behavior so as to not fall under the condemnation of it. This is like justifying bad behavior by pointing to

other bad behavior. But all other forms of what the scriptures call ungodly or sinful behavior falls within this attitude as well.⁵ Now, there are already new "translations" of the Bible on sale rewriting it so that both gender identification and sexual abominations are eradicated.⁶

The Apostle Paul is also clear about other things regarding this and the other unrighteous conduct he lists, but continues to say in I Corinthians 6:11 for example, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

He continues on saying,

12: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. 13: Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. 14: Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. 15: Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16: Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." 17: But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18: Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19: Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20: For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

There are several other places where Paul addresses these issues,

In Romans 13:12-14, Paul writes,

12: "The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13: Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and

⁵ This is addressed in the Excursus at the end of this exposition.

⁶ "The Inclusive Bible," "The Queen James Bible" and the "Gay Bible" can be purchased on Amazon.

sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

In Colossians 3:4-8 he writes,

4: "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. 5: Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6: For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7: and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8: But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth."

And in Ephesians 4:17-32 he writes,

17: "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18: being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19: and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20: But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21: if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22: that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23; and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24: and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 25: Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE** of you **WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another. 26: **BE ANGRY, AND** yet **DO NOT SIN**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27: and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28: He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. 29: Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31: Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32: Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Many other passages reflect this teaching. In summary, those who are actually Christ's ought to be and will be in the process of laying aside the old corrupt practices and conforming to those consistent with their new identity and life in Him.

II. Definitions

I wish first to speak of the term "perversion." This term is often applied to those engaged in sexual immorality as defined by the Bible. We find this a largely objectionable term in our society today when speaking of sexual acts once deemed improper or disgusting but now propagandized as "normal" by the media, our political leaders, and much of our educational system.

The term is used in the English Bible, and in the RSV,⁷ the NIV⁸ and NASB⁹ it is found in Leviticus 18:23 (following the word "abomination" in verse 22 describing homosexuality),

22: 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. 23: 'Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.'

The Hebrew word for "abomination" (translated "detestable" in the NIV) is "toebah" meaning loathsome, detestable, disgusting, despicable, abhorrent and so on indicating something to be shunned, avoided, and condemned.

"Perversion" is "tebel" meaning sexual impropriety.

In Ezekiel 9:9,

"Then He said to me, 'The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great, and the land is filled with blood and the city is full of perversion; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!'

Perversion here is the Hebrew "mutteh" and is only used once in the Bible in this verse. It means "warped", "distorted" "stretched out of shape."

⁷ Revised Standard Version

⁸ New International Version

⁹ New American Standard Version

This is close to our English definition. "Perversion" is the use of something other than what it was designed for. Most often applied to the sexual arena. The Oxford Dictionary defines it in this context as, "Behavior that most people think is not normal or acceptable, especially when it is connected with sex; an example of this type of behavior." Or generally, "The act of changing something that is good or right into something that is bad or wrong."

This can apply to any form of "perversion" such as a perversion of justice, a language misspoken to the use of something in a manner not consistent with its design. In the case of sexual "perversion" Biblically, this applies to those who use their sexual determination in a manner for which it was not designed by God

In the New Testament, the word "perverse" is used as the translation of three Greek words in the NASB found in four verses, namely, Acts 2:40, 20:30; Philippians 2:15 and II Thessalonians 3:2 .

In Acts 2:40 and Philippians 2:15 (translated "crooked") it is used and the Greek is: "skolios" from which we derive the term "scoliosis." It means. "crooked", "warped" or "bent." In Philippians 2:15 the word "perverse" is the Greek "diastrepho" meaning distortion, corruption, or reversal of something intended one way but turned into another.

II Thessalonians 3:2 has the Greek "atopos" translated "perverse" in the NASB. This word means, "out of place", "amiss", or simply not where it ought to be.

So, Biblically, sexual "deviancy" (behavior or thinking is different from what people normally consider to be acceptable - Collins Dictionary) would include all forms of sexual expression not prescribed according to, and designed by God.

For any person, regardless of their sexual persuasion to deny this is the Biblical teaching is simply a deliberate deception of self and others in order to continue whatever behavior they are indulging in.

The interesting thing is that this is the determination of all forms of ungodly behavior whether sexual or not by those who indulge in whatever form of personal behavior or belief about God they prefer over the truth.

That is why Paul lists so many of these expressions of ungodliness in his lists.

III. The Challenge for the Christian who believes in the Word of God, the Bible.

In the United States, the only sexual activity deemed "improper" and actually enforced by law is child molestation, rape and prostitution. All other forms of sexual activity, even though illegal within some states are largely ignored. Discrimination against those who practice any form of sexual behavior is now against the law except for the three I mentioned above - which may only be reported. No direct action is permitted. So what do we do?

First, we must remember that though this behavior is clearly condemned in the Scripture, so are all forms of ungodliness. The Old Testament leaves little mercy for those engaged in ungodly practices. Why? God, in His foreknowledge saw the desperate need and lost condition of man left to His own devices, having removed God from his life. He had given man free will and the authority to rule over the creation with the implied promise He would not interfere. Man has, from the beginning, felt that God was not necessary in his life and excluded Him from it.¹⁰ This led to a vacancy of divine direction leaving mankind to be guided by his own instincts driven by his flesh, not by God.

But even before creation God saw that mankind would ruin the beautiful design He had implemented and provided a way for those who wished to return to Him. In His wisdom he brought those who still had a heart for God into His plan of redemption which would culminate in the coming of Christ. To accomplish this through the descendants of His chosen patriarch, Abraham, God instituted a strict Law and requirements - with penalties - in order to keep this plan from going sideways.

Once Christ was born and accomplished redemption on behalf of all mankind, the Law and God's plan (The Old Covenant) was fulfilled.

The New Testament (and The New Covenant resulting from Christ's sacrifice) reveals that God has provided a way for all who would believe to return to Him in a new and living reality extending into eternity regardless of their "sinfulness." The truth of Romans 3:23 is quite evident, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It is also clear that, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) And the great verse from John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

¹⁰ See: Romans 1:18-2:11

So, the love of God for *all* people has been revealed in that He sent His Son to die, paying the penalty (as we saw in the scriptures) for all mankind. A free gift and open door to return to God for anyone who wishes to do so. From there, a person will find that he or she will be led to conform to a life honoring to God and His Son

Meanwhile, until God's promise of Christ's return to establish a kingdom where His promise of a place of peace and righteousness would be fulfilled, we must determine how best to cope within a world where all of this is not only not evident, but devolving into a morass of ungodliness, debauchery, crime and misery.

So, what are believers to think and do about this behavior...or any ungodly behavior? And, what should the believer not do?

There is ample evidence in our nation that any reference to God and Christ are slowly but progressively being scorned and spurned. So we who proclaim rescue from death by faith in Him are not only being shunned but can expect persecution and retaliation from those who are intent on living their lives under the dictates of their flesh. Even law-enforcement officers are under the constant threat of attack. Anarchy is barely prevented and a "Lord of the Flies" chaos looms on the social horizon.

Further, there is a concerted effort on the part of the "gay" and sexually perverse movements to "normalize" their conduct and not to be considered by the church to be "sin." They wish to silence the church and the Christian community. There are also a growing number of "churches" comprised of these people who claim to be "Christian" and not only support these life choices but promote them as normal and acceptable to God. In order to get around the Biblical opposition to these behaviors, the Bible itself must be reevaluated and rewritten so that all sexual perversity is no longer written as abominable, but actually approved of by God.¹¹

Children are being indoctrinated with this. To see this and more, just go to gonetofar.org. A friend wrote to me recently, "We all (their family) were at a Lifeway Christian store yesterday. My daughter had some money and she wanted to buy a toy and movie. As we're looking around in the children's/youth section the books that we heard of as promoting this culture, written by false teachers, were prominently on display." In this investigation, I have viewed some horrific and disgusting displays by members of this movement. Of course, not all members

¹¹ See: footnote 6

of this "community" engage in such despicable acts, but there are numerous examples of those who do.

The challenge for the believer is to stand fast in their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Steadfastness and perseverance in one's faith is paramount in a time of mocking and persecution by many in this movement.

Second, we are under the laws of the nation and commanded to obey them save for the denying of our faith. So what believers in Christ can do and must not do about this needs to be seriously considered. Let's look at some foundational truths.

1. To be clear, the judgment of the Old Testament of all the offenses prescribed by the law are no longer relevant or an option, in spite of what some groups teach. The Law and its penalties were fulfilled at the death of Christ, and the responsibility of the church and His people is to bring "Good News" of hope and life through faith in Christ. We live and conduct our lives under the New Covenant, not the Old. We are to be led by God's Spirit.

There is no mandate, direction or suggestion in the New Testament for any believer to condemn or attack any person for any cause whatsoever unless it is commanded by a governing authority under whose authority one may be. For example military and law enforcement personnel may have occasion to use force to subdue a person in violation of the law as ordered by their superior officers.

People who claim that, "They were told by God" to do this or that criminal act against someone" are deceived and totally wrong. 100%.

2. So we need to see this in light of our national laws. As I said, we are commanded to obey the law of the land - save for denying our faith.

So, how do we know what we can or should do?

- A. In the church, should the leadership determine that any offense contrary to church policy is occurring, it can indeed be addressed and dealt with as long as there is no violation of national or local law involved. Such action ought to be in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament, not the Old. This normally would be the expulsion of the offending member from the congregation. But restoration is also possible under specific conditions determined by the church.

B. Should a church member find that church policy or teaching itself is corrupt in their minds, the only options are to confront the leadership if motivated to do so, or leave the church. In this era, many churches are succumbing to the pressures of the social and political leadership, including that of the LBGTQ+ lobbies. In fact, adoption of these practices contrary to scripture would be cause to leave that church in spite of influence not to do so. The conscience of the believer as guided by his heart and the leading of the Holy Spirit and scripture would be the proper motive for doing so.

Unfortunately, it is often monetary considerations or fear of accusations, law suits, or legal action that are at the core of the churches reluctance to take a stand, but that has been the case for centuries now.

C. Both the church and the believer must teach the truth from the Scripture about these matters to the congregation, to one's family and to any who are willing to be under proper instruction. Adjusting one's attitude, comprehension, and the understanding of how a believer must think and act in regard to people entangled in these activities is important, and may be a difficult transition to make depending on one's background and training.

[Some may object to this exposition, but here I stand doing the best I can to relate what I believe is God's perspective in light of the New Covenant toward all the world God loves.]

D. Apart from this, returning to the topic sexual deviancy, an individual believer must erase all thoughts of recrimination or judgment of those so engaged even though the conduct raises strong emotions and thoughts about it. There are several reasons for this. The main one being that the only thing that can be done about any of this is beyond our scope of legal and spiritual involvement and to attempt a punitive action is a violation of both. Plus it would do not good at all and actually be a stumbling block for the hope that God and His Word and Spirit might bring that person to Him.

Let me be clear that I am in no way an authority on homosexuality. The point I will make is that people like me have limited understanding of this matter but regardless of the causes or motives resulting in any sexual behavior outside of Biblical standards, or any behavior at all outside of Biblical standards actually is irrelevant. The scripture is clear that all peoples have behavior, motives and thoughts that will fall outside Biblical standards.

So, just in considering homosexuality for example, and speaking only from observation and reading, there are many possible reasons one may engage in this behavior.

1. Some claim that a genetic disposition may actually exist causing confusion about one's true sexuality. But there is still considerable skepticism in the scientific community about this at this time.
2. The environment in which one is raised may press a person to adopt this disposition. I recall an incident when I was a child raised in a very unpleasant non-Christian home with little love. I was approached by a young man who sought to "comfort" me. I had a momentary temptation to succumb to his advances, but innately knew it was wrong and destructive. So I declined. But many young people may be swept into this situation as they may be vulnerable and in need of affection.
3. In a like manner, a child having endured abuse of various forms may find him or herself caught in this expression of sexuality.
4. It may simply be a choice, one finding heterosexual relationships unsatisfactory, painful, threatening, and so on.
5. It may be simply be due to experimentation. There are celebrities who have moved from a heterosexual relationship to a homosexual one and then back again. And so on. I am sure the reasons are numerous. So a choice based in one's own fleshly motives may be the cause.
6. One may find him or herself outside of acceptance, acknowledgement or even affection among family or peers and seek these things that are often offered by those in the LGBTQ+ communities.
7. Following that, once again, failing to find acceptance among peers, especially as a child, could motivate a person to seek a place where they can be accepted. The church has not done a very good job at welcoming the unattractive or different over the centuries. Quite the opposite in many cases.

But this is only to point out our limited understanding and that no form of behavior is excluded from the opportunity to believe in and receive God's free gift of life in Christ.

E. What else are believers to think and do about this behavior...or any ungodly behavior? And, what should the believer not do?

1. If any person is involved in any behavior condemned by Scripture¹², lay it aside, move away from it, and desist from continuing it. This is your mandate.

2. In one's thoughts, recognition of these behaviors will automatically bring the condemnation of the scripture of them to mind. However, we are prohibited from heaping condemnation or judgment upon any who are so engaged unless authorized by governing authorities, which in the case of those living in the United States, is prohibited as well. There is no place in scripture where the believer has the permission, let alone the mandate to heap condemnation and wrath upon anyone.

In my experience I have come to a conviction about why people might engage this and other "ungodly" acts. Please see the excursus at the end of this exposition.

However, if one is aware of Biblical teaching and is engaged or tempted to engage in this manner of life, and is a true believer in whom Christ dwells, then the motivation for such an individual will be to lay this - and any- ungodly practice aside.

I had a good friend (a male) who knew he had the nature and make up of a homosexual. He had good friends who were active in this "lifestyle" and lived with one of them as a room-mate. Yet he did not engage in this activity at all simply because he knew that the Lord prohibited it. There are many people like this, but, in my opinion they need to move from these associations toward a their new identity in Christ and develop a life based on the Lord's design and will.

3. Controlling impulses. Though the temptation to sexual activity of all sorts exists, this doesn't mean that succumbing to these temptations is appropriate. Married men may find women other than their wives attractive, but this is not permission to engage in adultery and vice versa.

¹² As described by the passages quoted in this study as well as any the believer knows to be wrong.

The scripture does not outright condemn a person for being a homosexual or having sexual urges that could lead to behavior disapproved by the Lord. It is engaging in this activity that is condemned. Thus, though a homosexual may become a believer, the activity itself then must cease. This is true of all sexual deviancy or misconduct described in the Scripture whether homosexual or not. As an example, Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need."

Some will say, "We are under grace and so we will not be condemned if we practice these things." No, sorry, if a true believer you will not be condemned, but the Apostle is clear when he writes, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!" Romans 6:1-2a.

Peter wrote, "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-slaves of God." I Peter 2:16

Personally, I would question the profession of being a "true believer" if one continues in and relishes ungodly behavior.

4. If a believer has the urge to judge another person or is tempted to say or do something in a verbal or physical attack upon such a person, he or she needs to walk away. Why? Because: a. God loves that person and Christ died for them too. b. There is no way to know why that person is engaged in that activity and whether this person will come to the Lord in due time. c. We are commanded not to engage in judgment or condemnation as to do so would be just as an ungodly behavior as the one we are condemning. Again, there is no place in scripture where the believer has the permission, let alone the mandate to heap condemnation and wrath upon anyone. d. It would do no good at all and make the "judgment" represent Christ and the gospel in a perverted way. e. The person engaging in the attack is not free from sin at all. One of the methods that could be used to dissuade this conduct is to imagine that your eyes are not receptacles nor your ears receivers but projectors and loudspeakers of every thought, word and fantasy you have ever had and have them projected on a world-wide sized screen for all to see. Anyone up for that? No? Then, shut up!

5. The view and message of those who are Christ's about and to every person is the same regardless of whom we are talking about.

- a. We are to love the way Christ loves and see beyond the conduct to the lost soul who needs salvation.
- b. If possible employ understanding without judgment in order to earn an opening to share the truth.
- c. What we say should reflect the gospel, the "good news" that their sins have been paid for and that they now have the opportunity for faith and new life in Christ.
- d. They are loved and forgiven, but coming to Christ will mean a reconsideration of their present conduct.
- e. Their sexual orientation is irrelevant to their need of salvation - a salvation God has provided to all peoples if they would just listen and truly believe.

QUESTIONS

1. Can a homosexual be saved? Of course. The issue is not their sin or sexual activity, but a true faith and desire to be obedient to God and His Word. This is true of all peoples. Whoever wishes to do so may come to the Lord. God is not prejudiced nor willing that any should perish. Faith is the key and not just some church liturgy or procedure. When one becomes a Christian, his "want to's" begin to change. How could we forget that John 3:16 makes it clear that, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The whole world, all of it.
2. How can we tell if a homosexual is really a believer? This is a question beyond our privilege to ask. This is God's area and only He can judge the heart and truth of this matter. Though we may have thoughts about this one way or another, best to let those thoughts be.
3. If we know a homosexual and wish to speak to him or her about the gospel, how should we address their conduct? You shouldn't need to. Speak to them as you would any other person needing the Lord. If they ask your opinion about

their conduct it will likely be as a test of your character. The best answer is, "That is irrelevant to every person needing to understand the truth about Jesus' coming to earth, what he did and why, and how God's love provided a way for all people to come into His kingdom."

4. What if a person claiming to be a believer continues to engage in sexual deviation? Are they truly saved? Again, above our place. But if the behavior continues with no desire to change, then the best thing one can do is pray for them and be available if this person seeks help. Otherwise, just leave it to God.
5. How do I act around a homosexual when he/she makes me so uncomfortable? Just like you would around any other person. Your discomfort is a result of all the negative input you have absorbed. In contrast you need to focus on how to look at and treat others as Christ would. This discomfort is understandable, but maturity in the Lord will help alleviate some of this discomfort.
6. How do I answer a person who has a child with gender confusion and asks, "How can God, who made my child, do such a thing and why would He allow this to happen in the first place?" This is actually a question based on false premises and thus not the proper question. I hear this all the time for all sorts of issues. God has nothing to do with any of this or any evil or aberration within the human species.¹³ The actual fact is that these things happen simply due to the corruption and deterioration of the human race. The real question is: "How can we best provide a positive and beneficial life for our child under the circumstances?"

The difficulty I see is that in our society the first thing we do when things do not go our way is to find someone or something to blame. Quite often this will be God. Taking responsibility for our own actions or result of our own actions is becoming almost unheard of. In the case of parents who give birth to infants with problems, the simple truth is that there was something in the family lineage, or in the personal conduct of the parents that might well help with the answer.

7. Should a young person be forced to undergo "conversion therapy" to reverse a sexual "confusion." No, not without the young person's consent and willingness to do so. However, in recent days, a movement to prevent even churches from

¹³ Please see my explanation of this on my website at: www.bibleclassroom.org under: "Studies"- "Topical Studies" - "Understanding the Problem of Evil." Other related articles as well may be found on the website.

offering counseling or help for a person desiring to leave this behavior is now being set before congress as a law.¹⁴ This in itself is very disturbing and disgusting. It is like saying no one is allowed to assist a drug addict or an alcoholic in his or her quest to be sober.

8. What should our attitude "be" when engaging in a conversation or encounter with a homosexual? The word "be" is easy to describe but difficult to achieve. One could say that we "should" approach this as Christ would. But that definition is often different in the minds of people. For Jesus, He would know the heart, thoughts and motives of such a person and be able to address them accurately and appropriately. But for us, I think, we should neither feel sorry or sympathetic, angry or judgmental. Neutral is the best advice I can give.

I recall entering a men's outdoor restroom in a public park once to use the facilities and, as I passed an open stall, two men were actively engaged in sexual conduct. I was immediately sickened, disgusted and nauseated.

This is a different matter due to the circumstances. What they were doing was not only disgusting, but doing it in an open place where children were outside playing. This was not only abominable, but against the law. Here is where one could rightly call the authorities.

9. Should a practicing homosexual be allowed to hold an office in the church? No. That would be a complete disregard of Biblical teaching and a disgrace to God and His church despite protests to this conclusion. The only possible exception might be the case of an individual who has turned from homosexuality totally, gotten married to a person of the opposite sex, has a history of good character and morals, no longer has any desire for that involvement, has a solid testimony of his transition and sufficient witness to all of this and more.

This also goes for those, though thinking of themselves as having a homosexual identity but not engaging in the activity.

10. Where can a homosexual fit in the church body? This depends on the person themselves and the church itself. If the homosexual sincerely wishes to leave that "lifestyle" and become a part of the congregation, then it is the churches

¹⁴ See the contents of HR5.

obligation to assist with this in an appropriate manner. (See comment 7 and footnote 14)

11. Do you have any resources where Biblical or honest information can be found? Yes, one might check out Robert Oscar Lopez whose comments about an interview with a "Karen Swallow Prior" an advocate for some sort of gay and lesbian recognition were, as far as I am concerned, pretty well said and on the mark. The link to his video is:

<https://englishmanif.blogspot.com/2018/06/saturday-2-my-response-to-karen-swallow.html>

Another possibility is: "Americans for Truth About Homosexuality" or AFTAH. You might look at gonetofar.org. I cannot endorse any of these sites, but there will be other links one can check out as you link to these.

EXCURSUS

WHY DO PEOPLE INDULGE IN ALL SORTS OF UNGODLY, IMMORAL OR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR?

I can only speak from my own perspective and that from the Biblical one. I am not steeped in psychological theories (of which there are an infinite number) nor a "trained" psychologist, but have had training and classes in psychology and have some half a century in marriage and personal counseling along with my wife. As the commercial for Farmers Insurance notes, "We know a few things because we've seen a few things."

I know there are a great deal of theories about this topic. The list is endless. I am only going to address one. I have stated for decades that the number one problem in all relationships is self-centeredness. Whether it be politics, business, personal relationships, marriage, parenting, planning, financial considerations, sex, goals, and the list goes on, the biggest problem causing all the evil and chaos in the world is self-centeredness, self-indulgence, self-absorption ... just the self.

Again, theories about the "why" of self-centeredness are numerous. I will Present just one in a moment. But the matter of self-interest is a major blockade to a successful and fulfilling life because it always seeks for oneself at the expense of

another and most folks do not appreciate that when they are on the "expense" end.

Jesus made this blockade clear and something relating to this to His disciples, "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Why? Because Jesus did not operate from a base of self-centeredness, but from a base of selflessness. His followers are to be of the same mind, and motive. To actually see this in anyone, including those in the church is rare.

And, He said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence." (Matthew 23:25)

And, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Matthew 23:12

Self-centeredness presents itself as, "My ideas are more important than yours." "My career is more important than yours." "My thoughts are more important than yours." "My goals are more important than yours." "What I want is more important than what you want." "What I think is more important than what anyone says, even God." "You are in a relationship with me so that I can fulfill my needs and goals at your expense." "You are here to wait on me hand and foot." Or, simply, "I am more important than you are in every way imaginable." And so on. Oh, we don't say this out loud, but the evidence confirms this attitude.

In an intimate relationship whether it be marriage, parenting or just family, the goal in most in these relationships is for one party to hopefully use another for their own benefit. In those considering parenting, how many times have you heard the phrase, "I want to have kids?" Compare that number to the phrase, "I want to be a parent." How about, "I want to have a wife" (or husband) rather than, "I want to be a wife or husband?" Rarely, if ever.

Most people wish for relationships for what they can derive from them, not for what they can give to them. This attitude begins at birth when the infant begins demanding attention - feeding, clothing, care, etc. As the child grows, seldom is it taught to begin to see others as important as he or she is. As a child moves into adulthood the demands become more consuming of those around them. If the emerging adult is not trained to begin to give to others and meet another person's needs a society like we have is the result. Teenagers are stereotyped as being like

this because it is so true so much of the time. The cause, in my opinion, is "emptiness" and the "emptiness" takes on infinite definition.

The self is demanding. It uses people to satisfy its cravings and desires. If someone or something in the relationship does not do so they are discarded. I have known husbands and wives who, after sucking everything they can from their spouse, cast them off and look for another relationship where they can continue the "draining" of the new person for their own selfish demands until the other is empty and useless. Then this one is cast off as so much trash and this repeats itself until death, the ultimate emptiness.

Someone wrote, "God made two orders in creation. He made persons and He made things. He made persons to be loved and things to be used. The great sin that man commits is in reversing God's order. They love things and use persons."

If parents do not give the children what is necessary for their understanding, the children will cast their parents off (and blame them from that time onward for everything) and find other sources to suck dry. The problem is that all the rest of the world is looking to them to do the same thing to them. When two people drain each other of all they can get from them, nothing is left but emptiness.

The sense of emptiness will most often stem from a deep seated anxiety or fear. Most fear is the fear of losing something or not having something. These various fears are so numerous that they cannot all be named, but for example they may include a fear of losing: love, security, hope, a reason to go on living, what others think about someone, position, money, time, significant relationships, things, properties, retirement funds, protection from threats, and a fear for one's health or life. But you could add many more things to this list. Whatever the cause of this "fear" often results in a person feeling empty. Sometimes there will be an expression of anger, frustration, depression, and a multitude of other emotions and "acting out."

Some seek to fill the emptiness with material possessions or other pursuits to soothe the emptiness or allay the fears. The problem is that in the case of accumulating possessions assumed to bring some sort of fulfillment also drain the owner.

When one finds that they are empty they will seek fulfillment in all sorts of ways, and many of these pursuits are described in the Scripture and we see these all the

time in our society.¹⁵ Sometimes it goes as far as criminal behavior. Murder is a way of disposing of a person who either has nothing more to give or has drained the murderer to the point of the ultimate disposal of the empty shell.

I have known many "Christian" marriages that continue to to be made up of couples who are constantly trying to manipulate each other for their own gain. Miserable, but unwilling to alter their thinking and practice, they fill their lives with "stuff" thinking it might make a difference in their relationship. But, falling deeper into debt, they now claw and gouge each other both verbally and physically. Any children are likely not to be well adjusted exacerbating the social problem for us all.

I was told of a couple, who, having marital "difficulties" decided the best thing to solve the problem was to move to a new place and start over. So they bought a condo in Hawaii. It was beautiful. The weather was gorgeous. It was indeed paradise. But there was just one small problem. They were there. Wouldn't it make more sense is people could just give to each other rather than take or expect something for themselves from the other? I always caution people to never expect anything from their spouse. Because if they fail to meet the expectations, disappointment, criticism, anger, blame, judgment, condemnation and a host of very negative emotions, outbursts or actions will ensue. Why do this?

Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-11,

3: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4: do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5: Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6: who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8: Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9: For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10: so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11: and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

¹⁵ See Romans 1:18-2:11; II Timothy 3:1-7; etc.

The response of most people who are prompted to give a little of themselves to another is often, "What's in it for me?" So people seldom go into any relationship with the mindset to give. Why not? Because they themselves are empty. Emptiness is like a vacuum. It demands to be filled. It seeks to suck life from others. And who steps up to fill it? Self. I propose that all evil, even the most heinous acts of history find their cause in this very matter of "self."

The Bible states clearly, without apology, that every evil, ungodly, immoral, sinful, wretched, filthy act if mankind is rooted in self. And this is due to the emptiness of one's life it seems to me. Seeking some sort of reason for living or to find some sort of "happiness" people resort to every possible form of debauchery or crime they believe they can get away with to fill the emptiness. It all fails to work.

The demand of the self is due simply to fear. People are either afraid they will lose something or afraid they will not gain something and their life is a waste if they don't. Their emptiness, like the vacuum, demands to be filled.

I am in whole hearted agreement with Blaise pascal (mid. 17th century mathematician and philosopher) who noted, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ."

This is in total accord with the teachings of the apostle Paul who wrote in the Book of Romans, chapter 1:18-32;

18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19: because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20: For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21: For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22: Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23: and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

24: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25: For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the

Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26: For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27: and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28: And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29: being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30: slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31: without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32: and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

It is interesting that the first thing the Apostle mentions is the drive to sexual gratification regardless of the form including homosexuality and all forms of bestiality, fornication, adultery, prostitution, and all the rest. We all know what happens.

Paul wrote to Timothy these words,

"But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (II Timothy 3:1-7)

This sums up the entire issue, in my opinion...and I believe I am not alone in that.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 2:4-11, the following challenge:

4: Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Here is a glimmer of hope. God is kind, tolerant and patient. His love and grace

awaits those who would turn from their past lives and cast themselves on Jesus for His mercy and saving grace. But...

5: ...because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6: who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8: but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Stubbornness, an unrepentant heart, selfishness and unrighteousness are the hallmarks of self-centeredness.

9: There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10: but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11: For there is no partiality with God."

Once again, the answer is to be found in Pascal's words, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ."

But one must actually believe this, act on it, learn of Him and become His disciple or we will continue to see the mess enlarge.