

Same-sex Relationships

Issues Facing Christians Today

Discovering what God intended

- ◆ Humans, both male and female, are "the image and likeness of God" on earth.
 - ◆ Intrinsic equality – made of the same stuff
 - ◆ Absolutely necessity - both male and female
 - ◆ Equal, distinct and complementary
 - ◆ Marital complexity
 - Adam given responsibility for Eve
 - But must leave home to be joined to her (woman taken out of man, but man must re-join with her to fulfil creational purpose)
- Gen. 2:18-25**

Understanding Marriage

- ◆ **Covenant** –leave and cleave
- ◆ **Union** – one flesh (conjugal union), the union of distinctly different genders, the union of the two "others"
- ◆ **Image of God** – in the union of the different genders there is the more fuller expression of God himself – male and female he made them.
- ◆ **Procreative possibility** –creationally fundamental, yet in fallen world not always possible.

A biblical definition of marriage

"Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership and normally crowned by the gift of children."

John Stott

Living in a fallen world ...

- ◆ In an ideal world, every male would be attracted to a female and together reproduce thus creating between them someone who was part of them both yet a distinct and new person
- ◆ In a non-ideal world we have a range of marital breakdown, life-long singleness, childlessness, discord between "gender" and "sex," intersex.

Understanding same-sex attraction

A Biblical response
Theological & Pastoral

Current legislative minefields ...

- ◆ Legislation appears intent on making homosexuality comparable to race and gender, things which are profoundly genetically determined
- ◆ But if homosexuality has little or no genetic determination then it may have more in common with polyamory (polygamy-gyny-andry) and adult-consent incest, rather than race or gender

Some key distinctions ...

- ◆ **Attraction** – our sexual feelings and interests
- ◆ **Orientation** – a perceived settled pattern to our sexual attractions
- ◆ **Identity** – a label to identify ourselves in terms of our sexuality
- ◆ **Behaviour** – our sexual activity
- ◆ **Relationship** – a central defining intimate relationship

Does the Bible Address 'modern' Homosexual practice?

Three Contemporary theological viewpoints:-

- ◆ The Bible condemns homosexual activity, but we now know the biblical writers were wrong.
- ◆ The Bible condemns certain types of homosexual activity but in effect has nothing specific to say about 'Modern' practice in life-long committed relationships (Civil Partnerships or S-S marriage)
- ◆ The Bible addresses 'modern' homosexual practice and views it negatively because the key element of it (same-gender sexual activity) is against God-ordained norms for sexual practice.

Key Biblical Passages

They all deal with homoerotic sexual activity:-

- ◆ **Leviticus 18:22; 20:13** through 1 Cor 6:8-11; 1 Tim 1:10
 - *Arsenokoites* – "a male-lying-with-a-male as with a woman in homosexual intercourse
 - *'malakoi'* – being soft (if outside a sexual context such as soft clothing in Matthew 11:8), being effeminate or unmanly, call boys or passive partners in homosexual relations or paid male prostitutes
- ◆ **Genesis 19:1-29** – homosexual rape

Jesus' teaching on sexual ethics

Matt 5:27-37 ; **19:1-15**

- ◆ Marriage is defined by Gen. 2:18-24 one male leaving parents and being permanently joined to one female
- ◆ Divorce (which assumes re-marriage) is only a permitted concession in the case of "porneia," otherwise re-marriage is itself a form of "porneia" – adultery.
- ◆ If a man looks lustfully at a woman he is guilty of adultery.

A Biblical conclusion from Jesus teaching ...

- ◆ any sexual acts that take place outside marriage (being defined as the exclusive relationship for life between one man and one woman) is not in accord with the will of God for humanity.

Romans 1:18-32

What is God's Wrath?

It is:-

- ◆ **Righteous Anger** against sin.
- ◆ **Inevitable consequences** of moving against the flow of God's creation
- ◆ **God's actions to hold people accountable** for what they've done

Romans 1:18-32

Why does God's wrath happen?

They "Exchanged the truth for a lie ..."

Romans 1:23, 25, 26

- ◆ Deliberate suppression of truth
- ◆ Deliberate rejection of God
- ◆ Exchanging created things in the place of the Creator
- ◆ Abandoning any memory of God
- ◆ Persisting in doing wrong and creating the environment for others to do the same

Romans 1:18-32

What does the "wrath of God" feel like?

"God gave them over – abandoned them ..."

Romans 1:24, 26, 28

Giving us up to do what we want to do, to any depth we want, and ultimately forever ...

- Sexual promiscuity 1:24
- Sexual perversity 1:26
- Debased minds 1:28

Orientation and "Natural order"

- ◆ That which is defined by God on the basis of created order
- ◆ Coming to terms with a fallen world
- ◆ What is "normal" by contemporary statistical evidence

- ◆ We are all disabled both by birth in a fallen world (consequential) and by choices we make (rebellion against God).
- ◆ Some of us struggle with unusually sexed bodies and/or discordant sexual desires.

Percentage of population reporting same-sex attraction

Gender Survey	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual
UCLA Law School – US, Canada & Europe	1.1	0.6	1.8
UK 2010 ONS (94.8% Heterosxl)	1.3	0.5	0.5
Aust./NZ 2003 – Journal of Public Health	1.6	0.8	0.9

Intersex (mixed or ambiguous sex)	
Cases in which signs at birth cause a referral to a consultant	0.0005%
Including anomalies in sex chromosomes, internal organs or subsequent problems	0.01

Possible causes for same-sex attraction

All evidence in current research points towards a complex of causes. Some relate to:-

- ◆ **Birth**, including degrees of androgynism and the concept that there may be certain genes that could give degrees of predispositions (no widely accepted evidence at present for such)
- ◆ **Nurture**: the role of a specific family biological history, parenting and a person's social environment.
- ◆ **Trauma**: the role of incest and other sexual-physical-psychological-emotional abuse.
- ◆ **Contra-nature choice** in which the absence or existence of strong societal mores and taboos affect the range of choices available to an individual regarding the sexual practices they may choose to adopt.

Can same-sex orientation be changed?

- ◆ Despite claims, there is limited unbiased accepted scientific evidence
- ◆ No scientific evidence that orientation is immutable, but change is very difficult
- ◆ Some evidence that attempts to change can reduce anxiety i.e. help a person
- ◆ More evidence of reduced same-sex attraction than change to hetero-sexual attraction but some significant anecdotal testimony to the latter.

Pastoral considerations regarding same-sex sexual activity

Issues Facing Christians Today

Key theological/pastoral considerations

- ◆ Recognise the existence of a spectrum of sexual orientation
- ◆ Understand and hold to the clear biblical definition of marriage
- ◆ Keep an even-handedness in defining sexual immorality
- ◆ Supporting believers of mixed sexual orientation as they seek to live in a God-honouring biblical life-style

A Summary

Four key pastoral directions:-

1. Entering into a right relationship with God
2. Finding my identity in Christ
3. Learning to experience intimacy as distinct from having sex
4. Living sexually in faithfulness to God (in singleness and marriage)

Defining yourself ...

- ◆ **Not by gender or sexuality**, because God is neither male nor female yet both masculinity and femininity find their source and definition in God
- ◆ **But as a child of God**
 - part of the "image and likeness of God" on earth (Creational identity)
 - and
 - "in Christ" (Redemption identity) Galatians 3:25-29

The ways forward ...

- ◆ Faithfulness to spouse within heterosexual marriage
- ◆ Faithfulness to God in singleness

Understanding Singleness
Matt 19:1-10

Matt 19:1-15 - a truly foundational passage

- ◆ Sanctity of marriage 19:1-10
- ◆ God's grace and calling in singleness 19:11-12
- ◆ The crucial value of children 19:13-15

Matt 19:1-15 - a truly foundational passage

Singleness causation

- ◆ Born that way
- ◆ Made that way by other people
- ◆ Choose to be that way

God's Grace & calling in Singleness

- ◆ Understanding the concept of singleness
- ◆ Appreciating the value of singleness
- ◆ Recognising the problems of singleness

Contemporary yet ancient struggles ...

- ◆ **Equality and mutual significance of men and women**
- ◆ **Pressure to redefine male and female so that all differences are eliminated – currently manifested in the intention to redefine marriage**
- ◆ **Domination and exploitation of others, – Slavery, and particularly sex-slave trade**
- ◆ **Difficulties in sustaining long-term in-depth relationships, esp. marriage**

Following in the master's footsteps ...

◆ John 8:2-11

"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her ..."

"... Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Some assumptions ...

- ◆ **God exists**, he is personal, community orientated (Trinity) and made us for relationships with himself and one another.
- ◆ **God has spoken**: God has revealed sufficient absolute truth that we have a basis on which to learn to distinguish between what is right and wrong
- ◆ **God has a plan**: God has a definite purpose in all that he does, therefore there are some definite reasons for gender difference & marriage

The problem ...

Eating from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil

... the authority to determine and define what is right or wrong

I will not follow my creator's instructions,

I will do my own thing ...

The key to restoration ...
humble obedience & godly submission

The Tree of the knowledge of good and evil

... the authority to determine and define what is right or wrong

I will do my own thing ..

Jesus Christ

"I have not come to do my will but the will of God who sent me ..."

"My Father ... not my will but yours be done."

Discovering what God intended

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-25

- ◆ Human beings, male and female reflecting and sharing his glory,
as they, in perfect cooperative harmony, reproduce, work and manage the world he had created.

Consequences of sin

- ◆ Curse on serpent – animal world
- ◆ Warfare between Satan and the woman's offspring
- ◆ Increased pain in child-bearing
- ◆ Conflict and tension between woman and man
- ◆ Curse on the ground making production difficult
- ◆ Increased pain in crop/fruit production
- ◆ Certainty of physical death

Increased risks in homoerotic sexual behaviour

- ◆ **General elevating of risk** for anxiety, mood and substance-use disorders (20-30%) and for suicidal thoughts and plans (double/triple)
- ◆ **Infidelity:** 28% Lesbian women, 21% women 26% men in heterosexual couple, but 82% gay men (all in committed long term relationships reported external sexual liaisons)
- ◆ **Breakups:** Likelihood of long term relationship breakups, within 5 years of legal union: gay couple 50% and lesbian couple 167% more likely to breakup than a heterosexual couple.
- ◆ **Life expectancy:** Gays research in 1990's indicated 8-21 years lower life expectancy for a 20 year old. Possible not so bad now due to improved HIV /AIDS awareness

Romans 1:18-32

God's mercy-full wrath

- ◆ Helping us reach the bottom, feeling the effects of sin gives hope that we will turn around – "repent"
- ◆ Justice is presently being worked out with much patience & mercy
- ◆ Through his death Jesus took responsibility for our sin and suffered the wrath of God in our place

Considerations regarding sin ...

1. "Deicidal" - Rebellious heart towards God
2. "Suicidal" – broken and living in a broken world

Pastoral direction regarding sin

1. "Deicidal" - Rebellious heart towards God

Romans 3:19-26

Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ restored to the right relationship with God

Romans 6:1-14

Learning our freedom from sin's power so that we can honour God with our lives

Romans 8:1-13

Living through the power of the Holy Spirit

A) Understanding the Concept of Singleness

Genesis 2 teaches a variety of key points,

- ◆ one of which is NOT that singleness is bad.
 - ◆ The difference between Company (animals) and Companionship (human)
 - ◆ That a human needs another human (distinction between animals and humans (ref also Gen 1 "made in the image of God"))
 - ◆ That there are different forms of acceptable human companionship e.g. parents and offspring, husband and wife.
 - ◆ That whether in unmarried or married states we need true and deep companionship with other humans
- Being in an unmarried state is a normal part of human existence creationally.

A) Understanding the Concept of Singleness

Reasons for singleness Matthew 19:11-12

- ◆ Some are eunuchs by being born that way ...
- ◆ Others were made that way by men ...
- ◆ Others have renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven

B) Appreciating the value of singleness

- ◆ Relationship with God
- ◆ Availability to others
- ◆ Specialist ministries

c) Recognising the problems of singleness

- ◆ Getting the attitude right
- ◆ Belonging to a family
- ◆ Having "children" (sociological or spiritual)
- ◆ Being sexual without having sex
- ◆ Developing true intimacy

Marriage

... a more detailed definition

Marriage is

the voluntary sexual and public social union

of one man and one woman from different families.

This union is patterned upon the union of God with his people the bride, the Christ with his church.

Intrinsic to this union is God's calling to lifelong exclusive sexual faithfulness.

Christopher Ash

Faithfulness in Marriage

Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-12

Historic Context

- ◆ Marriage in most cultures of that day was about a man's exclusive rights over (possession of) a woman for the purposes of child-bearing & inheritance.
- ◆ A wife's faithfulness was essential to be sure of the child's identity, therefore strongly monitored.
- ◆ A Husband's sexual liaison ("porneia") with other single women were tolerated (especially with "pornai" or slaves)
- ◆ A husband's sexual liaison with a married woman was NOT permitted as it infringed the rights of the other man!

Faithfulness in Marriage

Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-12

Some counter-cultural Biblical teaching

- ◆ Gen. 2:24 movement of the man to a new centre for his life – his wife, to form one new unit.
- ◆ 1 Cor. 7:1-5 mutual possession of one another's bodies in marriage
- ◆ Deut. 24:1-4 protects a divorced woman by fully releasing her from the man, making her independent and free to re-marry.

Faithfulness in Marriage

Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-12

In brief, a counter-cultural bomb-shell:-

- ◆ Divorce ("to set free and send away") is only fully right in the case of a wife who is characterised by "porneia"
- ◆ Re-marriage is assumed a logical consequence of being set-free (divorced)
- ◆ Any other reason for divorce puts her in a position that she is stigmatized as adulterous and also the man she marries comes under the same stigma.
- ◆ Matthew makes explicit what Mark & Luke assumes as in the OT adulterers were to be executed, but by that time divorce had become the required legal action to take in the case of adultery

Faithfulness in Marriage

Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-12

3 points of contrast in Matt 19:3-12:-

- ◆ Pharisees absorbed with the grounds for divorce
 - Jesus: with the institution of marriage.
- ◆ Pharisees called Moses' words a commandment for divorce
 - Jesus: a concession because of the sinful hardness of the human heart.
- ◆ Pharisees (especially as men) regarded divorce lightly:
 - Jesus: seriously as an action against God, leading to adultery, except for one case.

Seeking clarity on God's intentions

...

In God's plan, why marriage?

- ◆ Genesis 1:24-31; 2:4-9; 15-24; 5:1-3; 9:1-7
- ◆ Matthew 19:1-9
- ◆ Ephesians 5:18-33 – The cosmic significance of marriage
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 – Pastoral instruction for a fallen world of marriage

Some key aspects of Biblical Marriage

Marriage is

- ◆ of Divine origin
- ◆ Creational – to do with original design for humans
- ◆ Complementary between two different genders
- ◆ Relational in an exclusive and specific sense
- ◆ A social relationship that affects the wider community
- ◆ Physical as well as emotional, physiological, spiritual and social
- ◆ Intentionally linked with reproduction and parenting -has as a fundamental possibility the bearing and raising of children who are the exclusive biological product of the male and female joined in marriage (conjugal definition)
- ◆ Reflects covenant relationships between God and His people – faithfulness, life-long, exclusive, sacrificial love
- ◆ At a personal level it is a gift/grace as an alternative to singleness

Practical restoration ... in relationships

- ◆ Ensure that regarding male/female I am informed by God's plan – restoration not ensnared in Satan's hand – conflict.
- ◆ Resist contemporary sexualisation of life.
- ◆ Connect intimacy with other people to intimacy with God.