What does God’s Word say about homosexuality? Part 1a continued

Read Genesis 1:26–31. What was (and still is since He is unchangeable) God’s intention for man and woman as He created them?

Another source that teaches us about the marriage relationship is the Liturgy of Holy Matrimony (LSB page 275). Even though it is not the inspired Word of God, these teachings are drawn from and express very clearly the teachings of God’s Holy Word. We read in these words of God’s intention for marriage when He created and blessed His creation with this gift, from the first marriage there in the Garden of Eden between one man and one woman until death parts them, to this very day. “In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the church.”

We go on to say in the service: “The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity.”

“What marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another.”

“God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear [respect, reverence] and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.”

What is God’s intention for man and woman now according to Hebrews 13:8?

What was Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees as they asked Him questions about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:3–9?

What is God’s teaching on this same subject through the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:31?

What is God’s plan for marriage and for His gift of sexuality?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for Your gift of sexuality and the biblical bonds and bounds of marriage that You have given to us in which to enjoy that most precious gift. When we fail to treat this gift as You intended through our thoughts, words, and deeds, forgive us and restore us. Use us to be Your loving messengers to call others to repentance just as we would have them call us to repentance over our sins. Let us be Your spokespeople to a world that does not understand Your will and plan for marriage, sharing with them Your love and Your desire for their lives. We pray this in the name of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

Closing Hymn

“O Love, How Deep” (LSB #544; LW #275) speaks of our Triune God’s incredible love for us, a love that we are called upon to share with others.

What does God’s Word say about homosexuality? Part 1b

Opening Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, our ever sure defense against temptation and sin, we thank You that You love us enough to give us Your Ten Commandments by which to live and to call us to account for those sins, offering to us the comforting words of the Gospel of forgiveness and life and salvation. Use us as models and messengers of that message of Law and Gospel, of sin and grace, of failure and forgiveness. We ask this in the powerful name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

God’s Word and God’s Law

Before we look at the verses from Scripture that deal with the topic before us, it will be helpful to have a refresher course in the three types of Law that are contained in God’s Word.

CEREMONIAL: These are the laws that were given to the Children of Israel, God’s chosen ones. They were given for a specific group of people, at a specific time, and for a specific purpose. These laws are not meant for all people of all times.

CIVIL: The civil law was also given to the Children of Israel. The civil law had a different purpose than the ceremonial and dealt with different matters, especially those matters that pertained to government and citizenship. They too were not meant for all people of all time.

MORAL: The moral law is unlike the other two. It is not for a particular culture or people, but it is for all people. In fact, it was written on our hearts when we were created. The moral law can also be described as the natural law. That does not mean that by nature we want to keep the Law. Instead, according to our sinful nature, we desire to break the Law all the time. It is called the Natural Law, or Moral Law, because this is the way God created the world to operate.

It is this Moral Law that we deal with in the references below as we talk about the verses from Scripture that form and inform our understanding about homosexuality. What are those verses?

Leviticus 18:22–24
Leviticus 20:13
Romans 1:26–27
1 Corinthians 6:9–11
1 Timothy 1:9–10

What is made clear in the references above?
What does God’s Word say about homosexuality? Part 1b continued

We are happy to assure the repentant who are struggling against this sin that they have complete forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When Christ died for all of the sins of the whole world, He gained forgiveness for homosexual deeds, for homosexual desires, and for the inborn sinful nature that produces these sins (1 Corinthians 6:11).

With that said, let us look at the promise of the Gospel, which we will flesh out even more as this study progresses.

Sometimes this message of repentance and forgiveness is hard for us and others to hear, so we choose to say nothing. Sadly, without the speaking and hearing of the message of the Law and God’s condemnation of all sin, there is no chance of repentance and the opportunity to share the soothing message of the Gospel and forgiveness of sins.

Yes, it may sound as if we are trying to beat the person up regarding their sins, but only as they and we see our sins and repent of them, do we have the opportunity to know the comfort and assurance of the Gospel. If they (and we) do not see the hope of the Gospel or hear the message of forgiveness, they can very easily abandon all hope, especially as Satan tries to assure them that there is no hope for them to be too bad or unlovable for God or anyone else to love. Before we get to that point or allow others to get to that point and believe those lies of Satan, let us flesh out the Good News and the promise of the Gospel, given to us the repentant who are struggling against this and all sin that they have complete forgiveness for all who believe! When Christ died for all of the sins of the whole world, He gained forgiveness for homosexual deeds, for homosexual desires, and for the inborn sinful nature that produces these sins (1 Corinthians 6:11) and every other sin, yours and mine included.

Important Note

Even though the expression of homosexual behavior is a sin, the same is true of every other actual sin. Giving into the temptation and desire to drink too much is also an actual sin. The same would be true of every other temptation and sin. The giving in to any temptation by thought, word, or deed is where all sin takes place. Our Lord dealt with temptation all the time and was without sin. (See Matthew 4:1–11 and Hebrews 4:14–16.)

Remember, the struggle with or temptation toward homosexual behavior is not an actual sin. It becomes an actual sin when we give into and act on the temptation. To give you one other example that may hit a little too close to home: Enjoying fine food (or any food for that matter) is not a sin until one eats himself to sickness or unhealthy weights or obesity. Then it is an actual sin.

How is this made clear in 1 Timothy 1:8–11?

Is this true for everyone caught in sin, no matter what that sin may be? “OK,” you might say, “homosexuality is a sin. Those things Paul talks about with Timothy are sins, but I have never slapped my parents, murdered anyone, committed an adulterous act, or perjured myself in a court of law. Does this penalty still apply to me?” If so, how?

You will hear many times in this study that we dare never overemphasize one sin over another, and we dare never make any sin unimportant, even if it is my favorite one and the one I am addicted to. In fact, we should care more about all sin, and all people caught in those sins, including those hard sins to deal with like gossip, over-eating, lack of exercise, over-consumption of alcohol, use of tobacco products, and the like — sins that we no longer consider sins and thus don’t deal with because they are sins I enjoy or sins that the members of my family are trapped in.

With that said, understand also that there are sins that are more dangerous than others, as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:18–20 when he says: Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

How does Ezekiel 3:17–21 apply to everyone (us included) whom God has called to reach out to those caught in sin?

What is the bottom line from God’s Word that cuts to the heart of the matter when we stop arguing back and forth? See James 1:13–15.
Again, the conclusion, based on these passages of Scripture and despite popular opinion, is that homosexuality is contrary to the express will of God for His creation and is a sin. Let’s approach this bottom line once again from another angle that may be helpful. How do 2 Timothy 4:1-5 and Proverbs 27:7 play into this?

What are some examples from your own life?

What are some of these things that Satan, the Great Deceiver (Revelation 12:9) and the Father of Lies (John 8:44b), uses to tempt and lure and entice?

These things include: The sinful nature we are born with (Original Sin) and resulting weaknesses in our body and mind; the temptation of the world around us; the temptation and encouragement to sin by those around us, including at times our own brothers and sisters in Christ; our own sinful desires that James talked about; and, the direct temptation of Satan himself, the Great Deceiver (And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Revelation 12:9), and the Father of Lies (“When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44b).

All of these things Satan uses to lead us to sin, be it homosexual sin or whatever sin afflicts us.

Here again is how Pastor Michael Goeke says it as he shares with us a little more of his story:

“When we don’t deal with the realities of life in the light of God’s Word, we will revise God’s Word to ‘fit’ our experiences. Head knowledge alone won’t suffice when our feelings grow too strong — so we will take our feelings and make God’s Word align with them, instead of allowing God’s Word to enlighten — shine light on — illuminate — give meaning to — our experience. Growing up, I was able to avoid homosexual behavior for a season because I knew right and wrong. But I was not in a place where I had the freedom to be honest about my struggles, bring them into the light, and allow God to help me work through them. When the feelings got too strong, the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ weren’t enough — and I found teachers who would teach according to my feelings.

“My journey back was about being honest with others and with God and seeing how my identity had been messed up by what I felt and what others said about me as well as how I was searching for identity where I would never find it as a child of God. In that honest, real place, Scripture shined a light on and informed my struggles rather than the opposite.”

Part 1b is concluded on page 28
“As we saw in 2 Timothy 4:3–4 [For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths], I was so hungry for acceptance and understanding and identity and affirmation that even the sin of homosexual expression tasted sweet — it was poison, but I was so hungry that I didn’t care. The false intimacy of sex with other men tasted sweet then — but now, the God-ordained intimacy/friendship with men that He designed for us tastes so much better, and I no longer crave the poison because I am ‘full’ with RIGHT relationships, with my wife and with other men in godly friendship.”

So, what are we called on to do in 2 Timothy 3:16–17?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, I am so tempted to qualify and quantify and categorize sins, especially when I am trying to justify my sins to myself and to You. It is so easy to look at the speck in my brother’s or sister’s eye, while striving with all of my might to see past the log that is in my own eye. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, working through Your Word, help me to see and to deal with the log in my own eye and the sin in my life, so that I may repent of that sin, confess it to You and the one I offended, and hear Your Word and their word of forgiveness. Restore me to a right relationship with You and with them so that I may then help others to see their sin and their need for forgiveness and a restored relationship with You and their fellowman. In the all-atoning name of Jesus I pray. Amen!

Closing Hymn

“Preach You the Word” (LSB #586; LW #259)

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Continued from page 23: Part 2 How do we respond in Christian love?

In summary of how Jesus interacts with the folks we have just talked about, and how that serves as a model to us, listen again to Pastor Michael Goeke as he sums up these interactions very well. “As we consider how Jesus interacted with sinners, He stood up for the sinner against the self-righteous [woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) and the immoral woman at Simon the Pharisee’s house (Luke 7:36–50)]; Jesus loved people first (Zacchaeus [Luke 19:1–10]); Jesus offered people something better than their sin since He didn’t just give rules but gave life, calling them out of their sin [woman at the well (John 4:1–42)].”

Here is a parting word of comfort and encouragement as we realize this is God’s work, working through us in the lives of others by the power of the Holy Spirit. Read Isaiah 55:6–12.

What assurance is ours that as we share God’s Word with others in all the various circumstances in which we find ourselves, He will give us the Words to say? See Exodus 4:10–12 and Luke 12:11–12.

As we conclude this study, I pray first of all that we know without a doubt that Jesus loves everybody no matter what their sin may be. I pray also that we know without a doubt that our Triune God is indeed a God of love (John 3:16), but He is not an enabling God. Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit never encouraged, overlooked, ignored, disregarded, tolerated any sin or destructive behavior. In fact, our Savior called His followers to higher standards than the rest, and He does the same today with you and me. (For examples, read Matthew 5 and 6.) He calls us to live and operate on a higher plane, if you will, than those who do not yet know Him as their Brother, and Savior, and Friend. Once we become a child of God through Holy Spirit—given and -nourished faith in Jesus Christ, we are expected to leave all, to die to all, to endure all and to serve all. (See Luke 18:18–30) Will we fail? Without a doubt! But our Father is always ready and willing to welcome us back with open arms as He offers us the forgiveness of sins and the opportunity to continue in His service (e.g., The Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11–32). Without a doubt, the calling of a disciple of Jesus Christ is a high one. To God be the glory as we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to live that high calling as we serve one another. Amen!

Closing Prayer

Dear Father, thank You that in Your love for me and all people, You do not leave me wallowing in the pig pen of my sin but instead call me to repentance and to a renewed relationship with You through faith in Jesus Christ. Help me to love others in this same way and to care enough about their temporal and eternal welfare that I speak up and share with them the painful message of Your Law, and that I can also share with them the comforting, soothing message of the Gospel of sins forgiven and life restored in Jesus Christ. It is in His forgiving name that I pray this. Amen!

Closing Hymn

“Take My Life and Let It Be” (LSB #783/784; TLH #400) or “Take My Life, O Lord, Renew” (LW #404)