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VALUES™



# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Answering revisionist gay theology

REVISED AND EDITED: JEFF JOHNSTON

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

For almost 2,000 years, the Christian Church spoke with one voice about marriage and sexuality, teaching biblical truth:

- God created humans in His image, male and female;
- Marriage was designed by God to be a life-long, committed, monogamous relationship between a husband and wife; and
- Other sexual relationships outside of marriage—including homosexuality—are sin.

As Christianity grew, and wherever the faith spread, the Church upheld these truths. Granted, not all Christians followed biblical teaching perfectly, but as the majority of Christians taught and demonstrated God's good plan for marriage and sexuality, the world was transformed. There was widespread agreement among theologians, pastors, scholars and teachers about what the Bible said on these issues, including that homosexual behavior was a sin.

*Until 1955.*

In that year, a British priest, Derrick Sherwin Bailey, published a book, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, questioning the traditional interpretation of some biblical passages dealing with homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> Since then, other scholars, writers and activists have followed and gone beyond Bailey, using a variety of arguments to support the idea that Scripture does not teach homosexual behavior is a sin. They argue that the Church has misunderstood Scripture and that same-sex relationships should be accepted and celebrated.

This "revisionist gay theology" has led to confusion among many Christians about what the Bible actually says about homosexuality.<sup>2</sup>

***Despite these zealous attempts to reinterpret particular biblical passages, God's Word is clear about His design for sexuality.*** The true intent of the biblical narrative—from Genesis to Revelation, taught and affirmed by Moses, Christ and Paul, and espoused in both Judaism and Christianity for thousands of years—cannot be denied, changed or twisted to fit a different sexual agenda.

As we look at what the Bible says about homosexuality and answer revisionist gay theology, our starting point will be God's original intentions for human sexuality. Then we'll look at specific passages in the Bible and respond to some of



the revisionist arguments against the Church's traditional, biblical interpretation and teaching. We'll conclude with encouragement and exhortation for those struggling with same-sex attractions and for Christians who engage in this discussion.

"We believe that God created humans in His image, intentionally and immutably male and female, each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a glorious gift from God to be offered back to Him either in marriage for procreation, union, and mutual delight or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ."

**—THE VALUE OF MALE AND FEMALE, FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S "SIXTH PILLAR"**

## GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENT

**God isn't silent about human sexuality.** Through its entirety, the Bible addresses the beauty, power, wonder and purposes of sex. Like any good gift, sex may be misused, so the Bible gives guidance about this, as well.

Scripture begins with God creating the world—all that surrounds it and all that it contains. As the final act of Creation, God makes humanity in His image, male and female. He designs two distinct but complementary creatures, made for each other. God brings them together and commands them to have dominion over the earth and to have children.

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27*

*"The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,*

*"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'*

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:20-24*

From this passage we can draw several important points about human sexuality and marriage. We are created in the image of God, male and female. **Human masculinity and femininity uniquely reflect God's image.** In the Creation account in Genesis chapter two, man is alone in the world. God fashions the woman out of substance taken from the man. She is like him, a human, yet she is distinct and complementary, a woman. **The man and the woman are created for each other, made to partner with each other.**

Genesis teaches that following this pattern, marriage takes place when a husband and wife

leave their families to come together in a unique, one-flesh relationship. The Lord Jesus quotes this passage when He is questioned about marriage (Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). He emphasizes that marriage unites a husband and wife in a relationship that is not to be broken.

Renowned Christian apologist  
C. S. Lewis notes:



*“The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ’s words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism—for that is what the words ‘one flesh’ would be in modern English. And the Christians believe that when He said this He was not expressing a sentiment but stating a fact—just as one is stating a fact when one says that a lock and its key are one mechanism, or that a violin and a bow are one musical instrument. The inventor of the human machine was telling us that its two halves, the male and the female, were made to be combined together in pairs, not simply on a sexual level, but totally combined.”<sup>3</sup>*

Within marriage, the sexual relationship bonds together a husband and wife as one flesh. In the usual course of events, that sexual relationship brings forth new life. Sexual intimacy creates family, and God designed marriage to join a husband and wife to each other to be mother and father to any children they have.

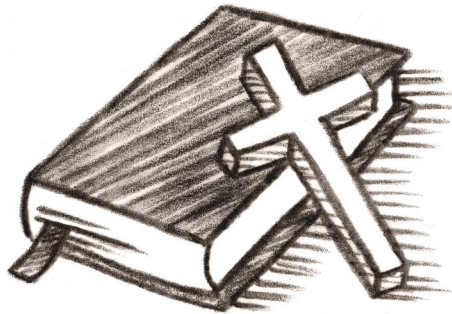
Because this relationship is so central to creation and humanity, God’s heart for marriage is woven throughout the Old and New Testaments. ***Marriage is the most important picture in Scripture of our own relationship with God.*** In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as a husband, and His wife is the nation of Israel. She is unfaithful, but still His own, and He lovingly pursues her. In the New Testament, the Church is the Bride of Christ. Christ’s love for the Church drives Him to sacrifice Himself for her.

## A CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHIC

***The Christian sexual ethic is simple: Marriage between a husband and wife is the place for sexual expression.*** Sadly, Adam and Eve fell into sin, and their sin affected each one of us, as well as every aspect of us, including our sexuality and relationships. Any kind of relational sin, whether envy, lying, hatred, violence, rage, gossip or disobedience to authority, falls short of God’s design. Sexual sins—such as sex outside of marriage, pornography, homosexual relationships, prostitution, rape, or lust—also miss God’s design. So although this ethic is simple, given our fallen state it is difficult for humans to follow. Actually, it is impossible to follow, which is why we need a Savior.

This Christian ethic is found throughout Scripture, not just in Genesis. “According to the biblical understanding, sexual intercourse is connected to the coming together of two persons as sexual beings into a one-flesh union,” says Stanley J. Grenz, Ph.D., a theologian and author of the book *Welcoming But Not Affirming*. “It represents the act of two-becoming-one at the deepest level of their being (e.g., Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6).”<sup>4</sup>

Same-sex relationships do not bring together complementary sexual persons—a male and a female. Regarding homosexual behavior, Grenz continues:



*“...same-sex intercourse loses the symbolic dimension of two-becoming-one present in male-female sex. At best, it is only a simulation of the two-becoming-one ritual the act of sexual intercourse is designed to be.”<sup>5</sup>*

Homosexuality is egregious and harmful because it rejects God’s design at its deepest point: Male and female were created for each other and together reflect the image of God. Same-sex relationships imply that the unique attributes both

male and female bring to the table don’t make much difference, that man and woman are virtually interchangeable.

**AS WE ADDRESS  
REVISIONIST THEOLOGY,  
WE DO NOT WISH TO  
ATTACK OR BELITTLE  
INDIVIDUALS.**

*Now, as we address revisionist theology, we do not wish to attack or belittle individuals. We speak clearly the truth of Scripture: Sexual activity is reserved for marriage between a husband and wife; and sexuality outside of those boundaries, including homosexuality, is a sin.* Those

who deny the sin of homosexual behavior deny people the opportunity to confess and turn from sin and then receive God’s forgiveness, grace and salvation. Let’s look at some of those revisionist gay arguments.

## **ANSWERING REVISIONIST GAY THEOLOGY**

Since God’s design for human sexuality and marriage is so clear, how do gay revisionist theologians support their position? How do they use Scripture? *If Christians are serious about*

*reaching out to homosexuals in truth and love, we will have to understand and address this revisionist theology.*

Typically, theological revisionists don't address our starting point and strongest argument: God designed sexual relationships for one woman and one man in a marriage. Nor do they spend much time on the fact that Moses, Paul and Jesus affirmed and taught this truth, or that for 2,000 years the Church has taught this. Instead, they attempt to re-interpret various Scriptures

that address and condemn same-sex sexual behavior.

As someone who used to identify as gay, Joe Dallas is a counselor, teacher and author who explains we must be prepared to answer revisionist arguments:

*"[Revisionist gay] theology offers what appears to be a series of conservative, fundamentalist responses to conservative, fundamentalist objections. That is, it meets every Bible verse referring to homosexuality head on, and attempts to explain why each*

*verse is misunderstood today. Common sense may reject it, but until it is examined a bit more closely, it is difficult to refute."*<sup>6</sup>

Difficult? *Perhaps.* But not impossible.

***We can respond effectively to this particular brand of Scripture-twisting, if we do our homework.*** Let's take a closer look at the relevant biblical passages, the assertions of homosexual revisionist scholars and some suggested responses.<sup>7</sup>

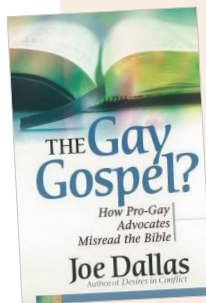
Before we begin, we want to make an important distinction. ***Homosexuality is comprised of many aspects, including these three: attractions, behavior and identity.*** We make a distinction between the three and note that only same-sex behavior and lust are condemned in Scripture. So when the Bible uses words like "abomination" or "detestable" it ***is not talking about people, but about behaviors in which people engage.*** We regret that such words have been used to describe individuals.

## THE CREATION ACCOUNT

Here's how revisionists respond to the Genesis account, quoted above (starting on p. 3).

### CAN YOU BE GAY AND CHRISTIAN?

Joe Dallas thought he could be actively gay and Christian. But God was tugging at his heart. From his background in the "gay church," this popular author and speaker explains in ***The Gay Gospel***:<sup>8</sup>



- The history of the "gay Christian" movement;
- Their revisionist arguments; and
- How to respond with biblical truth and compassion.

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## REVISIONIST ARGUMENT

*“The Genesis account does not forbid homosexuality; it simply does not refer to it.”*

## RESPONSE

While it is true this passage does not forbid homosexual relations, it does provide the model—the standard—for human sexuality. The male-female marriage union, introduced in Genesis, is the only type of sexual behavior consistently praised in both Old and New Testaments. Moses,

Jesus and Paul each point to Genesis as the primary text for understanding God’s design in creation.

We must look at all forms of sexual expression through the lens of marriage and the male/female complementarity of God’s design in Genesis. Robert Gagnon, Ph.D., one of the world’s foremost scholars on homosexuality, writes about how God brings forth the woman from the man, creating a longing within them to reunite through marriage and sexual intercourse. “The woman is not just like himself but ‘from himself’ and thereby a complementary fit to himself. She is a complementary sexual ‘other.’”<sup>9</sup>

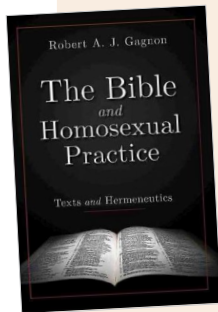
Gagnon explains that this teaching from Genesis permeates Scripture.

All through the Bible, men and women are presented as biologically complementary for the purposes of sexual activity and reproduction. ***This complementarity is “clear and convincing proof of God’s will for sexual unions.”*** Echoing Paul in the book of Romans, Gagnon continues by saying that even those who don’t believe the Bible should be able to figure out God’s design because of the physical structure of created humanity.<sup>11</sup>

## DIG DEEPER INTO WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Robert A. J. Gagnon’s book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*,<sup>10</sup> is the premier scholarly work for those who wish to

explore biblical texts on this timely topic. Gagnon carefully examines the original language and the historical context, as he explains the Bible’s teaching about homosexuality.



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## THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

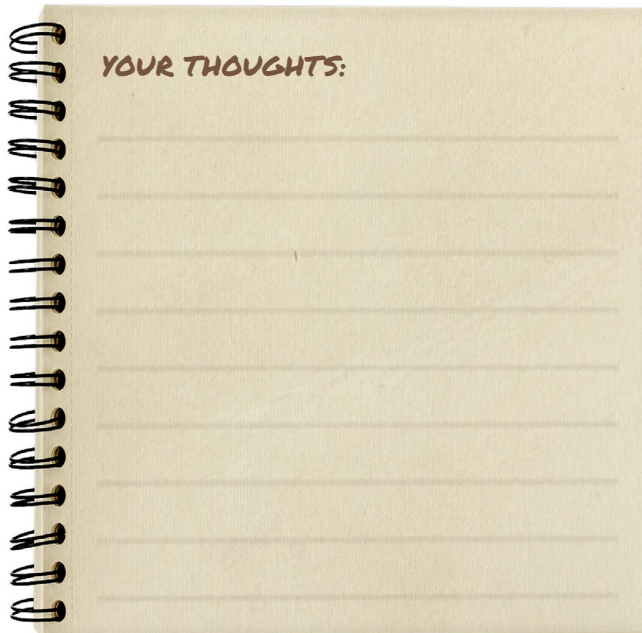
*“[T]he men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.’ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.’ But they said, ‘Stand back!’ And they said, ‘This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the*



*judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.” Genesis 19:4-9*

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #1

*“God destroyed Sodom because of the inhospitality of its citizens, not because of homosexuality.”*



### RESPONSE

The argument makes no sense in light of Lot’s words and actions. His first response, “Don’t do this wicked thing,” could hardly apply to a simple request to “get to know” his guests. The second thing Lot does is especially telling: He answered the demands of the men of the city by offering his two virgin daughters—another senseless gesture if the men wanted only a social knowledge of his guests. Surely the people of the town were acquainted with Lot’s daughters, and Lot’s answer makes clear that he and the townsmen are talking about sexual activity.

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #2

*“Sodom was destroyed for attempted rape, not homosexuality.”*

### RESPONSE

The argument is partially true; the men of Sodom certainly were proposing rape. But for such an event to include “all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old,” homosexuality must have been commonly practiced.

Thomas Schmidt, Ph.D., in his book, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*, cites evidence in early literature connecting Sodom with more general homosexual practices. The literature says the people of Sodom were “sexually promiscuous” and “departed from the order of nature.”<sup>12</sup> Here, “the order of nature” is a reference to male-female complementarity.

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #3

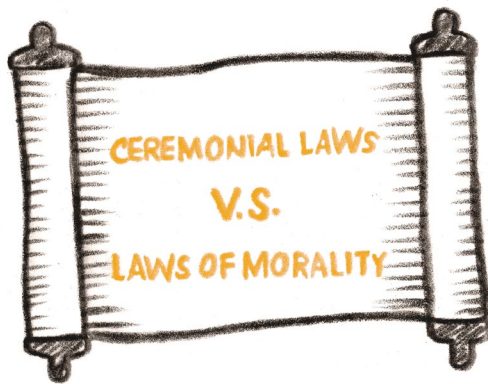
*“The real sins of Sodom, according to Ezekiel 16:49, were ‘pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but [they] did not aid the poor and needy.’ These have nothing to do with homosexuality.”*

### RESPONSE

Again, the argument is only partially true. When Sodom was destroyed, homosexuality was one aspect of its wickedness. But Ezekiel also mentions “the abominations” (Ezekiel 16:47) of the city and says, “They were haughty and did an abomination



before me” (Ezekiel 16:50). The word “abomination” is the same word used to describe homosexual activity in Leviticus 18 and 20, and many Jewish readers would have made that connection. When we read 2 Peter 2:6-7 and Jude 7, we learn that this “abomination” included sexual immorality and homosexual conduct.



## THE HOLINESS CODE

*“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.’*

*“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*

*“If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.”  
Leviticus 18:1-3, 22; 20:13*

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #1

*“The practices mentioned in these chapters of Leviticus have to do with idolatry, not homosexuality.”*

### RESPONSE

The prohibitions against homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20 appear within lists of other sexual sins—adultery and incest, for example—which are forbidden in both Old and New Testaments. If the practices in Leviticus 18 and 20 are condemned only because of their association with idolatry, then it logically follows they would be permissible if they were committed apart from idolatry. That would mean incest, adultery, bestiality, and child sacrifice (all of which are listed in these chapters) are only condemned when associated with idolatry; otherwise, they are allowable. No serious reader of these passages could accept such a premise.

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #2

*“The Holiness Code’s injunction against homosexual acts is not an ethical but rather a ceremonial prohibition. It focuses on Jewish ritual cleanness or ceremonial impurity, not on behavior that is immoral or sinful.”*

## RESPONSE

This argument, too, is based on a partial truth. New Testament scholar Stanley Grenz says:

*“This theory is a helpful reminder that the Holiness Code arose partly out of a concern for ritual purity. However, it is not completely clear that the injunctions against sex acts such as bestiality and same-sex intercourse fall in this category....*

*“Further, by claiming that the Holiness Code prohibition of homosexual acts arises merely out of concern for ceremonial purity and not for morality, the argument assumes a disjunction between ethics and ritual uncleanness that is foreign to Leviticus....*

*“Considerations such as these make it difficult to get around the conclusion that the Holiness Code prohibits homosexual acts in general and that it did so on the basis of concerns that were at least in part moral.”<sup>13</sup>*

Grenz also notes that the Law of Moses usually portrays ritual impurity as “a condition that was involuntarily contracted, whereas it presents these forbidden sexual practices as willful.”<sup>14</sup> A person could take steps to become ritually clean. The death penalty for sex between two males, rather than action to achieve ritual purity, points to the serious nature of the sin.

## REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #3

*“You don’t follow all of Leviticus; you eat shellfish and wear mixed threads, don’t you? Those are prohibited in the same passages as the verses on homosexuality.”*

## RESPONSE

Of course, sexual activity is a much bigger deal than eating shrimp or wearing a polyester-cotton blend shirt. They are not equivalent. In addition, we don’t throw out other sexual ethics in Leviticus 18 and 20, such as the prohibitions against incest or adultery.

Michael L. Brown, Ph.D., author and theologian, helps explain the difference between dietary laws that applied to Israel and ethical laws that apply to everyone:

*“Within the Torah (God’s Teaching and Law), there were many laws given to Israel to keep them separate from the nations (like Leviticus 19:19). That’s why the Torah said that certain foods, like shellfish, were unclean for the Israelites but not for all people (see Deuteronomy 14:7, 19). On the other hand, there were laws given to Israel that were universal in scope, like the command not to murder.*

*"When it comes to homosexual practice, not only is it the only sinful action singled out in Leviticus as an abomination, but it is part of a list of universal moral prohibitions, including incest and other forbidden sexual acts. We know this because the chapter states that the Lord judged the pagan nations for these very acts, and if acts were wrong for idol-worshipping pagans, they were wrong for the people of Israel (see Leviticus 18:24-30). And when we see that the prohibition against homosexual practice is reiterated in the New Testament, the case is settled for those who accept the Bible as God's Word."<sup>15</sup>*

## DAVID AND JONATHAN

*"And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David." 1 Samuel 19:1*

*[David is lamenting the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.]  
"Jonathan lies slain on your high places. 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 a woman." 2 Samuel 1:25-26*

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT

*"David and Jonathan were obviously homosexual lovers."*

### RESPONSE

Given the evidence of the biblical text, the conclusion is anything but obvious. Instead, this interpretation reflects a set of cultural assumptions—in particular, a highly sexualized interpretation of the word "love"—which is more characteristic of modern Western society than of the ancient Near East. Contrary to the implications of contemporary movie plots and song lyrics, "love" and "sex" are not mutually

interchangeable terms. They certainly weren't in biblical times, and we shouldn't impose our worldview on ancient times.

Demonstrative, emotionally charged same-sex friendships were common in David and Jonathan's cultural context. Stanley Grenz notes that the language of David's lament

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is typical of that used in treaties. In this case, it's as if David were describing or establishing a treaty between himself and Jonathan's family. Grenz

also notes that both David and Jonathan married women and fathered children.<sup>18</sup>

The Bible does not avoid David's sins—including pointing out his orchestration of the murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). If David had sinned homosexually, certainly Scripture would have noted it, and he might have incurred the penalty for such activity.

## PLURAL MARRIAGE IN SCRIPTURE

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT

*"Many in the Bible, including Abraham and David, practiced polygamy. Why aren't you open to practicing polygamy and other types of sexual relationships?"*

### RESPONSE

The Bible is honest about sexual sin in a fallen world and *describes* many kinds of sexual activity, including polygamy, incest, prostitution, rape and homosexuality, all of which are rejected as God's design. But the only kind of sexual behavior the Bible *prescribes* is marriage between one man and one woman.

## JESUS

*"He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'" Matthew 19:4-6*

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT

*"Jesus never taught against homosexuality or lesbianism. In fact, He was silent on the issue."*

### RESPONSE #1

As Grenz writes:

*"[A]rguments from silence are notoriously difficult to substantiate. We might just as easily conclude*

**Michael L. Brown, Ph.D., has written several helpful books about Christianity and homosexuality. Here are two we highly recommend:**

### *Outlasting the Gay Revolution: Where Homosexual Activism Is Really Going and How to Turn the Tide*<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Brown offers eight biblical principles for a Christian response to this important issue.

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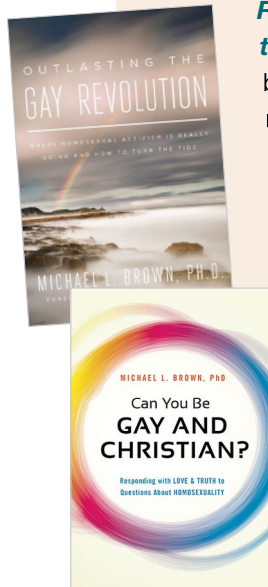
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### *Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality*<sup>17</sup>

This book gives a compassionate, clear and biblical response to gay revisionist theology.

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*that other acts about which Jesus was silent were equally unimportant to the Master. For example, does His silence about incest mean that we are no longer bound to the Old Testament prohibitions in this area?”<sup>19</sup>*

There is a much simpler and more obvious explanation for Jesus’ silence. Homosexuality was not a controversial issue for the Jews of His day. It was a settled issue in Israel that homosexual behavior was a sin, so Jesus was not asked about it.

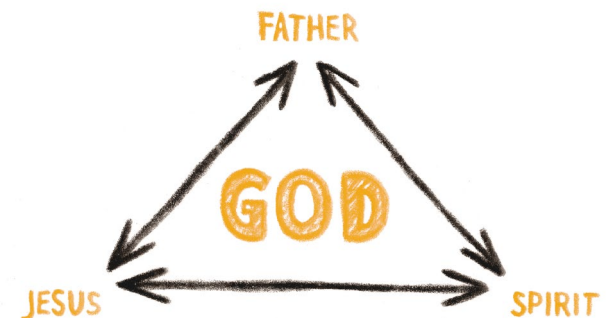
### RESPONSE #2

Jesus is the Son of God; He is the living Word, God made flesh. The revisionist argument assumes that Jesus somehow might have had a different view of homosexuality from that which God made clear to His people in the Old Testament. Jesus is one with the Father, and the Spirit, and the same Holy Spirit inspired all the authors of Scripture. Jesus kept and affirmed all that the Law and the Prophets taught (Matthew 5:17-19).

### RESPONSE #3

Jesus said everything that needed to be said on the subject of sexual ethics when, as cited above, He quoted Genesis in response to the Pharisees’ question about divorce. In other words, Jesus explicitly endorsed the Christian sexual ethic outlined earlier in this booklet. As Grenz affirms:

*“But nowhere did He condone genital sexual activity outside the context of a lifelong heterosexual commitment. In fact, the only option He mentioned other than marriage was celibacy (Matt. 19:11-12). Moreover, whenever Jesus engaged with questions involving human sexual conduct, he appealed to God’s intention in creation (e.g., Mark 10:11-12; Matt. 19:4-9).”<sup>20</sup>*



### PAUL: 'NATURAL' AND 'UNNATURAL'

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*

*“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly*

## DOES THE BIBLE TELL US WHAT CAUSES SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS?

Does the book of Romans—or other Scripture—help to explain why some individuals struggle with homosexuality?

Find out the answer and more when you check out our Thriving Values article:

***Factors in Homosexual Struggles—What Does the Bible Say?***<sup>21</sup>

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*perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

*“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

*“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” Romans 1:18-27*

## REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #1

*“Paul is not describing true homosexuals; rather, he is referring to heterosexuals who, as he says, ‘exchanged natural relations.’ The real sin here is in changing what is ‘natural’ to the individual.”*

## RESPONSE

There is nothing in Paul’s wording to suggest he recognized such a thing as a “true” homosexual versus a “false” one. ***The idea of gay as an identity, of someone “being gay” or “being homosexual” is a modern construct, rooted in ideology and a particular worldview.*** Paul simply describes homosexual behavior as against nature—unnatural.

**“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.”**

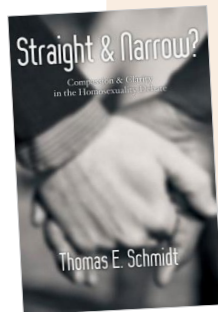
**—I CORINTHIANS 6:11**

Paul’s wording, in fact, is very specific. He chooses the Greek words that most emphasize biology. He is not considering sexual orientation. He is saying that homosexuality is biologically unnatural—not just unnatural to “heterosexuals,” but unnatural to humanity as God created us, before we turned



## HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CULTURAL DEBATE

Thomas E. Schmidt, Ph.D., explains in his book, *Straight & Narrow?*,<sup>12</sup> what the Bible says about homosexuality, the health effects of same-sex behavior and whether or not people are “born gay.”



This book is helpful for those who wish to explore the issue in depth.

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away from Him. As Grenz puts it, “[T]he verse does not speak of natural and unnatural feelings, but natural and unnatural function.”<sup>22</sup> Paul is speaking of how we are created—male and female.

### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT #2

*“This Scripture describes people given over to idolatry, not gay Christians who worship the true God.”*

### RESPONSE

Idolatry plays a major role in Romans 1. Paul begins his writing by describing humanity’s rebellion and decision

to worship creation rather than the Creator. But Paul is also talking about sins that arise when humanity stops worshiping the true God, including the sin of homosexual sexual activity. Schmidt explains:

*“Paul is not suggesting that a person worships an idol and decides therefore to engage in same-sex relations. Rather, he is suggesting that the general rebellion created the environment for the specific rebellion: ‘For this reason God gave them up to,’ not ‘As a result of this they did.’”<sup>23</sup>*

## PAUL: THE REJECTION OF SAME-SEX ACTS

*“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

*“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine...” 1 Timothy 1:8-10*

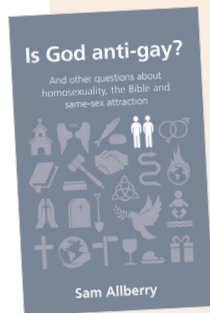
### REVISIONIST ARGUMENT

*“Arsenokoite, the word used for homosexuality by Paul in his letters to the Corinthians and to Timothy, is apparently a word he coined. It never appeared in Greek literature before he used it in these Scriptures. At that time there were other*

words for 'homosexual.' Had he meant to refer to homosexuality, he would have used one of the words already in existence. Most likely, he was referring to male prostitution, which was common at the time."

### **Is God Anti-Gay? by Sam Allberry**

In this short, helpful book,<sup>24</sup> Sam Allberry helps Christians understand what God has said about homosexuality.



From his own experience as a same-sex attracted man, he offers helpful advice to others struggling with this issue and to the Church about reaching out with love and conviction.

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### **RESPONSE**

Whether Paul coined the term *arsenokoite* or not, there can be no doubt about its meaning. It is a literal translation into Greek of the Hebrew phrase *mishkav zakur*, "lying with a male," which is "... the usual way of referring to homosexual intercourse in early rabbinic literature."<sup>25</sup> As such, it refers back to the prohibition of the Holiness Code, especially Leviticus 20:13, which, in the Greek Septuagint version, reads, "... *hos an koimethe meta aresnos koiten gynaios* ..." or "*If a man lies with a male as with a woman.*"<sup>26</sup>

As Grenz concludes:

*"We must remind ourselves that Paul's list in the Corinthian epistle occurs in the wider context of matters related to proper sexual conduct and the believing community (1 Corinthians 5-8). As his subsequent discussion indicates, Paul was convinced that the only proper context for sexual intercourse was heterosexual marriage.*

*"The apostle apparently did not see any reason to elaborate further why homosexual behavior violated this basic view."<sup>27</sup>*



Interestingly, this term *arsenokoite* or "men-who-bed-men" is close to the term used by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "men who have sex with men." Like Paul, the CDC places the emphasis on the *behavior*, rather than on identity or attractions. And the good news, stated clearly in the first letter to Corinth, is that people come out of homosexuality—their sin is paid for, and they are washed and made holy by the work of Jesus on the cross. From the early Church until today, people have left homosexual behavior.

In his book, *Is God Anti-Gay?*,<sup>24</sup> Sam Allberry explains how Paul's list of sins should bring us to acknowledge our deep need for a Savior:

“When Paul coined the term *arsenokoite*, he took it directly from the Greek translation of Leviticus’s prohibitions against homosexual behavior.

His intent couldn’t be clearer. Though *arsenokoite* is unique to Paul, it refers specifically and unambiguously to sex between men.”

—JOE DALLAS,  
*THE GAY GOSPEL: HOW PRO-GAY  
ADVOCATES MISREAD THE BIBLE*<sup>28</sup>

*“These forms of behavior characterize those who are not ‘just’ and for whom the law was given, in order to bring conviction of sin and the need for mercy. All these practices contradict ‘sound doctrine’ and the gospel. They do not conform to the life Christians are now to lead. They go against the grain of the new identity we have in Christ.”<sup>29</sup>*

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*In the final analysis, there is no evidence that the Bible recognizes the validity of same-sex relationships.* If this were the case, we would expect to find some thread of teaching throughout the Scriptures regulating such liaisons—just as is done with every other form of human relationship (e.g., husbands and wives, parents and children, citizens and government). Instead, there is not one verse indicating the possibility of such a relationship being acceptable in God’s eyes.

### FOR CHRISTIAN STRUGGLERS

It is not temptation, feelings of love or attraction between two human beings, or the struggle in our souls that is prohibited in Scripture. In fact, God tells us He is close to the hurting, the confused and the tempted. Sin occurs when lustful thoughts are entertained or we engage in behavior outside of God’s design.

To act on homosexual feelings is a fruitless attempt to bond inappropriately with another person. Though sexual attraction to members of the same sex is rarely a conscious choice, individuals who seek physical or emotional gratification in homosexual or lesbian relationships are depriving themselves of God’s best.

Since the way we see ourselves, others and the world around us begins at an early age (and homosexuality is often an intimacy and identity disorder that is rooted in childhood), breaking free from same-sex attraction can be an arduous process. As with most of life’s toughest struggles, this is a path we should not walk alone. Being rooted and grounded in God’s love; developing healthy relationships with others of the same sex; healing for past hurts; repentance, confession and forgiveness; building accountable connections in a church; and growing closer to Christ and being changed into His image are keys to freedom.



Living out our sexuality the way the Bible demands is not easy, and there is no single way to deal with homosexuality. God works with each of us differently, because every individual is unique, as is each story and recovery.

### THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

The appropriate response from the Church to homosexuality must include compassionate love, gentle truth and authentic humility. All three components are essential, and needed in equal proportion. Loving others means sticking by their side—in good times and bad. It means caring for them and extending the love of Christ whether or not they ever turn from their sin. Loving others means seeing them with the eyes of Christ, just as He viewed (and still views) us in our sin. Often, it's our relationship with an individual that initially guides that person into a saving relationship with Christ. Subsequently, it's the Holy Spirit's job, usually working within a local church, to restore to wholeness.



Loving someone also means speaking the truth, even if it's met with hostility or indifference. Sharing God's Word could save a man or woman from a lifetime of

## STORIES OF HOPE

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**Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, Ph.D.**, shares her dramatic testimony<sup>30</sup> of coming to faith in Jesus Christ after living as a lesbian who was vehemently opposed to Christianity and the Bible.

**LISTEN NOW**

Singer-songwriter **Dennis Jernigan** recounts his former struggles<sup>31</sup> with homosexuality and describes how he found hope, restoration and a new identity through his personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

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**Linda Seiler** tells her remarkable story<sup>32</sup> of finding healing in Christ and restoration of her identity as a woman after many years of struggle with gender confusion and same-sex attraction.

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poor decisions, confusion, sin and suffering—and could make an eternal difference. We have the roadmap to life; but it's important to earn the right to be heard, to listen with an open heart and to use Scripture with love and discernment. Not everyone is ready to accept certain biblical precepts. Patience and gentleness should guide our discussions concerning truth.

**WE HAVE THE  
ROADMAP TO LIFE:  
BUT IT'S IMPORTANT  
TO EARN THE RIGHT  
TO BE HEARD.**

acknowledging, confessing and turning from our own sin; and embracing God's deep love as expressed on the cross.

***Homosexual activists are making inroads in every area of our culture, but we must let love and compassion be our motive, rather than fear, anger or hatred.*** In a presentation on Christians and homosexuality, Joe Dallas says:

Authentic humility is also part of the equation. It consists of conversation and time with God;

*"The voice that must go out from the Christian community is one that is absolutely unsparing in truth and will not compromise under the worst conditions, yet also equally unsparing in love saying, 'Hate us and we will love you. We will be to you what you need us to be.' For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, just as Paul said we would, and we'll be asked what we did in this life. Surely that question will include how we responded to the responsibilities and issues of our time. May God help us on that day when we are asked to give an account of how we responded to the difficult issue of homosexuality so that we might hear Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"*<sup>34</sup>

#### ***How Should We Respond?***<sup>33</sup>



This Focus on the Family resource outlines steps for Christians to build relationships with lesbian-, gay-, and bisexual-identified men and women by first asking God to forgive our own sins, then reaching out in love.

**GET IT HERE**

Online at [FocusOnTheFamily.com/ThrivingValues](http://FocusOnTheFamily.com/ThrivingValues)

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## Endnotes

1. See John Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), pp. 17-30. ↩
2. For more about the growth of revisionist gay theology, check out Joe Dallas' *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), especially Part One; <http://bit.ly/biblesay1>. ↩
3. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1952), pp. 104-105. <http://bit.ly/biblesay15>. ↩
4. Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 110. ↩
5. *Ibid.*, p. 111. ↩
6. Joe Dallas, “Responding to Pro-Gay Theology, Part III: Scriptural Arguments,” Exodus Global Alliance, (02 July 2017). <http://bit.ly/biblesay2>. ↩
7. Some portions of the following sections of Revisionist Argument and Response are taken from Joe Dallas' *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the 'Gay Christian' Movement*. This book has been updated, expanded and republished by Joe Dallas as *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007). <http://bit.ly/biblesay1>. ↩
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13. Grenz, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44. ↩
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17. Michael Brown, Ph.D., *Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality*. <http://bit.ly/biblesay7>. ↩
18. Grenz, *op. cit.*, p. 60. ↩
19. *Ibid.*, p. 61. ↩
20. *Ibid.* ↩
21. <http://bit.ly/biblesay16>. ↩
22. Grenz, *op. cit.*, p. 49. ↩
23. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79. ↩
24. Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* (Purcellville, Va: The Good Book Co., 2013). <http://bit.ly/biblesay9>. ↩
25. Grenz, *op. cit.*, p. 58. ↩
26. *Ibid.* ↩
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. ↩
28. Joe Dallas, *The Gay Gospel?*, p. 213. <http://bit.ly/biblesay1>. ↩
29. Allberry, *op. cit.*, p. 38. <http://bit.ly/biblesay9>. ↩
30. Focus on the Family broadcast interview with Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, Ph.D. <http://bit.ly/biblesay11>. ↩
31. Focus on the Family broadcast interview with singer/songwriter Dennis Jernigan. <http://bit.ly/biblesay12>. ↩
32. Focus on the Family broadcast interview with Linda Seiler. <http://bit.ly/biblesay13>. ↩
33. Joe Dallas, *How Should We Respond? An Exhortation to the Church on Loving the Homosexual* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family, 2016), p. 12. <http://bit.ly/biblesay10>. ↩
34. *Ibid.*, <http://bit.ly/biblesay10>. ↩