

This paper was adopted by the 2015 International Conference of the Wesleyan Church.

HOMOSEXUALITY

THE GLOBAL ISSUE.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”¹ For this reason Christians should approach those in the community who are caught up in sinful lifestyles with a firm but kind spirit. The need for gentleness is especially important for Christians confronting those who aggressively promote ungodliness. The homosexual lobby is one such group with a disproportionately loud voice. When the general public is asked to estimate the percentage of the community that is homosexual, the estimates can range from 10% to 25%. Indeed the militancy of those who call for homosexual rights and media’s attention to these campaigners could suggest estimates in that order, but studies and census data reveal considerably lower percentages²:

- In the USA a 2012 Gallup Poll reported 1.7% of adults identify themselves as homosexual (gay or lesbian)³.
- In Canada a 2009 community health survey revealed that 1.1% of adults identify themselves as homosexual².
- A 2010 Office of National Statistics survey in the United Kingdom reported 1.5% of adults identify themselves as homosexual².
- A 2003 survey of 20,000 people in Australia concluded that 1.2% of adults identify themselves as homosexual².
- In Brazil in 2009 a university study suggested that 6.35% of adults identify themselves as homosexual⁴.
- In China a recent study reported 2.2% of adults identify themselves as homosexual⁵.

Gaining reliable statistics on this topic is difficult. Those who seek to promote a homosexual lifestyle can inflate the figures and those with an anti-homosexual agenda can understate them. At stake is whether homosexuality should have international protection as a human-rights issue or whether it is an abnormality that should be addressed as a community problem.

It is equally difficult to gain agreement on the cause for homosexuality.

*What causes homosexuality?... Is it genes, upbringing or simply a matter of personal choice? 19th Century medics attributed homosexuality to moral degeneracy, mental illness and 'congenital anomaly'. The 20th Century has seen hormonal imbalance, psychosocial influences and biological factors named as possible suspects. The American Psychiatric Association cancelled homosexuality's pathological classification in 1974. Now that it has gained 'non-pathological status', it is increasingly hard to challenge the prevailing views on homosexuality's causation.*⁶

¹ Romans 5:8.

² <http://saltshakers.org.au/issues/homosexuality/199-statistics-homosexuality> cited on 1st October 2013.

³ These figures do not include transgender or bisexual. In the USA the figure doubles to 3.4% when transgender, homosexual and bisexual are all included.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_people_in_Brazil cited on 1st October 2013.

⁵ http://www.danwei.org/trends_and_buzz/the_chinese_government_its_ok.php cited on 1st October 2013.

⁶ <http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=630> cited 1st October 2013.

Today it is generally understood that there is no link between genetics and sexual orientation⁷. The most common prevailing arguments are that homosexuality is caused by environmental influences or is simply a matter of personal choice. In any case, Biblical teaching is not impacted. Humans are expected to control their choices and urges in many facets of life. Sexual preference is only one such area.

There are some facts about homosexuality that are not difficult to verify. Most notable is the link between homosexual males and an increased AIDS vulnerability.

*Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) represent approximately 2% of the US population, yet are the population most severely affected by HIV and are the only risk group in which new HIV infections have been increasing steadily since the early 1990s. In 2006, MSM accounted for more than half (53%) of all new HIV infections in the United States.*⁸

In China, where the gay and lesbian population is estimated to be 30 million (2.2% of the population) the rate of AIDS amongst gay men is disproportionately high. “A study released by the Ministry of Health revealed today that approximately one of three new HIV infections in China are (*sic*) found in homosexual men.”⁹ The rate of AIDS in China amongst men who have sex with men is 88 times higher than the national average.¹⁰

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON HOMOSEXUALITY.

The Bible has several very specific statements on the topic of homosexuality.

Biblical prohibitions.

The foundation for a Biblical prohibition against homosexuality lies in the Genesis 2:18-24 account:

And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

And Adam said:

*“This is now 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 mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

⁷ <http://io9.com/5967426/scientists-confirm-that-homosexuality-is-not-genetic--but-it-arises-in-the-womb> 6 Jan 2014.

⁸ <http://carm.org/statistics-percentage-population-hiv-infected> 1 Oct 2013.

⁹ <http://www.ibtimes.com/chinas-gay-population-hit-hardest-hiv-aids-study-297253> 1 Oct 2013.

¹⁰ <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/hiv-aids-spreading-fast-among-gays-in-china/815878/> 1 Oct 2013.

God is the Creator, and in his wisdom he created a female as the suitable partner for the male. A multitude of other Biblical passages make it clear that the Creator's intention is for sexual relations to be restricted to a heterosexual couple in a monogamous, life-long sexual relationship. Furthermore, a faithful marriage between a man and a woman is the proper cradle in which to raise children. God's authority as Creator is the source of this wisdom and instruction. Four key Bible passages are referenced here to reinforce God's objection to deviance from his established plan for human sexuality: Leviticus 18:22, Genesis 19:5, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

Perhaps the most oft quoted passage is Leviticus 18:22, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (NKJV). In other versions it is recorded as "detestable" (e.g. NIV). Clearly the Old Testament teaches that homosexual practice is a sinful rebellion against God's natural order.

In Genesis 19 the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed for their wickedness, as illustrated in an attempted homosexual rape by the residents (verse 5). Four centuries later the Israelites were commanded to wipe out all of the Canaanites for their moral degradation¹¹. Sodom and Gomorrah were judged ahead other Canaanites because their wickedness had produced an outcry before God (Gen. 18:20-21).

The New Testament book of I Corinthians makes it clear that the Old Testament condemnation of homosexuality was not simply a regulation that belonged to a past time or culture. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 records, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (NKJV). Here it is clearly stated that homosexuality continues to be an offense before God.

1 Timothy 1:8-10 adds these words,

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine (NKJV).

Homosexuality is not a "unique sin".

A complete Biblical search on the topic of homosexuality must also conclude that there is not a special class of abhorrence for the sin of homosexuality.

The use of such a strong word as "abomination" in Leviticus 18 must be kept in context. Many other actions in the Old Testament are also described as an abomination, including idolatry (Deut 27:15), the use of unfair measurement in the marketplace (Prov. 11:1), lying lips (Prov. 12:22), pride (Prov. 16:5), unworthy prayer (Prov. 28:9), lustfulness (Jer. 13:27) and heterosexual adultery (Ezek. 22:11), to name a few. Again, in the 1 Corinthians 6 passage, homosexuality is listed alongside other sins such as general sexual promiscuity, idolatry, adultery, thievery, coveting, drunkenness and extortion. Other translations include greed and slander in this list (see NIV). Therefore, homosexual

¹¹ Deuteronomy 7:1-4.

practice is not a special category of sin that attracts a harsher punishment, but it is, nonetheless, a sin.

One Biblical passage does offer a distinction between homosexuality and other sins; Romans 1 describes the descent of depravity in society that begins with denying God as Creator (Romans 1:18-20). The depravity then progresses through various stages of denial, idolatry, sexual promiscuity, and eventually to homosexuality (both gay and lesbian).

For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Romans 1:26-28 NKJV).

The conclusion to this downward spiral is a depraved mind, which again brings out the sins of slander, envy, greed, disobedience, etc. The lesson from Romans 1 is that the sinful decline begins with rejecting the knowledge of God and concludes in moral degeneracy. In the same way, the remedy for sinful depravity begins with acknowledging God.

In this chapter homosexuality is a manifestation of human depravity, the denial of God, and the collapse of society. The rise of the homosexual lobby is, indeed, a serious challenge to Godliness and to a stable society. However, Christians must be careful how they respond to such an emotive topic, remembering that all sins are acts of rebellion against God, even the ones less culturally offensive than homosexuality. The proper Christian response to sinful behavior is always gracious refusal to compromise God's Word, but never to engage in physical or verbal abuse of sinners. Christians should take an unwavering stand against the sin but treat the individual sinner with compassionate firmness and respect. To do violence to, or to verbally assault, a homosexual, a transvestite or any other sinful individual erodes the Christian's witness and hardens the resolve of the sinner. The power of conversion is in love, not hatred.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE WESLEYAN CHURCH.

The Wesleyan Church, as an article of faith, upholds the sixty-six books of the Bible as the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority. They have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine¹². Society and cultures may change, but God's Word remains forever.

We, the delegates of the 3rd International Conference of the Wesleyan Church call upon our church members and adherents everywhere to uphold these truths:

1. We affirm that "God's plan for human sexuality is expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage."¹³
2. We affirm that homosexual practice (gay and lesbian) is a sin against God which violates God's creative purposes and offends his moral purity, and that those who turn to God must repent and turn away from their sinful behavior.
3. We affirm that homosexual behavior is not a greater sin than heterosexual immorality or any other form of willful rebellion against God or selfish use of another human being.
4. We affirm that a homosexual temptation is not a sin in itself. The sin comes when the temptation is yielded to and acted upon through fantasy or sexual act.
5. We affirm that the blood of Jesus Christ and the grace of God are sufficient for all persons who surrender to God and seek his will.
6. We affirm that Christians have a duty to remain free from sin while remaining in the world to testify to those who are caught in sin's grip. We urge Wesleyans everywhere to show mercy and grace to those caught in the bondage of homosexuality.¹⁴
7. We affirm that, as a matter of our Christian belief, no Wesleyan pastor or church leader should officiate in the marriage ceremony or civil union of a same-sex couple or in any way pronounce God's blessing upon such a union. We affirm the right of all Wesleyan ministers to refuse to marry same-sex couples without legal penalty.
8. We vigorously disapprove of the placement of children through adoption, in-vitro-fertilization or surrogacy under the care of a same-sex couple.
9. We call upon governments and law makers everywhere to honor God by upholding God's purpose for marriage as being only a monogamous, lifelong commitment between one man and one woman.

¹² *The Charter of the International Conference of the Wesleyan Church, revised by the International Conference, 2012.*
Para. 6570.

¹³ *The Charter of the International Conference of the Wesleyan Church, revised by the International Conference, 2012.*
Para. 6580.

¹⁴ Galatians 6:1.