

Frequently Asked Questions about Sexuality



What do Genesis 1–2 teach about marriage?

Gen. 1:27 teaches that God created humans as male and female. In Genesis 2, we are given the specific details of how God created the first humans at the end of the sixth day. Gen. 2:7 teaches that God first made one male human from the dust of the ground, and then later, according to Gen. 2:21–22, God made one female human from the male human's rib. God then gave the male human and the female human to each other to form the special human relationship known as marriage. In Matt. 19:4–5, Jesus quotes Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 to show that God created marriage as a unique relationship between one man and one woman. The apostle Paul also quotes Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5:31 to show that marriage between one man and one woman is God's institution.

What do Genesis 1–2 teach about the purpose of sex?

Gen. 1:27 teaches that God created humans as male and female. In the next verse, God commands them to “be fruitful and multiply.” The Bible teaches that God's gift of sex is meant to take place between males and females and that it results in the creation of new human beings. In Gen. 2:24, we see that God's gift of sex (which Moses describes as becoming “one flesh”) is to take place between one man and one woman within God's institution of marriage. Therefore, the purpose of this gift is not merely to create new human beings but also for a husband and wife to celebrate their commitment to each other within marriage. For example, the Song of Solomon (which never mentions how sex results in the creation of new human beings) shows that one purpose of God's gift of sex is for a husband and wife to celebrate their love for each other within God's institution of marriage. (See Song of Solomon 6:1–9; 8:4.) This teaches us that, according to Genesis 1–2, the purpose of God's gift of sex is not limited to the creation of new human beings but also serves as the means for a husband and wife to celebrate their promise of love to each other.

How do Genesis 1–2 teach that sex outside of marriage is not God's will?

The answer to the previous question (“What do Genesis 1–2 teach about the purpose of sex?”) explained that the purpose of God's gift of sex is: 1) to create new human beings and 2) for one man and one woman to celebrate their love for each other within God's institution of marriage. Gen. 2:24 teaches that a man and a woman should engage in God's gift of sex (“become one flesh”) only after they are united in marriage. Therefore, when Gen. 1:28 teaches that God

wanted the man and the woman to “be fruitful and multiply,” this shows that God's original plan is that children should be conceived and cared for by their mother and father who are united as husband and wife within God's institution of marriage. When a man and a woman engage in sex outside of marriage, a child may be conceived within a relationship that has no lasting commitment. In addition, when a man and a woman engage in sex outside of marriage, they also fail to understand that God's gift of sex is meant to be a celebration of the promise of sacrificial love that exists between a husband and wife who have been united in marriage. When God's gift of sex is separated from God's institution of marriage, then there is nothing to celebrate. Sex between a man and a woman who are not united in marriage reduces God's gift of sex to a selfish act that uses another person for one's own physical gratification. The apostle Paul writes the following about the sin of sex outside of marriage: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter” (1 Thess. 4:3–6a).¹ Paul teaches that we “transgress and wrong” other people when we use one another for sexual gratification outside of God's institution of marriage.

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How are Genesis 1–2 the foundation for understanding what the rest of Scripture teaches regarding God’s will for our sexual behavior?

Genesis 1–2 clearly teach that God’s gift of sex is to take place only between one man and one woman who have been united in marriage. The rest of Holy Scripture either alludes to Genesis 1–2 or quotes from it directly in order to stress that we rebel against God when we engage in this gift outside of His institution of marriage. For example, when the Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20:14) forbids adultery, it assumes the teaching of Genesis that God’s gift of sex is to be reserved for one man and one woman within marriage. The Song of Solomon celebrates God’s gift of sex between one man and one woman within marriage (see Song of Solomon 6:1–9; 8:4)² — and this is based on what God teaches about marriage and sex in Genesis 1–2. In Mal. 2:14–15, we see that God condemns men who are unfaithful to their wives, saying, “Did he not make them one ...?” This alludes to Gen. 2:24. In Matt. 19:1–12, Jesus quotes Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 to show that God created marriage as a unique relationship between one man and one woman and that the only option to sex within marriage is celibacy. The apostle Paul quotes Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5:31 to show that marriage between one man and one woman is God’s institution. In 1 Cor. 6:13–16, Paul also quotes from Gen. 2:24 to show why having sex with a prostitute is a distortion of God’s gift of sex.

What do Genesis 1–2 teach us about same-sex behavior?

Even though Genesis 1–2 do not mention same-sex behavior, these chapters of Scripture clearly teach that God created sex for male and female and that male and female should engage in the sex act only within God’s institution of marriage. In Matt. 19:1–12, Jesus quotes from Genesis 1–2 to show that the only option to sex between one man and one woman within marriage is celibacy. Therefore, Genesis 1–2 simply assume that same-sex behavior (even when it takes place between consenting adults within a committed relationship) is never God’s will and is always sinful.

If Genesis 1–2 teach that marriage is to be between one man and one woman, then why did some of the patriarchs (e.g., Abraham and Jacob) and kings of Israel (e.g., David and Solomon) practice polygamy?

Gen. 4:19 teaches that Lamech was the first man to have two wives. However, nowhere in Scripture do we find evidence that God condoned the practice of polygamy. Therefore, unlike Gen. 2:24 (a *prescriptive* text that shows that marriage is to be between one man and one woman), Gen. 4:19 (and other texts that describe the practice of polygamy) is a *descriptive* text that merely shows

² Even though Solomon was himself a polygamist, in the Song of Solomon he teaches the ideal of exclusive love for one particular woman (also see Prov. 5:18). Monogamy was God’s plan from the beginning of creation (see Genesis 1–2 and Matt. 19:1–12), and this is reflected in the Song of Solomon with its focus on the “Lover” and his “Beloved.”

us what some person did at some point in history, even though God did not approve. Even though men like Abraham, David and Solomon had more than one wife, nowhere in Scripture do we see that God commanded this behavior, much less condoned it. Instead, God tolerated and regulated polygamy. (Some point to 2 Sam. 12:8 as evidence that God did condone polygamy. However, God never explicitly says that He condones David’s polygamy. Therefore, in light of God’s teaching of monogamy in Gen. 2:24, it is best to interpret 2 Sam. 12:8 as God allowing David to engage in polygamy but not condoning the behavior. In fact, 2 Sam. 12:8 is best understood as God’s rebuke to David. Even though God allowed David to have several wives, this did not satisfy David’s lust, and he even committed adultery with Bathsheba!) The fact is that God often allowed people to engage in various sinful behaviors that were opposed to His will — and whenever Scripture describes polygamous activities, there are always negative consequences. In addition, in Matt. 19:4–5 we see that Jesus quotes from Genesis 1–2 to show that God hates divorce and wants marriage to be for life. These same texts from Genesis also show that God’s original plan for marriage is monogamy. The Pharisees tried to correct Jesus by quoting from Deuteronomy 24 where God commands men to give their wives a certificate of divorce when they divorce them (Matt. 19:7). But then Jesus explains that God did not condone this behavior but merely allowed it because the men’s hearts were hard (Matt. 19:8). The same reasoning could be used to explain why God allowed for the practice of polygamy. In fact, Jesus even says that if a man divorces his wife so that he can marry another, this man is guilty of adultery against his first wife (Matt. 19:9). This could not be the case if Jesus had condoned polygamy! The apostle Paul also assumes that monogamy is God’s will for marriage when he quotes Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5:22–33. Again in 1 Tim. 3:2, we see that Paul expects pastors to have only one wife. Just because some men throughout history practiced polygamy does not mean that God condoned such behavior. In Acts 17:30, Paul says the following to the unbelievers in Athens: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” God expects people today to obey His prescription for marriage in Gen. 2:24, which teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman.

What does the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1–29) teach us about God’s view of same-sex behavior?

A mistake often made by Christians who want to explain that Scripture condemns same-sex behavior is that they begin with the historical event of homosexual gang rape that took place in a city known as Sodom as recorded in Gen. 19:1–29. The problem with this approach is that it fails to begin with God’s foundational teaching about sex and marriage in Genesis 1–2. In addition, the text of Gen. 19:1–29 — read in isolation from the wider context of the rest of Scripture — says nothing about consensual, publicly accountable, life-long, monogamous same-sex behavior (which many today attempt to condone). Instead, the sin of the men of Sodom was homosexual gang rape — and most of those today who affirm consensual homosexual behavior will agree with us that homosexual gang rape is sinful.

We can learn something about consensual same-sex behavior from the event that took place at Sodom. But first we must consider the context: Gen. 18:16–33. In Gen. 18:1–15, we see that Abraham and Sarah receive three visitors at their home — two of these visitors were angels, but the third was God Himself in human form (Gen. 18:1, 10a, 13; 19:1, 22). The Lord reminds us of the promise He made to Abraham (Gen. 18:17–19; also Gen. 12:1–3). Then in Gen. 18:20–21, the Lord tells Abraham about the sin of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and speaks of His plan to destroy them. Abraham then pleads with the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of any believers that may be there. (Abraham was probably thinking of his nephew Lot and his family.) The Lord finally agrees to spare the cities if at least 10 believers can be found in their midst. Sadly, this does not end up being the case, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed.

But what was the sin (or sins) of Sodom? In the New International Version (NIV) English translation of Gen. 19:5, we are told that the men of Sodom wanted to have sex with the two male visitors. The NIV uses the words “have sex” to translate the Hebrew word *venedeah* — based on the Hebrew verb *yada*. Is this a legitimate translation? The Hebrew word *yada* can have various meanings, depending on its context. Most often, *yada* means “to know” in the sense of having personal experience with something — and in the case of human beings, to “get to know” or “become acquainted with” them. However, in a few cases *yada* is used to refer to sexual relations. (See Gen. 4:1; 24:16; Num. 31:17–18, where *yada* is used in this sense.) Simply put, the context must determine how the Hebrew word *yada* will be translated.

Some scholars such as Derrick Bailey³ and John Boswell⁴ have argued that *yada* in Gen. 19:5 does not refer to homosexual relations. Instead, they argue that the men of Sodom wanted to “get acquainted with” the two visitors in Lot’s house because they were suspicious of strangers in their city. When Lot refused, the crowd became angry. Therefore, they say, the sin of the men of Sodom was not homosexual gang rape but inhospitality.

But not even the highly respected pro-gay scholar Martti Nissinen agrees with this interpretation. Nissinen writes: “Although Bailey’s interpretation of the verb *yada* has met with some approval, the theory ultimately fails. Lot tries to appease the troublemakers by offering them his daughters (Gen. 19:8), saying that his daughters are virgins, or, as the Hebrew text puts it, ‘they do not know of man’ ... In this context the verb *yada* is used with an explicitly sexual meaning — only a couple lines after the previous similar use. Bailey’s explanation, that the daughters were only a tempting bribe to calm down the mob, may be correct but this does not alter the sexual connotation of *yada*.”⁵ Other respected scholars

also challenge this view of Bailey and Boswell — such as Thomas Schmidt⁶, Stanley Grenz⁷ and Robert Gagnon.⁸

In addition to all of the scholarly evidence against this interpretation of Bailey and Boswell, we also have the witness of the New Testament Scriptures. In 2 Peter 2:7, the sin of the men of Sodom is described by the Greek word *aselgeia*, which refers to sexual sin. In Jude 7, the sin of the men of Sodom is described by the Greek word *ekporneusasai*, which also refers to sexual sin. Simply put, when the immediate context of Gen. 19:1–29 is considered along with the New Testament witness, it becomes very clear that the sin of the men of Sodom was homosexual gang rape.

Some who affirm homosexual behavior, and who realize that all of the evidence shows that the men of Sodom were guilty of homosexual gang rape, suggest that God did not destroy Sodom because of their *sexual* sin. Instead, they insist that God destroyed Sodom because of their many *non-sexual* sins. In support of this idea, they will usually quote Ezek. 16:49, which reads: “Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (ESV). “There you have it,” they say. “God destroyed Sodom because they were gluttons and didn’t feed the poor — not because of the homosexual behavior of the men.” So, how do we respond to this? At least two points can be made.

First of all, we must acknowledge the fact that the people of Sodom were guilty of many other sins besides homosexual behavior — just as we are guilty of many other sins besides homosexual behavior. Certainly, gluttony and failing to help the truly needy when we have the opportunity are horrible sins. But that’s just the point. There are no people in any Christian denomination who are suggesting that gluttony and failing to help the poor are sins that we should tolerate, much less affirm. Scripture clearly condemns gluttony and failing to help the poor — and we should repent of these sins, trust in Christ for mercy and strive to do better.

Second, even though Ezek. 16:49 teaches that Sodom was guilty of gluttony and failing to help the poor, and even though all sin deserves God’s wrath, the New Testament texts previously cited make it clear that God was also angry with Sodom’s *sexual* sin! In other words, we can’t use Ezek. 16:49 to justify homosexual behavior by suggesting that gluttony and failing to help the poor are the “really bad” sins compared to sexual sin. Such self-righteous thinking places various sins into categories of “not so bad,” “worse” and “unforgivable” — as though God will overlook our sexual sins as long as we’re not gluttons who fail to help the poor.

One other thing we must consider is that those who quote Ezek. 16:49 to support their idea that God did not judge Sodom for sexual sin usually don’t quote the very next verse — Ezek. 16:50, which reads: “They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen” (NIV). “Detestable” translates the Hebrew word *toevah* — a Hebrew

3 See *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* by Derrick Bailey (London: Longmans, Green, 1955).

4 See *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* by John Boswell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

5 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 45-49 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

6 *Straight & Narrow* by Thomas Schmidt, 86-99 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

7 *Welcoming But Not Affirming* by Stanley Grenz, 36-40 (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

8 *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 71-90 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

word that is used in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 to describe consensual homosexual behavior.

Now, some will argue that the Hebrew word *toevah* also refers to various other non-sexual sins in the Old Testament. This is true. However, since Ezek. 16:49 already lists various non-sexual sins, and in light of the fact that the New Testament texts cited here refer to the sexual sin of the men of Sodom, it is very likely that the Hebrew word *toevah* in Ezek. 16:50 is referring to the *sexual* sin, that is, the attempted homosexual gang rape by the men of Sodom.

Finally, those who want to affirm consensual homosexual behavior will point out the fact that the sin of the men of Sodom was homosexual gang rape and not the consensual homosexual behavior we find in our society today. What is our response to this argument?

First, even though it is true that the sin of the men of Sodom was homosexual gang rape and that Scripture says nothing about them engaging in consensual homosexual behavior, the fact is that the rest of Holy Scripture clearly condemns even consensual homosexual behavior (as explained by other FAQs on this website).

Second, we can't be too sure that there wasn't any consensual homosexual sex taking place within the city of Sodom. For example, in Gen. 18:16–33 we see that God was planning to destroy Sodom *before* the homosexual gang rape depicted in Gen. 19:1–29 had even occurred. If there was consensual homosexual behavior in the city of Sodom, then God would have seen such behavior as *toevah*, that is, “detestable” — as *toevah* is translated in the NIV texts of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, where even consensual homosexual behavior is condemned.

What sexual behaviors do Leviticus 18 and 20 prohibit and condemn as sinful? Why?

In Leviticus 18 and 20, God condemns various types of incest (for example, see Lev. 18:6–17). *However, marriage between first cousins, illegal in some parts of the world today, is not prohibited.* God also condemns polygamy (Lev. 18:18), adultery (Lev. 18:20), same-sex behavior (Lev. 18:22) and bestiality (Lev. 18:23). In addition, God prohibits a man having sex with a woman during her period (Lev. 18:19), as well as child sacrifice to the false god Molech (Lev. 18:21). The purpose for these last two prohibitions (Lev. 18:19, 21) are explained more thoroughly in other FAQs on this website.

The reason for these laws against various sexual behaviors is that God's gift of sex is good and holy only when it takes place between one man and one woman who are married. All sexual behavior outside of marriage between one man and one woman is rebellion against God's will for us. (See Matt. 19:4–6; 1 Thess. 4:1–8.)

Why should we submit to God's sexual laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 when there are many other laws in the rest of Leviticus that we do not follow today?

The Book of Leviticus can be very difficult to comprehend if one fails to understand its message within the wider context of the rest of Holy Scripture — especially as it is fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. In his commentary *Leviticus*, John Kleinig writes: “The book of Leviticus consists of God's ritual legislation for the performance of the divine service at the tabernacle and, by extension, later at the temple in Jerusalem. The advent of Jesus Christ radically and irrevocably altered the way in which the OT revelation continues to speak to God's people ... through the Word and Meal of Christ, we are involved in the liturgy performed together with the angels in the heavenly sanctuary ... both Christ and his apostles show that the ritual legislation in Leviticus is relevant for us ... Leviticus was used widely in the early church and later to preach the Gospel and our participation in God's holiness by virtue of our union with Christ. In contrast, the modern church generally ignores Leviticus ... Leviticus cannot be sidelined as easily as that, for much of the NT is rightly interpreted only in its light. We depend on Leviticus for the proper understanding of Christ's death for sinners and the doctrine of his vicarious atonement, which is the heart of the NT Gospels and epistles.”⁹

Since many fail to understand how Leviticus has been fulfilled in Christ, they conclude that its message is completely unrelated to our lives today. Some will use this erroneous opinion to suggest that we should ignore the entire Book of Leviticus — especially the texts that prohibit various sexual behaviors! But this leads to some problems since there are many texts in Leviticus that clearly do apply to us today.

For example, there are texts condemning idolatry, adultery, bestiality, murder, theft, and oppression of the poor and those with disabilities. In addition, there are texts that are positive commands — such as “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2), “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father” (Lev. 19:3) and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).

Therefore, we must carefully distinguish between the civil and ceremonial laws in Leviticus that were given only to the people of Israel and only for a temporary period of time versus the universal moral laws that apply to all people of all times and places. For example, in his commentary *Ezekiel*, Horace Hummel writes: “... the OT places moral and ceremonial laws beside each other without the sharp distinction between them later made by Christians. Christ fulfilled the entirety of the OT for our sakes. The ceremonial law has been rendered obsolete, and indeed since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 much of it is impossible to perform, but God's moral law remains normative for Christians and for all peoples. To the best of my knowledge, no Christians prohibit intimacy during menstruation. However, even most secular societies regard mother-son incest as heinous, and this is also an excellent example of ‘natural law’ (cf. Oedipus).”¹⁰ Simply put, we would be foolish

⁹ Concordia Commentary *Leviticus* by John Kleinig, 24–26 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003).

¹⁰ Concordia Commentary *Ezekiel* 21–48 by Horace Hummel, 684–685 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

to ignore the universal moral laws (including the various sexual laws) in Leviticus 18 and 20 simply because there are also civil and ceremonial laws in the Book of Leviticus that no longer apply to us today.

Doesn't Lev. 18:22 condemn only homosexual rape and say nothing about same-sex behavior within a consensual, committed adult relationship?

Some who affirm consensual same-sex behavior have argued that Leviticus only condemns violent homosexual rape (as found in Gen. 19:1–29 with the men of Sodom). But this interpretation cannot stand because Lev. 20:13 clearly shows that both partners were to be put to death for this sin. The Old Testament would never have imposed the death penalty on a man who was raped against his will.¹¹ Therefore, Lev. 20:13 is clearly condemning the consensual same-sex behavior of both the active and passive partners.

Why should we follow what Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 say about same-sex behavior when we do not follow other laws in Leviticus — such as the prohibitions against eating shrimp or pork?

Some who want to ignore what Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 teach about same-sex behavior will often quote Lev. 11:10, which reads: “But anything in the seas or the rivers that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you.” Their point is that since most Christians today do not believe that Lev. 11:10 applies to them, we need not take the condemnations against same-sex behavior in Leviticus 18 and 20 seriously, either.

However, of all the arguments that attempt to show that we need not take Scripture's prohibitions against same-sex behavior seriously, this one is by far the weakest. For example, if someone uses Lev. 11:10 to suggest that we can reject the entire Book of Leviticus (especially the prohibitions against same-sex behavior in Leviticus 18 and 20), simply ask them: “Do you think mother-son incest is wrong? Do you think adultery is wrong? Do you think bestiality is wrong? Do you think children should respect their mother and father? Do you think feeding the poor is good? Do you think stealing is wrong? Do you think telling a lie is wrong? Do you think slandering an innocent person is wrong? Do you think refusing to pay an employee is wrong? Do you think mocking deaf and blind people is wrong? Do you think courts of law should be fair and impartial? Do you think murder is wrong? Do you think prostitution is wrong? Do you think consulting demons is wrong? Do you think dishonest business practices are wrong? Do you think that showing love for others is a good thing?”

Unless a person is morally bankrupt, he or she will answer all of the above questions by saying, “Yes!” Then simply point out that all

those things that he or she agrees with are laws that are found in the Book of Leviticus! In other words, if you reject the entire Book of Leviticus because you believe that Lev. 11:10 no longer applies to us, then you are also rejecting many good laws that most would agree still do apply to us today.

Simply put, when a person reads the Book of Leviticus he or she must distinguish between ceremonial laws that were given only to the people of Israel and only for a temporary period in history versus the universal moral laws that continue to apply to all people of all times and places.

For example, the various food laws found in Leviticus 11 are clearly given only to the Jews. God never says that He condemns the Gentile nations for eating unclean animals. In contrast, in Leviticus 18 and 20, God clearly condemns the Gentile nations for their sexual immorality — including their consensual same-sex behavior.

In addition, the New Testament clearly teaches that the Levitical ceremonial food laws have been abolished because they have been fulfilled by Christ. (See Mark 7:19; Acts 10:9–23; Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:3–4.) In contrast, the New Testament is clear that the Levitical universal sexual prohibitions are still in force for all people — whether Jew or Gentile. (See Mark 7:21; John 8:11; Rom. 13:9–10; 1 Cor. 5:1–5; 6:9–20; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5–6; 1 Thess. 4:1–8; Heb. 13:4; 2 Peter 2:14–22; Jude 7; Rev. 22:14–15.)

At this point, someone might ask: “What was the purpose of the temporary Levitical food laws given to the Jews?” Simply put, as with many of the other ceremonial laws given to the Jews, the laws against unclean foods were a sign that Israel was to be a unique nation among the peoples of the earth. Why? The primary reason is that God wanted Israel to stand out as unique among the nations of the world because the Savior of all nations would come into the world through Israel (Gen. 12:1–3).

However, once Jesus, the eternal Son of God who was descended from Abraham, came into the world and finished His work of salvation, Israel's role as a unique nation had served its purpose. All the ceremonial laws (for example, the food laws, circumcision, the animal sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple, the Sabbath Day ritual and many others) were fulfilled in Christ! As Paul writes: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:16–17).

In the beginning, before Adam and Eve rebelled against God, there was no eating of meat but only plant life (Gen. 1:29–30). However, after Noah's flood, God gave permission for humans to eat meat (Gen. 9:1–3). For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote the following: “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 4:4).

In other words, the Levitical food laws about unclean animals were not implying that some animals (for example, pigs or shrimp) were evil in and of themselves. Instead, certain animals were designated as unclean for Israel to distinguish itself from the other nations. However, once Christ completed His work, He thereby fulfilled all these Levitical ceremonial laws. The result is that there are now no animals that God considers “unclean.”

¹¹ Robert Gagnon writes: “Deut. 22:23–27 penalized an engaged virgin for having intercourse with another man only if she did not cry for help; a cry for help indicated rape and the victim of rape was not penalized.” (Emphasis added.) *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 71–90 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

However, just because Lev. 11:10 no longer applies to us today does NOT mean that the universal sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20 no longer apply to us today. According to the rest of the Old Testament as well as the witness of the New Testament, the Levitical sexual laws are still in force for us today.

Why should we submit to what Lev. 20:13 says about same-sex behavior when we do not submit to its command to execute those who engage in such behavior?

Another argument used by those who want to affirm same-sex behavior is this: “If we insist on taking the Levitical prohibitions against same-sex behavior seriously, then we must also be prepared to give the death penalty to those who practice same-sex behavior today. But since most Christians would not be in favor of giving the death penalty to those who practice same-sex behavior, they thereby show that they do not take Lev. 20:13 seriously.” How do we answer this?

First, one must understand that ancient Israel functioned as a theocracy, that is, it was both church and state. However, after Christ finished His work, the purpose of Old Testament Israel was fulfilled. Therefore, the Old Testament civil laws were abolished and Christians now submit to the various laws of the governments under which they live — unless certain laws are in opposition to God’s Laws. In that case, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19–20; 5:29).

Second, even though the death penalty for same-sex behavior is no longer required, same-sex behavior itself is still condemned as sin. Would those who affirm same-sex behavior argue that we should also affirm idolatry, children disobeying parents, adultery, incest and bestiality, since we no longer apply the Levitical death penalties for those sins?

The fact that God required the death penalty for same-sex behavior, adultery, bestiality, murder and so on shows that God was very serious about His hatred of such behavior. In fact, in Rom. 1:28–32 and 6:23 the apostle Paul clearly states that all sin is worthy of death. Even though Jesus did not encourage the death penalty for such sins, He still clearly taught that we must repent and trust in Him for salvation or face something far worse than physical death. (See Luke 13:1–5; Matt. 5:27–30; 7:13–21; 10:26–39; 11:20–24; 18:6–7; also see 1 Thess. 4:1–10.)

Of course, Jesus taught us to “love our neighbor.” But Jesus’ own example shows us that loving our neighbor includes telling them to repent of their sin so they can receive forgiveness through His sacrifice for sinners on the cross. Jesus reached out in love to the tax collectors and prostitutes — but Jesus did not affirm their theft and sexual sin! Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery: “Go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11).

Weren’t the sexual laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 given only to the people of Israel and, therefore, do not apply to us today?

Some suggest that God prohibited various sexual behaviors only to distinguish Israel from the pagan nations and not because the sexual behaviors were evil in and of themselves. This argument is used to suggest that the sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20 only applied to the Jews of that time and not to the Gentile nations of that time or to any people in the modern world today. But this argument fails to see the obvious. The reason that God condemned the sexual immorality of the Gentile nations of Egypt and Canaan (Lev. 18:1–3) is that their sexual sins were evil in and of themselves. In addition, when writing to Gentile Christians around 1,400 years later, the apostle Paul shows that the sexual laws found in Leviticus 18 and 20 (along with other universal moral laws) are still in force. This is why the apostle Paul could condemn a man for his incestuous behavior. (See 1 Cor. 5:1–3.)

Doesn’t Lev. 18:22 teach that same-sex behavior is wrong only when it is part of a fertility rite during idol worship as was common among the people of the land of Canaan?

Some have argued that Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 are only condemning consensual same-sex behavior within the context of idol worship. In other words, they argue that the truly detestable act is idolatry (the worship of false gods with heterosexual or homosexual rituals) and not the same-sex behavior per se. But this argument completely fails when one considers the fact that idolatry is not even mentioned within the context of the sexual laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 (with the exception of Lev. 18:21 and 20:3, which prohibit offering one’s child as a sacrifice to Molech). In addition, if the idolatry argument were true, then does this mean that all the other sins listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 — such as incest, adultery, child sacrifice and bestiality — are permissible as long as they do not take place within the context of idolatry? Hardly.

Even though Leviticus 18 prohibits brother-sister incest, God allowed the children of Adam and Eve to marry each other in order to populate the world. If God allowed incest at one time in history, how do we know He does not allow for same-sex behavior and marriage now?

If we believe that the creation account in Genesis is an accurate record of a real historical event, then wouldn’t some type of incest have been necessary in order to produce human descendants from Adam and Eve? Yes. However, in Leviticus 18 we find that brother-sister incest is clearly prohibited. It appears that God later changed His mind about brother-sister incest — later prohibiting a behavior He once allowed.¹² Some then suggest that maybe God has also

¹² On Page 22 of *The Lutheran Study Bible* in the commentary notes for Gen. 4:17 we read these words: “... Abram’s marriage to his half-sister, Sarai. Such marriages were likely common in this earliest period of history. The Lord would later prohibit marriages to close kin (Lv 18).” *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

changed His mind about consensual same-sex behavior — now allowing a behavior He once condemned. How do we answer this?

It is true that God originally allowed brothers and sisters to marry and have children in order to populate the world. But at some point in history, not long after creation (we don't know when for sure, because Scripture doesn't say), God prohibited this behavior and declared it to be sinful. This explains why God could condemn the Gentile nations in Lev. 18:1–3 for the sin of brother-sister incest.

God is almighty. God can *permit* a set of behaviors at one point in history and then *prohibit* those same behaviors later in history — and He doesn't have to give us any explanations.¹³ Our place as human creatures is to trust God's Word and accept His will — even when He decides to prohibit a behavior (such as brother-sister incest) that He once permitted.

However, those who want to argue that “God is doing a new thing” and that He now permits same-sex behavior even though He once prohibited it have a huge problem to overcome. Simply put, Holy Scripture is clear that the prohibitions against consensual same-sex behavior in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 are still in force today — and several New Testament texts affirm this. (Other FAQs on this website make this clear.) God has not abolished His prohibitions against same-sex behavior. Therefore, it is sinful for us to suggest otherwise.

Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 say nothing about same-sex behavior between women. Does this mean that God has no problem with lesbianism?

Some point out that even though Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 clearly condemn consensual same-sex behavior between men, nothing is said about consensual same-sex behavior between women. Therefore, some argue that God has no problem with same-sex behavior between women. How do we answer this?

First, this argument ignores the fact that God expects us to assume that even female homosexuality is sinful based on the example of male homosexuality. For instance, in the sections of Leviticus 18 and 20 that condemn various forms of incest, there is one type of incest that is not even mentioned: a father having sex with his daughter. In contrast, a mother having sex with her son is mentioned and condemned (Lev. 18:7). Now, based on this information, what conclusion should we draw? Should we conclude that the condemnation of mother-son incest assumes that father-daughter incest is also condemned? Or do we conclude that the failure to mention father-daughter incest means that such sexual behavior is tolerated or even affirmed by God? The answer should be obvious.

Another example of one type of prohibition assuming another is Jesus' condemnation of a man's lustful thoughts for a woman who is not his wife (Matt. 5:28). Does this mean that God is indifferent

about or affirms a woman lusting after a man who is not her husband since Jesus only condemned lustful thoughts by a man? Of course not. The point is: What's bad for the gander is bad for the goose.

Finally, in Rom. 1:26 the apostle Paul clearly condemns also consensual *female* same-sex behavior, thereby showing that he understood that God wants us to assume that female same-sex behavior is sinful based on the creation account in Genesis as well as the condemnation of male homosexual behavior in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13.

Few insist that Christians must submit to what Lev. 18:19 says about a man not having sex with his wife during her period. Therefore, can't we also ignore what Lev. 18:22 says about same-sex behavior?

When we are confronted with this particular prohibition in Lev. 18:19, we must ask ourselves: Why does this prohibition exist here? Scholars have offered various explanations.

Some suggest that God was prohibiting a kind of rape, that is, God was condemning any man who would force himself on his wife during a time when she would be uncomfortable with such an act. Certainly, Scripture does forbid rape — and this would include a husband forcing himself on his wife when she is unwilling because she is having her period. But this does not fully explain why God also condemns this act when the woman is a consensual participant, because in Lev. 20:18 we see that both the husband and wife are to be punished — and this would make no sense if the woman were a victim of rape!

Therefore, the best explanation seems to be that we are dealing with a ceremonial law that has been placed in this context because of the sexual nature of the act. Unlike adultery, incest, male and female homosexual behavior or bestiality (which are sinful in and of themselves), the prohibition against contact with a woman's menstrual blood is not a universal moral law binding on all people of all times but, as described in Lev. 15:19–31, merely makes an *Israelite* ritually unclean. In contrast, there is no place in Scripture where adultery, incest, male and female homosexual behavior or bestiality are described as merely making one ritually unclean. They are condemned as serious sin for the people of Israel and all Gentiles alike.

Jews (and Gentiles who lived with them) were not allowed to eat blood because of its associations with life and especially because of blood's connection with the temple sacrifices for the atonement of sin (which were a picture of the blood of Christ and His sacrifice for us). Because blood was associated with life and atonement for sin at the temple, Israelites were temporarily ritually impure as a result of contact with blood.

In addition, according to Leviticus 15, when a husband had accidental contact with menstrual blood during a sex act with his wife, they were merely temporarily unclean and had to offer certain sacrifices and perform various ritual washings. But in Lev. 20:18, the result of such behavior is that both the man and the woman are to be “cut off from among their people.” Why this intense punishment for the behavior described in Lev. 20:18 when the same behavior

¹³ In Rom. 11:33–34, the apostle Paul writes: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’”

described in Leviticus 15 results in only temporary ritual impurity after the required purification rituals are performed?

The best answer is that in Lev. 20:18 we appear to have a man who *knowingly* and *willingly* has sex with his wife during her period in open rebellion against the known ceremonial law and its required purifications. In the same way, it appears that the woman in Lev. 20:18 *knowingly* and *willingly* participates in this act in open rebellion against the known ceremonial law and its required purifications. In other words, *intentional* rebellion (for whatever reason) against God's ceremonial law and its purification requirements is met with a harsh punishment, whereas *accidental* contact with menstrual blood resulted only in being temporarily ritually unclean as long as one took part in the purification requirements.

Therefore, the best way to understand the prohibition against contact with a woman's menstrual blood in Lev. 18:19 and 20:18 is that this was a ceremonial law (given only to Israel and only for a temporary period in history) that was included in this section of universal sexual prohibitions because of the sexual nature of the act itself. (For the same reason, the prohibition against offering one's child to Molech, even though this act had to do with the universal laws of murder and idolatry, was placed in this section of universal *sexual* prohibitions because children are the fruit of the sexual act between a man and a woman.)

One other thing we must note is that unlike adultery, incest and homosexuality (which are clearly condemned in the New Testament Scriptures), the prohibition against contact with a woman's menstrual blood is not found anywhere in the New Testament. Because of the ceremonial aspect of this law, most Christians have understood it to be fulfilled in Christ who shed His blood for us (just as the animal blood sacrifices were abolished because they were fulfilled in Christ).

Now, this doesn't mean that it is a good thing for a husband to have sex with his wife during her period. Certainly, a husband should never force himself on his wife during her menstrual cycle (or anytime, for that matter) because such a selfish, unloving act would be in direct conflict with the sacrificial love that God intends to be communicated in the "one flesh" sexual activity between a husband and wife. In addition, there could also be other reasons (health or hygiene) that it would be best for a husband and wife to refrain from sexual activity during the menstrual cycle. The point is that such an act (unlike the universal sexual laws) is not prohibited for us today because the temporary ceremonial laws given to Israel have been abolished by their fulfillment in Christ.

Does Scripture teach that David and Jonathan engaged in same-sex behavior with each other?

The suggestion that King David and Jonathan (son of King Saul) might have been homosexual lovers is so strained beyond credibility that it would not be worth a response if it were not for the many people who have been misled by this erroneous notion.

One of the more popular proponents of a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan is Tom Horner. Referring to Old

Testament characters, in his book *Sex in the Bible* Horner says that the relationship between David and Jonathan is "the only example of an unabashed homosexual love of one well-known character for another."¹⁴

Many who share Horner's opinion about David and Jonathan will usually, in support of their argument, quote these words of King David at the death of Jonathan: "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26). So, does this Scripture text prove that David and Jonathan had a homosexual relationship?

Many have written fine refutations of the idea that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers.¹⁵ In fact, even pro-gay scholar Martti Nissinen, in his book *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, says the following: "Nothing indicates that David and Jonathan slept together 'as one sleeps with a woman.' Neither of the men are described as having problems in their heterosexual sex life ... The story of David and Jonathan was being told at the time when the Holiness Code with its commands and prohibitions of sexual contact between males regulated the Israelites' sexual morality."¹⁶ With that understood, consider the following additional responses to the idea that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers.

First, even if we grant the unlikely possibility that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers, this would in no way change the fact that Scripture clearly condemns even consensual homosexual behavior. When reading Holy Scripture, one must distinguish between prescriptive texts (commands that God expects some or all people to obey) and descriptive texts (portions of Scripture that relate events in history but are not intended as commands or examples for some or all people).

Simply put, just because Holy Scripture describes an event in history does not mean that God thereby condones or affirms that event. For example, Scripture describes how the men of Sodom threatened homosexual gang rape against Lot's guests. But Scripture in no way condones this behavior. In the same way, even if David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers (and all the evidence shows that they were not), this does not mean that God affirmed their behavior.

Second, as noted in the above quote from Nissinen, "The story of David and Jonathan was being told at the time when the Holiness Code with its commands and prohibitions of sexual contact between males regulated the Israelites' sexual morality." In other words, David himself would have acknowledged that homosexual behavior was sinful!

14 See *Sex in the Bible* by Tom Horner, 85 (Rutland, Vt.: C. E. Tuttle Co., 1974). Also see *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* by Tom Horner (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978). A few other pro-gay authors also attempt to find a lesbian relationship between Ruth and Naomi. For an excellent refutation of the idea that Ruth and Naomi were lesbian lovers, see *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures* by Ronald M. Springett, 78-81 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1988).

15 For example, see *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 146-154 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). Also see *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures* by Ronald M. Springett, 70-74 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1988).

16 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 55-56 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

Third, when 2 Sam. 1:26 tells us that Jonathan's love for David was "extraordinary, surpassing the love of women," this in no way implies a homosexual relationship. In fact, the wider context of 1 and 2 Samuel proves the opposite. David had several wives, and yet his relationship with some of them was less than ideal. In contrast, the brotherly love between David and Jonathan was sacrificial and unconditional. Jonathan sacrificed so much to be loyal to David, whom he knew was God's chosen one to be king over Israel in place of his evil father, King Saul. Jonathan was willing to be loyal to David even though this resulted in a tense relationship between him and his father. The Hebrew word *ahad* is used to describe the "love" that David and Jonathan had for each other. The same Hebrew word is also used to describe the love that all Israel had for David (1 Sam. 18:16). The Hebrew word *ahad* in these and similar contexts has the meaning of the Greek word *philia*, which describes a dedicated brotherly or family love (unlike the Greek word *érōs*, which describes romantic or sexual love).

Finally, one other place where some try to find a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan is 1 Sam. 20:41b, which reads: "And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most." How do we respond to this text?

First, the wider context of 1 Sam. 20:41b has nothing to do with a sexual situation. Second, the fact that David and Jonathan "kissed one another" has nothing to do with homosexual behavior when one considers that in the culture of that time it was perfectly natural for heterosexual men to express affection for each other via non-sexual kissing. Even Nissinen acknowledges this when he writes: "Modern readers probably see homoeroticism in the story of David and Jonathan more easily than did the ancients. In the contemporary Western world, men's mutual expressions of feelings are more restricted than they were in the biblical world. Men's homosociability apparently was not part of the sexual taboo in the biblical world any more than it is in today's Christian and Islamic cultures around the Mediterranean ... The relationship of David and Jonathan can be taken as an example of ancient oriental homosociability, which permits even intimate feelings to be expressed."¹⁷

Simply put, there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers. Those who want to suggest such a relationship are forcing their views on the text of Holy Scripture. The love that David and Jonathan had for each other was a non-sexual, sacrificial friendship between two men. In view of this, Robert Gagnon writes: "Some companions destroy each other 'but there is a lover/friend ... who sticks closer than a brother' (Prov. 18:24). David and Jonathan had the latter type of relationship and it was one which was completely asexual."¹⁸

17 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 56 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

18 *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 154 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

The four Gospels contain *no* explicit teaching from Jesus regarding same-sex attraction or behavior. Doesn't this mean that Jesus tolerates or maybe even affirms same-sex behavior?

Some who want to find a way to dismiss what Scripture clearly teaches about same-sex behavior being sinful will say: "But Jesus Himself never said one word about homosexuality. If homosexual behavior was such a horrible sin, don't you think Jesus would have addressed it? Jesus' silence on the issue of homosexuality convinces me that my homosexual desire and behavior are affirmed by God." This argument is found among many who affirm homosexual desire and behavior. How do we respond?

It is true that the four Gospels have no record of Jesus saying anything directly about the issue of homosexual desire and behavior. However, Jesus' silence on homosexual behavior does not mean that we can affirm it in direct conflict with the rest of Holy Scripture. In fact, Jesus' silence on the issue of homosexuality actually speaks loudly regarding what the rest of Scripture teaches about homosexual desire and behavior being sin and in conflict with God's loving plan for our sexual lives. Below are several arguments for why Jesus would have been opposed even to consensual homosexual behavior.

First, Jesus' silence on homosexual behavior does not mean that He was indifferent about the issue, much less that He affirmed it. For example, the Gospels give us no record of Jesus ever mentioning bestiality. (See Lev. 20:15–16.) Does this mean that Jesus affirmed such behavior? Also, Jesus never directly speaks to the issue of incest. (See Lev. 18:6–18.) Does this mean He would have approved of sex between an adult mother and her adult son or an adult father and his adult daughter? In addition, in no place does Jesus explicitly condemn the abuse of people with disabilities. (See Lev. 19:14.) Does this mean that Jesus would overlook or even affirm such behavior?

Those who suggest that Jesus would affirm homosexual behavior usually respond to the above points by saying: "But sins such as bestiality, incest and abuse of people with disabilities are clearly condemned in the Old Testament and go against the moral teachings of Jesus about sex and love of one's neighbor." Precisely. In the same way, the sin of homosexual behavior is clearly condemned in the Old Testament and, as we will see, goes against the moral teachings of Jesus about sex and love of one's neighbor.

Second, the Jewish culture of Jesus' day condemned even consensual homosexual behavior between adults. Therefore, Jesus did not need to "beat a dead horse" and "preach to the choir" by condemning a sexual behavior that was viewed as sin by the Jewish people in His day. Regarding this, pro-gay scholar Martti Nissinen writes: "To the extent that Rabbinic and Hellenistic Jewish literature sheds light on the norms of Jewish society in Jesus' time, it can be assumed that public expressions of homosexuality were regarded as anomalous, idolatrous, and indecent."¹⁹ In addition, the pro-gay scholar Louis Crompton writes: "Since few men are uninfluenced by their culture and times, it is likely Jesus shared the traditional prejudices of

19 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 118.

his fellow Jews.”²⁰ Therefore, if Jesus had affirmed consensual homosexual behavior, we would have expected Him to condemn the views of His own people who believed that homosexual behavior was an abomination. Jesus never hesitated to rebuke and correct His own people regarding their erroneous views on other issues. Therefore, Jesus’ silence on the issue of homosexual behavior speaks loudly about His own views on this matter. Simply put, Jesus’ silence on the issue of homosexual behavior shows that He agreed with His fellow Jews that such behavior was sinful and condemned by God.

Third, Jesus’ use of Genesis 1–2 in Matt. 19:1–12 shows that He viewed the creation account as a commentary on God’s will for human sexuality. In Matt. 19:1–12, Jesus clearly teaches that the only option to sex between one man and one woman in marriage is a life of celibacy. Of course, some will try to spin this text to suggest that Jesus was open to the idea of homosexual behavior. They will point to Jesus’ comments about eunuchs in Matt. 19:11–12. However, His comments here actually go against the argument that He would have affirmed homosexual behavior. In Matt. 19:11–12, Jesus is responding to His disciples who suggested that if God does not want men to divorce their wives, then it would be better not to marry (thus showing that they did not understand the sacrificial nature of what it means to be a Christian husband — see Eph. 5:25–32). Jesus tells them that not all men have this gift, that is, the gift of celibacy. Jesus goes on to give examples of men who DO have the gift of celibacy. He mentions that some are “eunuchs” because they were born that way. The Greek word translated as “eunuchs” is *eunouchoi* — a word that refers to a man whose reproductive organs do not function or have been cut off, and so he is not able to have sexual relations at all. In other words, Jesus’ comment about eunuchs that were “born that way” does not refer to those who engage in homosexual behavior (as though Jesus were somehow affirming homosexual behavior) but to those who do not practice any type of sexual behavior — either heterosexual or homosexual. Jesus also mentions those who have been made eunuchs by men (referring to those who have been castrated versus those who were born with non-functioning reproductive organs). Finally, Jesus mentions those who “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” In this case, Jesus is speaking of men who choose to remain single (and therefore celibate) so as to give their attention to serving the Lord with undivided commitment. Simply put, in no way does Jesus use the word “eunuchs” to affirm those who engage in homosexual behavior. Jesus’ point is that celibacy is the only option to sex between one man and one woman in marriage.

However, some who affirm homosexual behavior will point out that whereas heterosexual people have the option of being sexually active within marriage, those with homosexual desires do not have this option if we teach that all forms of homosexual behavior are condemned by God. Therefore, they argue, we should allow those with same-sex attraction the option of being sexually active within consensual, adult, life-long, monogamous relationships. How do we respond to this?

First, those who have same-sex desires are allowed the option of sexual activity within *heterosexual* marriage. In other words, they still have the biological ability to function in a heterosexual manner even though this is not their ideal preference. Just because a person may prefer homosexual sex does not mean we should affirm such behavior. For example, a heterosexual man may prefer to have sex with other women besides his wife, but this does not mean that his preference should be affirmed.

Second, if people with same-sex desires refuse to enter heterosexual marriage, then God asks them to deny themselves and strive to live a sexually pure life — and for a single person (whether heterosexual or homosexual), this means celibacy.

Fourth, in Mark 7:21 we see that Jesus condemns “sexual immorality” in addition to the sin of adultery. The Greek word translated as “sexual immorality” is *porneiai* — and in the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day, this word was used to refer to all forms of sexual immorality condemned by the sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20, including the prohibition against consensual homosexual behavior. But why does Jesus even mention adultery and other forms of “sexual immorality” (including homosexual behavior) if the Jews of His day already agreed that such behaviors were sinful? Simply put, most Jews were focused merely on the outward behavior and not on the sinful desire that could lead to such behavior. That is why Jesus said: “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery” (Mark 7:21). Jesus makes the same point in Matt. 5:27–28 when He stresses that lustful thoughts are equal to adultery before God. The fact that Jesus speaks of “sexual immorality” (*porneiai*) in addition to adultery shows that He agreed with the Jews of His day regarding the universal applicability of the sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20 — which also condemn even consensual homosexual behavior.

Fifth, Jesus’ love for sinners did not mean that He tolerated or affirmed their sin. Instead, Jesus preached that people should repent of their sins — including various sexual sins — and receive forgiveness and new life through faith in Him. But if people refused to repent of their sin, they faced eternal condemnation. Jesus was very likely referring to Lev. 19:17–18 when He spoke the following words: “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:3–4). All the evidence shows that Jesus would have condemned homosexual behavior along with the other sexual sins condemned in Leviticus 18 and 20. At the same time, He would have offered complete and total forgiveness to those who confessed their sin and longed for God’s mercy. However, the forgiveness that Jesus freely gives us results in us turning away from the very sins He has forgiven. That is why Jesus defines the Christian life as “taking up your cross,” “denying yourself” and “losing your life.” (See Mark 8:34–37; Matt. 10:38–39; Luke 14:27; 17:33; John 12:25.) Therefore, there is no reason to believe that Jesus would make an exception for homosexual behavior when He clearly expected people to repent of all other sexual sins.

Finally, Jesus entrusted His teaching to His chosen apostles (John 17:16–20; Acts 26:15–18). This means that Jesus’ apostles delivered His teaching to others — including God’s teaching for our sexual

20 *Homosexuality and Civilization* by Louis Crompton, 111–112 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

lives. Jesus did not need to mention homosexual behavior explicitly because the Jews to whom He ministered already agreed with Scripture that homosexual behavior was sinful. However, when the apostle Paul shares Jesus' teaching with the Gentiles (whose culture did have many who affirmed homosexual behavior), he clearly addresses the issue of homosexual behavior and condemns it as sinful. Since the apostle Paul speaks for Jesus, we see that Jesus would have been opposed to homosexual behavior.

Do Matt. 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 teach that Jesus affirmed a same-sex relationship between a Roman centurion and his slave?

Some suggest that there is one example where Jesus seems to affirm a male homosexual relationship. They refer to Matt. 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 where we read about the Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his sick servant. Some have attempted to find evidence of Jesus affirming a male homosexual relationship by suggesting that the Roman centurion and his servant were homosexual lovers. Why would they make this assumption? The reason is that there is historical evidence showing that some (but not *all*) Roman men who were slave owners would sometimes have sex with their slaves — both male and female. They then conclude that the Roman centurion mentioned in Matthew and Luke must have had a homosexual relationship with his servant — whom Luke says his master “highly valued” (Luke 7:2). Since Jesus does not condemn this supposed homosexual relationship (in fact, He doesn't even mention it), they argue, Jesus was thereby affirming their homosexual behavior. Is this a reasonable interpretation of this event as recorded in Matt. 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10? How do we respond?

First, even though there is evidence that some Roman slave owners had sex with their male and female slaves, not all of them did. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that the Roman centurion mentioned in Matthew and Luke had sex with his servant when there is no clear evidence that such a sexual relationship existed. In their book *The Children Are Free*, Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connoley make a lot of the fact that the Roman centurion refers to his servant as his *pais*²¹ — a Greek word that could, in some contexts, refer to a male slave who was a homosexual partner with his master. But even Miner and Connoley admit that this is not the only meaning of the word *pais*, which can also mean “son” or just plain “servant” (without any sexual connotations). In fact, in the New Testament the Greek word *pais* is best understood as being synonymous with the Greek word *doulos* — which also means “slave” or “servant” (without any sexual connotations whatsoever). In fact, the cultural context in which we find this Roman centurion actually makes it quite impossible that he had a homosexual relationship with his servant.

For example, in Luke 7 we read: “When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with

him earnestly, saying, ‘He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue’” (Luke 7:3–5). Here we see that the Jews adore and respect this Gentile centurion. They even say that he deserves to have Jesus heal his servant. Why would the Jews say this about a Roman centurion when they usually despised most Gentiles — especially the Romans who were often oppressing them and whose various sinful behaviors (such as idolatry and homosexuality) were an abomination to them? The answer is that this Roman centurion was very likely a “God-fearer” (the Greek word for “God-fearer” being *phoboumenos*). In Acts 10, we read about another Roman centurion whom Luke explicitly refers to as a God-fearer (*phoboumenos* — see Acts 10:2). When we consider how the Jews in Luke 7 adored the Roman centurion in their community, and when we note that the Roman centurion loved the Jewish nation and built the synagogue in Capernaum, the obvious conclusion is that this Roman centurion was a God-fearer.

Now, what did it mean for a Gentile man to be a God-fearer? In his commentary on the Book of Acts, F.F. Bruce writes the following about the Roman centurion in Acts 10: “It is further important to observe that Cornelius was one of those Gentiles who are commonly classed as ‘God-fearers’ ... Many Gentiles in those days, while not prepared to enter this Jewish community as full proselytes, were attracted by the simple monotheism of Jewish synagogue worship and by the ethical standard of the Jewish way of life. Some of them attended synagogue and were tolerably conversant with the prayers and Scripture lessons, which they heard read in the Greek version; some observed with more or less scrupulosity such distinctive Jewish practices as Sabbath observance and abstinence from certain kinds of food.”²² What we know of these Gentile God-fearers is that they, at the very least, worshiped only the God of Israel and submitted to all their moral laws — including their sexual laws! As Bruce notes, not only did the God-fearers submit to the ethical standards of the Jews, but some of these God-fearers would even observe many of the Jewish ceremonial laws. Therefore, if the Roman centurion in Luke 7 were a God-fearer (and the evidence suggests that he was), then he would not have been involved in homosexual behavior because this was clearly condemned in the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, if the Jews had known that this Roman centurion was involved in homosexual behavior with his slave, they would have been greatly offended. But Luke tells us that they thought highly of this centurion and believed he deserved Jesus' help.

In *The Children Are Free*, Miner and Connoley suggest that the Jewish crowd knew about the centurion's homosexual behavior and despised the fact that Jesus was willing to help such a man.²³ But this view is in direct conflict with what Scripture teaches us about the event. The Jews respected this Roman centurion because he loved their nation (and therefore, also loved their moral laws — including their prohibition of homosexuality), and they pleaded with Jesus to help him.

21 *The Children Are Free*, Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connoley, 47–48 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, 2002).

22 *The New International Commentary on the New Testament The Book of Acts* by F.F. Bruce, 215–216 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990).

23 See their book *The Children Are Free*, 49–50 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, 2002).

Miner and Connoley also write: “We must let the word of God speak for itself, even if it leads us to an uncomfortable destination.”²⁴ This sentence is ironic. If Miner and Connoley were actually willing to let the Word of God “speak for itself” on the issue of homosexuality, they would quickly realize that God clearly condemns even consensual homosexual behavior as being sinful.²⁵ This might be an “uncomfortable destination” for those who wish to impose their affirmation of homosexual behavior on the pages of Holy Scripture, but the Holy Spirit moves us to face the truth of God’s Word even when it exposes our cherished sins. But even more, the truth of God’s Word points us to Christ through whom we have complete forgiveness and new life with God!

Does Scripture teach that Jesus and the apostle John engaged in same-sex behavior with each other?

Some attempt to argue that Jesus Himself engaged in same-sex behavior with the apostle John, and they point to the fact that John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and that John leaned against Jesus’ chest during the Last Supper (John 21:20). However, even most pro-gay biblical scholars admit that this argument is ridiculous. For example, pro-gay scholar Martti Nissinen writes: “Clearly the Gospel of John in particular presupposes a close teacher-student relationship between Jesus and his immediate circle, and in this company the favorite disciple clearly enjoys special status. He is the one whom Jesus quite especially ‘loved’ and who always stood closest to Jesus. Nevertheless, the homoerotic or pederastic dimension of their relationship could be argued only in a strained way ... Only the scene at the last supper might suggest this direction — and it is questionable evidence at that. The custom of a student resting against his teacher’s chest manifests cultural conventions rather than homoeroticism ...”²⁶ Below are more arguments against the view that Jesus and John were involved in a homosexual relationship.

First, Jesus and His apostles would have shared the common view of the Jews in their day who believed that even consensual homosexual behavior was condemned by the Old Testament. Therefore, Jesus and John would not have engaged in such sinful behavior.

Second, John uses the Greek verbs *agapao* and *phileo* to describe Jesus’ love for him and his love for Jesus. Never once does John use the Greek verb *erao* (the Greek verb used for sexual behavior) to speak of his relationship with Jesus. Regarding this fact, Robert Gagnon writes the following: “The fact that the verb *phileo*, which refers to friendship love, and the related noun *philos*, ‘friend,’ are

used interchangeably with *agapao* and cognates in John’s Gospel confirms the non-erotic character of this love.”²⁷

Simply put, there is no evidence whatsoever to support the notion that Jesus and the apostle John may have had a homosexual relationship. In fact, all the evidence shows that Jesus (and His apostles) would have considered even consensual homosexual behavior to be a sinful abomination before God.

What does Rom. 1:26–27 teach about same-sex behavior?

The apostle Paul clearly teaches here that same-sex lust and behavior are sinful for both men and women. Paul begins by mentioning that women “exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.” Here Paul condemns consensual female homosexual lust and behavior. This confirms that Leviticus 18 and 20 also condemn female same-sex behavior even though only male same-sex behavior is condemned. Father-daughter incest, although not mentioned in Leviticus 18 and 20, is condemned because of the example of mother-son incest; female heterosexual lust, although not mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 5, is condemned because of the example of male heterosexual lust. In the same way, female homosexual lust and behavior are condemned by the example of male homosexual lust and behavior in Leviticus 18 and 20. After Paul condemns female homosexual behavior, he goes on to say that “the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.” Here Paul clearly condemns consensual male homosexual lust and behavior. Paul adds that these men committed “shameless acts” with each other. What were these “shameless acts”? Paul is referring to any type of sexual behavior between men. In the same way, any type of sexual behavior between women would also be a “shameless act.”

However, what does Paul mean when he says that these men received in themselves the “due penalty” for their perversion? Scholars debate about what this “due penalty” might be. Some suggest it could be a hard heart that is incapable of repentance. Others suggest some type of physical and emotional problems associated with male homosexual behavior. Whatever the “due penalty” may be, Paul is pointing out that all sin — including the sin of homosexuality — has negative spiritual, physical, emotional and mental consequences.

Does Rom. 1:26–27 suggest that same-sex lust and behavior are worse than all other sins?

In Rom. 1:28–32, Paul goes on to stress that God gave unbelievers over to many other sins besides same-sex lust and behavior. We see here a list of sins against every one of the Ten Commandments — sins of desire, thought, word and deed. Paul then writes: “Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32).

Paul clearly teaches that all sin is worthy of death. That may surprise us, because some of the sins Paul lists seem trivial from a human point of view. In the same way, some think that God overreacted

24 See their book *The Children Are Free*, 48 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, 2002).

25 Even pro-gay author Daniel Helminiak, who would love to find evidence for Jesus affirming homosexual behavior, admits that there is not much proof for the idea that the Roman centurion in Matthew 8 and Luke 7 had a homosexual relationship with his servant. On Pages 128–129 of his book *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, he writes: “...what was the relationship between the centurion and the servant? There is no way of knowing for certain. The historical evidence is scanty.” *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* by Daniel Helminiak (San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1994).

26 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 122 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

27 See the article “Was Jesus in a Sexual Relationship with the Beloved Disciple?” by Robert Gagnon (found on his website: www.robagnon.net).

when Adam and Eve merely ate a piece of fruit from the forbidden tree. But what we must understand is that at the heart of each and every sin is a rebellious attitude: “I know God says this is evil. But I don’t care what God says. I’m going to do it anyway.” No wonder Paul says, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a).

What do we learn from Rom. 1:28–32? First, we learn that homosexual lust and behavior are not the worst of all sins. No sin is more evil than another before God, and no sin is too evil that it can’t be forgiven by Christ’s shed blood. Second, we dare not stand in judgment over those who practice homosexual behavior as though our sins are less evil. Paul is very clear that all sin is worthy of death and deserves God’s wrath — *and yet there is forgiveness for those who repent and trust in Christ!*

If heterosexual behavior outside of marriage and other non-sexual sins are just as bad as same-sex behavior, then why does Paul single out same-sex behavior in Rom. 1:26–27?

If same-sex lust and behavior are not worse than other sins, then why does Paul single out female and male homosexual lust and behavior and list it separately from the other sins mentioned in Rom. 1:28–32? The context helps us understand what Paul is trying to do. Paul teaches that licentious unbelievers ignore the Creator and worship created things. In other words, unbelievers create false gods that they can appease and bribe so they can live as they want — and the result of denying God’s laws (written on their hearts) is that they turn God’s plan for human life upside down.

Now, what is a very obvious example of turning God’s plan for human life upside down? Even though various sins could serve as examples, homosexual behavior clearly and obviously distorts the created order by reversing the natural function of sex between male and female — the “one flesh” union described in the Genesis account. In fact, Rom. 1:18–27 brings to mind the creation account in Genesis 1–2, where we read that God created the first two humans as “male and female” and gave them to each other in marriage. The Greek words that Paul uses for “men” and “women” (*arsenes* and *theleias*, respectively) in Rom. 1:27 are based on the same Greek words for “male and female” (*arsen* and *thelu*, respectively) used in Genesis 1–2 of the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was the common Bible among Jews in Paul’s day. Paul wants us to think about God’s creation of the first man and woman in Genesis! Also, the created anatomy of male and female are structured to be compatible with each other. This fact is so obvious that some people today even refer to certain electrical components as having “male” or “female” parts.

Therefore, Paul uses homosexual behavior as a clear example of what happens when licentious unbelievers suppress the truth of God in creation and choose to rebel against it. Because their suppression of the truth is so obvious (as with the example of homosexual lust and behavior), God says they are “without excuse” because “they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things

deserve to die” and yet “they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.” Of course, this is also true for non-sexual sins as well, because in Romans 2 Paul teaches that God has written His Law on the human heart.

Does Rom. 1:27 teach that God is only condemning people with a HETEROsexual orientation who engage in same-sex behavior while giving no condemnation to those with a HOMOsexual orientation who engage in same-sex behavior?

In his book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, John Boswell argues that when Paul says that men gave up “natural relations” for other men just as women gave up “natural relations” for other women, by “natural” Paul meant that heterosexuals were going against their natural orientation and engaging in homosexual behavior. In other words, according to Boswell, Paul is not condemning homosexual behavior per se, but only homosexual behavior that is contrary to “nature,” that is, contrary to one’s heterosexual orientation. Therefore, argues Boswell, if a person who has a homosexual orientation engages in homosexual behavior, this is not sin because it is not contrary to his or her “nature.”²⁸ How do we respond?

First, one must note that Boswell admits that Paul is condemning even consensual homosexual behavior — quite apart from whether it is associated with idol worship. Boswell writes: “...it is clear that the sexual behavior itself is objectionable to Paul ... and possibly more important, Paul is not describing cold-blooded, dispassionate acts performed in the interest of ritual or ceremony: he states very clearly that the parties involved ‘burned in their lust toward one another.’”²⁹ So how does Boswell get around Paul’s condemnation of homosexual behavior? Boswell’s solution is to argue that Paul is only condemning homosexual behavior by those who have a heterosexual orientation and who are thereby acting contrary to their “nature.”

However, the problem with Boswell’s argument is obvious. When Paul talks about “nature,” he is not referring to one’s “sexual orientation” (a modern category which Boswell imposes on the text of Romans). Instead, when Paul speaks of “nature” (the Greek word is *phusiken*) in the context of Romans 1, he means God’s created order! In other words, based on the creation account, it is “natural” for a man to have sex with a woman and it is “natural” for a woman to have sex with a man. However, it is contrary to “nature” when men have sex with men or when women have sex with women.

Even pro-gay scholars, who would be happy to agree with Boswell, admit that his argument fails when one considers the context of Rom. 1:26–27. For example, even though Martti Nissinen shows some appreciation for Boswell’s argument, he acknowledges that this argument does nothing to change the fact that Paul was condemning any type of homosexual behavior — whether performed by a person with a heterosexual or homosexual orientation. In his book *Homoeeroticism in the Biblical World*, Nissinen writes: “The distinction between sexual orientations is clearly an anachronism that does

28 See *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* by John Boswell, 108–117 and 303–332 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

29 See *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* by John Boswell, 108–117 and 303–332 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

not help to understand Paul's line of argumentation. Paul does not mention *tribades* or *kinaidoi*, that is, female and male persons who were habitually involved in homoerotic relationships; but if he knew about them (and there is every reason to believe that he did), it is difficult to think that, because of their apparent 'orientation,' he would not have included them in Romans 1:26–27.”³⁰

In addition, Nissinen also writes the following: “It is essential to notice that Paul speaks of homoeroticism precisely as a practice ... for him, there is no individual inversion or inclination that would make this conduct less culpable ... nothing would have made Paul approve homoerotic behavior. Clearly, Paul, to whom marriage was the only acceptable venue for sexual life, could not have approved of any same-sex interaction that even resembled sex between a man and a woman.”³¹

Another pro-gay scholar who disagrees with Boswell is the New Testament scholar Bernadette Brooten. In her book *Love Between Women*, she writes: “Paul could have believed that *tribades*, *kinaidoi*,³² and other sexually unorthodox persons were born that way and yet still condemn them as unnatural and shameful, this all the more so since he is speaking of groups of people rather than of individuals ... I believe that Paul used the word ‘exchanged’ to indicate that people knew the natural sexual order of the universe and left it behind ... Paul is condemning all forms of homoeroticism as the unnatural acts of people who had turned away from God.”³³

In addition, pro-gay scholar Louis Crompton, in his book *Homosexuality and Civilization*, responds to Boswell's argument with these words: “Some interpreters, seeking to mitigate Paul's harshness, have read the passage as condemning not homosexuals generally but only heterosexual men and women who experimented with homosexuality ... But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstances. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any other Jew or early Christian.”³⁴

The above quotes from pro-gay biblical scholars are enough to put Boswell's argument to rest. However, many others have refuted Boswell's argument as well.³⁵

30 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 109 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

31 *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* by Martti Nissinen, 111–112 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998).

32 The *tribades* and *kinaidoi* were people in Paul's day who had same-sex desires and acted on them. So the argument that Paul knew nothing about “homosexual orientation” simply cannot stand.

33 *Love Between Women* by Bernadette Brooten, 244 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

34 *Homosexuality and Civilization* by Louis Crompton, 114 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

35 See *The Same Sex Controversy* by James White and Jeffrey Niell, 125–127 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002); *Welcoming But Not Affirming* by Stanley Grenz, 49–50 (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); *Straight and Narrow?* by Thomas Schmidt, 77–83 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995); *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 254–269 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); *Understanding Homosexuality* by David Glesne, 115–124 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Kirk House Publishers, 2005); and *The Gay Gospel?* by Joe Dallas, 202–206 (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2007).

Does Rom. 1:26–27 condemn only adult men who force younger boys to engage in same-sex behavior while NOT condemning two adult men or women who consent to engage in same-sex behavior with each other?

In his book *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, Robin Scroggs³⁶ argues that Paul was only condemning abusive forms of homosexual behavior, such as pederasty.³⁷ However, even many pro-gay scholars disagree with Scroggs. For example, in her book *Love Between Women*, Bernadette Brooten writes: “Robin Scroggs has argued that in Rom. 1:27 Paul was opposing the principal form of homosexuality known in the Roman world, namely pederasty ... If Paul directed Rom. 1:27 mainly against pederasty out of humanitarian concern for the passive boy partner, several interpretive problems emerge. Why does Paul apply the phrase ‘deserve to die’ (Rom. 1:32) to all of the foregoing acts, not distinguishing between victims and perpetrators? ... Rom. 1:27, like Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, condemns all males in male-male relationships regardless of age, making it unlikely that lack of mutuality or concern for the passive boy were Paul's central concerns.”³⁸ Simply put, Paul nowhere mentions that abusive homosexual behavior is his concern. Instead, when Paul says that men “were consumed with passion for one another,” he thereby stresses that the consensual homosexual act itself is sinful and condemned by God.

Another bit of evidence that refutes Scroggs' argument is the fact that Paul also condemns consensual *female* homosexual behavior — and there is no evidence of *female* pederasty in the culture of Paul's day. In other words, if abusive forms of male homosexual behavior were Paul's only concern, then why condemn consensual female homosexual behavior? In view of this, Brooten writes: “If however, the dehumanizing aspects of pederasty motivated Paul to condemn sexual relations between males, then why did he condemn relations between females in the same sentence? ... Scroggs ... maintains his thesis concerning pederasty even though the sources on women do not support it.”³⁹ Brooten also adds: “The ancient sources, which rarely speak of sexual relations between women and girls, undermine Robin Scroggs's theory that Paul opposed homosexuality as pederasty.”⁴⁰

Does Paul merely condemn *lustful* but *not* loving, committed homosexual behavior?

Some try to suggest that Paul is merely condemning lustful homosexual behavior outside of a loving, committed relationship. However, based on what we know about homosexual behavior from Scripture so far, this argument is easy to refute.

First of all, the creation account clearly teaches that the only proper place for sexual activity is between one man and one woman within

36 *The New Testament and Homosexuality* by Robin Scroggs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

37 “Pederasty” refers to an adult man who has sex with a male teenager or boy — often against his will.

38 *Love Between Women* by Bernadette Brooten, 256–257 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

39 *Love Between Women* by Bernadette Brooten, 253, footnote #106 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

40 *Love Between Women* by Bernadette Brooten, 361 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

marriage. Therefore, the Levitical prohibitions against homosexual behavior as well as Paul's condemnation of homosexual behavior (which are based on the creation account in Genesis) would not condone homosexual behavior simply because the two involved are in a committed, loving relationship. Simply put, homosexual behavior *itself* is sinful and is not made right simply because two people love each other. For example, in his book *Homosexuality and Civilization*, pro-gay scholar Louis Crompton writes: "The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any other Jew or early Christian."⁴¹

In addition, should we then affirm other sexual sins as long as they take place within a committed, loving relationship? Is adult mother-son or father-daughter incest acceptable if it occurs within a committed, loving relationship? Certainly not. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul condemns an incestuous relationship even though the two involved were consensual and very likely loved each other. Should we affirm adultery as long as a husband and wife give each other permission and as long as they love the people with whom they are committing adultery? No. Adultery is condemned by God quite apart from whether a husband and wife give each other permission and love the people with whom they are committing adultery.

Not only does Paul condemn homosexual behavior itself — whether or not it occurs within a committed, loving relationship — but one could argue that the ongoing nature of homosexual behavior within a committed, loving relationship (in contrast with a "one-night stand") is all the more sinful because it prolongs a sinful behavior condemned by God's Word. For example, a person who agrees with God's Word that homosexual behavior is sinful but who has a lustful homosexual one-night stand during a time of weakness can repent of his or her sin and be forgiven. In contrast, people who practice homosexual behavior within a committed, loving relationship are refusing to repent of their sin and thereby deny the forgiveness of Christ.

Does the context of Rom. 1:26–27 suggest that Paul is condemning same-sex behavior only when it is engaged in by those who worship idols?

Some suggest that in Rom. 1:18–27 Paul is not condemning homosexual behavior *per se* but only homosexual behavior by those who reject the Triune God and worship idols. In other words, they argue that as long as you worship the Triune God and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your homosexual behavior is not condemned by God. In their book *The Children Are Free*, Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connoley write: "The model of homosexual behavior Paul was addressing here is explicitly associated with idol worship ... But this is not the experience of the vast majority of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people ... These are lovers of God who, nevertheless, have been attracted to people of the same sex from early in life ... Paul simply does not address our model of stable, loving homosexual relationships among people of faith."⁴²

⁴¹ *Homosexuality and Civilization* by Louis Crompton, 114 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁴² *The Children Are Free* by Jeff Miner and John Tyler Connoley, 14–16 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, 2002).

The fact is that Paul would have condemned any type of homosexual behavior — whatever the context or motivation. Paul's point is not that homosexual behavior is wrong only when it is performed in the context of idol worship. Instead, his point is that homosexual behavior is just one sin among many other sins that show how people have turned away from the one, true God.

For example, idolatry is one obvious way that people reject the one, true God. However, homosexual behavior (along with the many other sins Paul lists) is also an example of how people have turned away from the one, true God. If someone claims to worship the Triune God and yet rejects what He clearly teaches about sins such as adultery, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, greed, theft, gossip, murder and so on, then such a person has rejected God and is living in a state of unrepentant unbelief.

Another thing to consider is that Paul mentions many other sins in addition to homosexuality in the very same context where he mentions the sin of idolatry. Paul says that just as God "gave ... up" some people to their homosexual behavior, He also "gave ... up" some people to various other sins — which Paul lists in Rom. 1:28–32. Therefore, those who insist that homosexual behavior is only wrong when performed in the context of idol worship would also have to argue that other sins — such as adultery, greed, murder, deceit, gossip, disobeying parents — are to be tolerated or even affirmed as long as they are not performed within the context of idol worship. But who would argue for that ridiculous notion? Not very many people. In fact, in Col. 3:5 the apostle Paul says that various sins are equal to idolatry. In other words, all sin — including homosexual behavior — results in the rejection of God and the worship of one's own sinful desires and actions.

Does the context of Rom. 1:26–27 teach that same-sex behavior is a ritually impure behavior for a Jew but not a sin *per se*?

In his book *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, L. William Countryman argues that Rom. 1:26–27 is not teaching that homosexual behavior is sin. Instead, he suggests that the apostle Paul was teaching that homosexual behavior was merely "dirty," that is, something that would be considered crude by Paul's culture but not sinful. However, argues Countryman, our culture today no longer views homosexuality as being something "dirty." Therefore, he says, we should not condemn homosexual behavior as being sinful or even crude — especially if it takes place within a loving, committed relationship.⁴³ But did Paul actually argue that homosexual behavior was merely "dirty" for the culture of his day and not sinful? Not at all!

First, Paul's Jewish culture clearly understood that Scripture condemned homosexual behavior as being sinful and not merely crude or dirty. Second, in the very same context Paul mentions homosexual behavior along with many other sins (Rom. 1:28–32). Why should we believe that Paul would single out only homosexual behavior as being merely dirty when all the other desires and acts he mentions are clearly sinful?

⁴³ *Dirt, Greed, and Sex* by L. William Countryman, 104–123 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

In response to Countryman, James White and Jeffrey Niell (in their book *The Same Sex Controversy*) write: “This revisionist argument is surely one of the weakest offered, for it requires us to believe all of the following propositions: first, that in the midst of demonstrating the awful sinfulness of idolatry and its punishment, Paul would insert a sentence where he switches subjects to something that, while possibly ‘unusual’ in a social sense, is not actually sinful; second, that the context is to be broken up with no connection seen (despite the summary statement of 1:32); and finally, that when Paul spoke of ‘degrading passions,’ ‘indecent acts,’ and how those committing them would receive the ‘due penalty of their error,’ these are not indications of sinfulness.”⁴⁴

In addition, in his book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, Robert Gagnon writes: “...the context surrounding 1:26–27 makes clear that same-sex intercourse is sin for Paul. First, all the other conduct described in 1:18–32 is evaluated as sinful, so surely same-sex intercourse is as well. Second, the heading for 1:18–32 as a whole refers to God’s wrath ‘upon every ungodliness and unrighteousness of human beings who suppress the truth in unrighteousness’ (1:18). Third, same-sex intercourse parallels the sin of idolatry since both suppress the truth of God and God’s creation. Fourth, the description of gentile behavior in 1:18–32 is presented as partial proof of the ‘charge’ that ‘all are under sin’ (3:9; cf. 3:23: ‘all have sinned’).”⁴⁵

Finally, in her book *Love Between Women*, pro-gay scholar Bernadette Brooten responds to Countryman with these words: “...Countryman ... argues that Paul explicitly defines homosexual acts as impurity, rather than as sin ... Countryman’s sharp distinction between sin and impurity, however, does not hold up. He argues that homosexual acts were a purity issue for Leviticus (which ... define sexual relations between males as an ‘abomination,’ rather than an ‘impurity’), but ‘impurity’ (or ‘abomination’) and ‘sin’ are not mutually exclusive categories. Further, in Rom. 3:9, 23 Paul applies the category ‘sin’ to both Jews and gentiles, which I understand to refer back to the preceding chapters; Countryman does not discuss Rom. 3:9, 23. Finally, the structure Countryman proposes (Rom. 1:18–23: about sin; Rom. 1:24–27: about impurity, not sin; and Rom. 1:28–32: about sin) would be more convincing if the text contained stronger markers for indicating that the middle section concerns itself with mere impurity, rather than serious sin. In contrast, I see the three units as substantially interconnected.”⁴⁶

Simply put, Paul clearly teaches that homosexual behavior is *sinful* — and not just for people in his day, but for all people of all times and places.

44 *The Same Sex Controversy* by James White and Jeffrey Niell, 133–134 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002).

45 *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 276 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

46 *Love Between Women* by Bernadette Brooten, 235–236, footnote #57 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

What does 1 Cor. 6:9–10 say about same-sex behavior?

In order to understand what Paul is teaching us here, we must first take a look at the Greek words behind the English translation. The Greek word *pornoi* is translated as “sexually immoral” by some English translations. In this case, *pornoi* most likely refers to prostitution (which Paul addresses in 1 Cor. 6:16), to fornication (sex between people who are not married) or to incest (which Paul addresses in 1 Cor. 5:1–5) — or to *all* three forms of sexual sin! The reason that the meaning of *pornoi* in this context is more limited is that Paul goes on to mention other particular sexual sins. For example, the Greek word *moichoi* is usually translated as “adulterers” — it’s related to the Greek word Jesus uses for “adultery” in Mark 7:21. The Greek word *moichoi* refers to people who have sex with another person’s spouse. In addition, the Greek word *malakoi* is sometimes translated as “male prostitutes.” The basic meaning of *malakoi* is “soft,” and it was used to describe a man who would sometimes act as though he were a woman and then take the “passive role” during a same-sex encounter. (I want to stress the point that *malakoi* refers to effeminate men who were also involved in homosexual behavior because there are some men who are less masculine and more effeminate than other men — *but this characteristic in and of itself is not sinful*. There are many men who have effeminate characteristics and yet are heterosexual in orientation, or if they do have same-sex desires, do not act on them.) Therefore, *malakoi* refers to men who willingly (and without remorse or repentance) take the role of a woman in order to engage in homosexual behavior. Scholars debate about whether *malakoi* merely refers to men who took the passive role in homosexual behavior or whether *malakoi* also entails the act of prostitution. In view of the fact that the very next word Paul uses in his list of sins — the Greek word *arsenokoitai* — can refer to both the *active* and *passive* partners in homosexual behavior, it is likely that *malakoi* refers to males who sell their sexual favors as the passive homosexual partner. In other words, by putting *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* immediately next to each other in his list of sins, Paul is thereby condemning not only homosexual *prostitution* but also *consensual* homosexual behavior without the element of prostitution.

The Greek word often translated as “homosexual offenders” is *arsenokoitai* — which literally means “men who go to bed with men” (from the Greek word *arsen* = “male” and the Greek word *koite* = “bed”). A closer examination of the Greek word *arsenokoitai* will help us to see that Paul is using this word to condemn even consensual forms of homosexual behavior. Some scholars have suggested that we can’t know for sure what Paul meant by the Greek word *arsenokoitai* because it is not found in any other Greek literature before or during Paul’s time. However, if we recall that Paul used the universal sexual prohibitions found in Leviticus 18 and 20 as the basis for his teaching about sexual sins, we can then find a strong clue as to what Paul meant by the word *arsenokoitai*.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament is known as the Septuagint. The Septuagint was a common translation of the Old Testament for both Jewish and Gentile Christians in Paul’s day. If one reads the Septuagint translation of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, we discover the likely source for Paul’s unique word *arsenokoitai*. The

Septuagint (Greek) translation of Lev. 18:22 is: *kai meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gunaikos Bdelugma gar estin*.⁴⁷ Notice the two words in bold print: **arsenos** and **koiten**. In addition, the Septuagint translation of Lev. 20:13 is: *kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gunaikos, Bdelugma epoieisan amphoteroi Thanatousthosan, enochoi eisin*.⁴⁸ Notice the two words in bold print: **arsenos** and **koiten**.

Many scholars believe that Paul coined his own Greek word based on the Greek translation of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. Paul made a compound Greek word out of *arsenos* and *koiten* in order to stress to his readers (who would have been familiar with the Septuagint) that even consensual homosexual behavior is sinful, which is the clear teaching of Lev. 20:13.

In view of the meaning of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor. 6:9 and its connection to the Septuagint translation of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, Robert Gagnon (in his book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*) writes: "...the likely derivation of the word from the Levitical prohibitions ... strengthens the case for an inclusive meaning. What kind of same-sex intercourse would have hurdled the obstacle of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 in Paul's mind? Surely none since these prohibitions speak generically of all men who have sexual intercourse with any and every kind of male."⁴⁹

In addition to Paul's clear allusion to Lev. 20:13, we must also note that in Rom. 1:27, where Paul deals with male homosexual behavior, he mentions "men ... with men" — and the Greek is *arsenes en arsesin*. Paul uses a Greek word for "men" that is also used in the Septuagint translation of Gen. 1:27 and Lev. 18:22. When we compare Paul's use of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor. 6:9 with his use of *arsenes en arsesin* in Rom. 1:27, it becomes clear that Paul is using *arsenokoitai* to refer even to consensual forms of homosexual behavior.

Therefore, when Paul uses *arsenokoitai* after *malakoi* in 1 Cor. 6:9, he is stressing that both the active and passive partners in a consensual homosexual relationship are guilty of sin before God. Just like Rom. 1:26–27, Paul's teaching about homosexual behavior in 1 Cor. 6:9 also applies to consensual homosexual behavior today!

Does 1 Cor. 6:9–10 teach that if one has ever engaged in any of these sins, it is impossible for such a person to enter God's kingdom?

In 1 Cor. 6:9–11, Paul lists many other sins besides homosexual behavior. Once again, this reminds us that homosexual behavior is not the worst of all sins. Homosexual behavior is one sin among many. Paul stresses that all of these sins (and many others he didn't bother to list) will prevent us from inheriting the kingdom of God if we refuse to repent of these sins and trust in Jesus for salvation.

⁴⁷ The English translation of this Greek text of Lev. 18:22 is: "And thou shalt not lie with a man as with a woman, for it is an abomination." (Taken from the Translation [of the Septuagint into English] by Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, 1851).

⁴⁸ The English translation of this Greek text of Lev. 20:13 is: "And whoever shall lie with a male as with a woman, they have both wrought abomination; let them die the death, they are guilty." (Taken from the Translation [of the Septuagint into English] by Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, 1851.)

⁴⁹ *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon, 326 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

Therefore, we must understand that when Paul says that those who practice homosexual behavior "will not inherit the kingdom of God," he is speaking about UNBELIEVERS — those who refuse to acknowledge their sin and thereby reject the forgiveness that Jesus longs to give them for that sin. In contrast, there are many men and women today who bear the burden of homosexual desire and behavior but who acknowledge this as sin and trust in Jesus for mercy and the strength to live a new life. Such repentant believers are part of God's kingdom NOW through faith in Christ!

In addition, many of the repentant believers in Corinth to whom Paul was writing were once unrepentant unbelievers who were outside of God's kingdom. But all that changed when they heard Paul's preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name (Luke 24:46–47) — and this same preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name continues to call people from unbelief into the kingdom of God.

When 1 Cor. 6:11 says, "And such were some of you," does this mean that once a person repents and trusts in Christ he or she will no longer struggle with same-sex desire or behavior?

When Paul tells repentant believers who bear the burden of homosexuality that they once were unrepentant unbelievers, this does not mean that such people have ceased to have homosexual desires. Being a Christian does not mean that you no longer struggle with sin. There are some Christians who will struggle with homosexual desire and behavior until the day they die. But these same people acknowledge their sin and trust in Jesus as their Savior — and so they are now in God's kingdom.

When Paul says that Christians were "washed" (Greek: *apelousasthe*), he is very likely referring to God's gift of Holy Baptism wherein God washes away the guilt of our sin by the power of Jesus' shed blood. When Paul says that Christians were "sanctified" (Greek: *eigiastheite*), he is teaching that we have been "set apart" as holy to the Lord. We belong to Him and nothing — not any sin — can separate us from His love. When Paul says that Christians were "justified" (Greek: *edikaiotheite*), he is reminding us that God has pronounced us to be righteous in His sight; God has declared us "not guilty" before His throne. This verdict is true and certain in spite of the fact that we continue to struggle with various sinful desires and behaviors.

Paul says that we Christians were washed, sanctified and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." With these words, Paul points us to the mystery of the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We Christians were baptized into His name — the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Our Baptism defines our identity, not our sin. So if you bear the burden of homosexual desire and behavior, know that this sin does not define who you are. If you have been baptized, then your identity is in Christ — and He defines who you are! In Rom. 6:4, the apostle Paul writes: "We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

I have a non-Christian friend who is also gay. How do I witness to him or her?

We should not begin our witness to such a person by dealing with the issue of his or her homosexual behavior. In fact, our ultimate goal with any people who bear the burden of homosexual behavior is not merely to get them to stop their homosexual behavior. Instead, our ultimate goal is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts so that we can receive and believe in the forgiveness and new life that the Father gives us in His Son, Jesus. Without faith in Christ, ceasing any type of sinful behavior does nothing to save us from our sinful condition.

Therefore, if a person engaged in homosexual behavior is a non-Christian, after building a trusting relationship with him or her, you will want to begin your witness with basic information about God, creation, the fall of Adam and Eve, original sin and our need for the person and work of Christ, God's Son. Help this person to see how God's plan of salvation unfolds throughout the history recorded in Holy Scripture — finding its fulfillment in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Once this person understands the nature of original sin and the hope we have in Jesus, you will then be in a position to deal with particular sin issues in his or her life — including his or her homosexual desire and behavior. The last impression we want to give to a non-Christian is that Christianity is just one more performance-based religion that requires us to obey certain rules and live a certain way in order to be worthy of God's love. Instead, we want to show people the true God who reveals Himself to us in the cross where He sacrificed Himself to save His enemies and make them His children.

I have a friend who says he's a Christian and that he believes the Bible is God's Word and the authority for what we should believe. But he also affirms same-sex behavior. How do I witness to him?

Some people who are currently involved in homosexual behavior say that they believe in Christ and that they agree with every teaching of the Christian faith. They even stress that they submit to the authority of Holy Scripture. However, they justify their homosexual behavior because they believe that Christians have misinterpreted the Bible's prohibitions against homosexual behavior. They have been led to believe that God does not condemn homosexual behavior as long as it takes place within a loving, committed, consensual, monogamous relationship.

Once we build a trusting friendship with such people, we should ask if they would be willing to study Holy Scripture about this issue. We should say to such a person: "We both believe that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone. Also, we both agree that we should submit to the authority of Holy Scripture. Can we study Holy Scripture together so we can learn what God truly teaches about homosexual behavior within a loving, committed, consensual, monogamous relationship? If you can show me from Scripture that I am wrong about God condemning even such homosexual behavior as this, then I will repent of my error and affirm your homosexual

behavior within a loving, committed, consensual, monogamous relationship. However, if I can convince you from Holy Scripture that God does condemn even your type of homosexual behavior, then will you be willing to acknowledge your error, repent of your sin and rejoice in the forgiveness and healing that Jesus longs to give you?" If such a person is honest about his or her respect for the authority Holy Scripture and his or her desire to live according to God's will, then such a person should be willing to study Holy Scripture and submit to what it says about homosexual behavior.

If such a person does study Holy Scripture with you and is convinced that his or her type of homosexual behavior is also condemned by God's Word, then you must assure this person that he or she is completely forgiven and holy in God's sight because of Jesus and His work on our behalf. You will need to surround such a person with Christian love and support as well as prayer, because it will be a difficult struggle for him or her to turn away from his or her homosexual behavior — especially if he or she has been in a long-term relationship with his or her partner.

I have a friend who claims to be a Christian but who also believes that the Bible contains errors and, therefore, cannot be trusted regarding the issue of same-sex behavior. How do I witness to him or her?

Some who bear the burden of homosexual desire and behavior may be willing to admit that Holy Scripture condemns all forms of homosexual behavior, but they dismiss Scripture's teaching about homosexual behavior because they believe that Holy Scripture need not be taken seriously. They have many objections about the doctrines of Christianity. They have many arguments that supposedly prove that the Bible is full of contradictions and shouldn't be trusted.

Before we attempt to speak God's truth in love to such people regarding their homosexual behavior, we must first deal honestly with their objections to the Christian faith and their arguments against the authority of Holy Scripture. We may not have to discuss the basic teachings of Christianity, since such people may already be aware of such teachings due to being raised as Christians and having once believed in Christ. However, we must be willing to engage in some apologetics with such people and help them to recognize that their objections to and arguments against the Christian faith are unfounded.

However, we must also remember that apologetics can only take us so far. Apologetics is a useful tool to expose the falsehood of people's objections to the Christian faith and their arguments against taking Holy Scripture seriously. But we can never bring people to faith in Christ through rational discussion. Therefore, at some point in the apologetics process, we need to ask such people if we can simply share what we believe with them. If they give us permission, then we tell them God's story of salvation as recorded in Holy Scripture. We should not attempt to defend God's plan of salvation, nor should we try to make God's plan of salvation sound rational (as though we could ever do that!). Instead, we must simply proclaim the Gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to create faith in their hearts.

Once the Holy Spirit gives people new hearts of faith, all their objections to and arguments against God's Word will fall away. They will now live by faith and not by sight. Once we have gone through this process, we can then address particular sin issues in their lives — including their homosexual behavior. Always remember that our ultimate goal is not to get such people to stop their homosexual behavior. Our ultimate goal is for them to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

I have a friend who believes in Christ and agrees with Scripture that same-sex behavior is a sin. This same friend also struggles with same-sex attraction and has much guilt over this. How to I minister to her?

Some people who are burdened by homosexual desire agree with Holy Scripture that all forms of homosexual behavior are sinful. However, some of these same people have never heard the true Gospel, and so they are in despair under God's wrath. If we ever meet such a person, we must understand that the last thing he or she needs to hear is that homosexual behavior is sinful. God's Word has already convicted him or her of sin. God's Law has done its job, and His Law has taken this person as far as it can. God's Law can only lead us sinners to despair under His wrath. God's Law can never comfort a despairing heart, nor can God's Law move us to cease our sinful behavior for godly reasons.

Therefore, if we meet a person who is convicted of the sin of his or her homosexual behavior and knows that he or she deserves God's wrath, then we must proclaim the Gospel. We must say to this person: "In Jesus' name I say to you: 'Your sins are forgiven. You are holy and innocent in God's sight. God loves you here and now. He will help you to resist your homosexual desires and live a pure life. If you do fall back into homosexual behavior during a moment of weakness, then you will fall into Christ's loving arms! He will pick you up and help you to live as His dearly loved and forgiven child!'"

Lutherans confess the scriptural doctrine known as objective justification. When Jesus said, "It is finished!" the sins of all people were forgiven! You see, the problem with unbelievers is not that they have not done something to get God's forgiveness. The problem with unbelievers is that they don't believe in the forgiveness that they already have in Christ. They have the gift, but they don't believe it. They don't trust God because they believe He won't love them or forgive them until they are worthy. Therefore, when unbelievers are crushed by God's Law and despair under God's wrath, the only way they can subjectively believe that they are already forgiven is if we proclaim the objective Gospel that is a present reality for them because of Christ's finished work on the cross for all sinners. We must remember this whenever we meet someone who is in despair under God's wrath because he or she agrees with God's Word that his or her homosexual behavior is sinful. Such a person needs to hear the Gospel!

