

# TRAINING FOR GUYS

34 September 14th 2013

## Reading the Bible the Jesus Way

Before we take a deeper look at the verses we read last week, let us be sure we know the general context of Scripture - the way we need to read it as Christians in the light of Christ's death and resurrection.

We do not live under the Old Covenant, but the New. God has not changed, but He has ripped the curtain in the Temple and opened up access for us to Him that was unknown for the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus declared Himself to be *the Way, the Truth and the Life, the only way to the Father* in John 14:6. Jesus reveals the Father, and we are the Body of Christ chosen to reveal Jesus.

To pick just three attributes of Jesus, three characteristics of Him, that our interpretation of the Bible needs to be consistent with I will choose *love, justice* and *righteousness*. If we interpret any passage of scripture in a way that is not based on love, then it is not consistent with Jesus and must be a false interpretation. If there is no justice in what we preach based on our reading of a passage, then we have got it wrong. If it is not righteous (upright, in line with God's revealed character) then it is missing the point. Jesus is Holy, Scripture is Holy, we are called to be Holy. Holiness includes love, justice and righteousness.

It goes without saying then (though I will say it) that whatever we learn from scripture about God's attitude towards homosexuality, our attitude towards those who are actively homosexual should be holy. Loving. Just. In line with God's character. (*What Would Jesus Do?*).

Jesus did not speak about homosexuality, but we perhaps get a good idea of how He might have reacted towards a person 'caught in the act' in John 8, the story of the woman caught in adultery. Adultery is mentioned in the same list as homosexuality in the Corinthians passage we are

### Summary so far

Verses that mention homosexuality:  
Genesis 19:4,5  
Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13  
Judges 19:16-24  
1 Kings 14:24 & 15:12  
2 Kings 23:7  
Romans 1:18-32  
1 Corinthians 6:9-11  
1 Timothy 1:8-10  
Jude 7

considering. You know the story, the woman was brought to Jesus accused of adultery. The Pharisees were trying to catch Jesus out, to see if He would condemn her. He stoops down and writes in the sand; when He stands up the accusers are gone. He treats her with

respect and values her (love). Without accusers to bring a case Jesus does not condemn her (justice). He tells her to sin no more (righteousness).

So now let's look closer at the Old Testament verses we read last time and see if they have anything to say to us today.

The **Genesis 19** passage tells a horrible story. It paints a picture of why God had judged that the city of Sodom and its region had to be wiped out. A story of uncontrolled selfish hedonism, of no hospitality or welcoming of strangers, and wrong worship in the background. Tragically, somewhere along the line, the focus on this story has simply become one of homosexuality and the name Sodomy has been used to describe homosexual activity. But I am sure that even if a Gay Pride activist who was also not only an ardent atheist but also vehemently anti-God and anti-Christian read Genesis 19 then he would agree that what the men of Sodom did was wrong. We simply can't use this passage - nor, indeed, the one in Judges - to condemn the modern homosexual who is either wanting a committed relationship or promiscuous sex with consenting partners. Neither of those



activities are in the frame in the Genesis and Judges passages and we ought not use these references when considering our position on homosexuality today.

We'll skip Leviticus for a moment, and look at the references in **Kings** again

briefly. As mentioned last time, these are there to describe the depth to which Israel had fallen from true worship of God. They were engaged in the practices of the heathen nations around them, which involved ritual prostitution. Their primary sin was to have turned from God, this led to seeking other gods and in turn blurred the Law and they forgot God's decrees. This includes what we are about to read in Leviticus - but the turning from God to worship false gods is the focus of these passages.

Again it should be said that (as far as I know) no modern homosexuals are going to temples to worship gods via shrine prostitutes. We are making more of the text than can be allowed to condemn all homosexual practices from verses such as these.

So now we do come to the **Leviticus** texts. Before we consider them directly, let us think about what Leviticus is. It is essentially a book of *separation*, or *holiness*. God has led Israel out of Egypt and is preparing them for nationhood in a land of their own. It is a book which teaches them how to be apart from the world to worship the One True God. It includes, among other things:

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- The way to approach and worship God
- Lifestyle and dress for the people of God
- Regulations about clean and unclean
- Rules for sexual activity

We need to be clear, as we read the book, not only its broad context (being holy before God) but also the sub-context of the part we are reading. We are not Jews. We are under the New Covenant. Therefore, as a book of the Law, it does not all apply to us in the same way that it did to the people of Israel. It is, however, still all relevant if read correctly.



### 1/ WORSHIP

The first seven chapters, roughly, cover the various offerings for sin, guilt and so forth. Also the grain offering, the fellowship offering and the like. These do not form part of Christian worship, Jesus became the One True Sacrifice and offering and our worship is now 'in Spirit and in Truth' (John 4:23). So, when we read about how the Israelites were to worship we do not read it as a list of dos and don'ts for us. Instead, we ask ourselves what the heart behind the requirements were. What did they teach the people, how did they respond? From that we reflect on what they teach us about what Jesus did for us.



### 2/ LIFESTYLE and DRESS

Most of us are jolly pleased that circumcision isn't a New Covenant requirement. Circumcision for the people of

### WEEDS

"We need to be more like the world, in order to connect with them. We'll never bring people to God if we aren't part of modern culture."

Of course, there is some truth in that. If we still speak the language of Shakespeare, it is verily folly to countenance that we will make fulsome communion with those who doth speak alien to us. U gedme?

But we have to be careful not to go too far. The Message must always be Jesus, not the greatness of the music, or the coolness of the youth leader.. The Church should lead, not follow.

Leviticus teaches that the people of God had to be separate from the world. The New Testament agrees. **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives for ever. (1 John 2:15-17)**

In a few places Christians have tried to live like the world, but that does not win the world for Christ. We need to find ways of being **in the world** but **not like the world**.

It's a tough call.

Israel dates back to Abraham in Genesis. Leviticus 12:3 says it needs to be done on the 8th day after a boy is born. There were other lifestyle regulations too. 19:27 says

*Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.*

Modern Orthodox Jews will still dress in this way, with heads covered, side hair uncut and so forth. These were signs of what became known as Jewishness. In the book of Acts there were prayerful meetings where the Holy Spirit led them to discern that such regulations should not be laid on the Gentiles.



Instead, we are dressed in the Blood of Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Again, when we read such parts of Leviticus we need to reflect on what it is at the heart of the message. God's people had to *look* different as well as *behave* differently. God set things up so that they would just not fit in with the nations around them, they would stand out as separate. That way they would be protected as much as possible from falling into the wrong worship and stuff.

Once they started to let the separation slip, they fell all the way.



### 3/ CLEAN and UNCLEAN

Modern hygiene rules were only really understood within the last century and a half. Things like infectious diseases and the need for quarantine, or how to keep food safe for eating, are relatively modern discoveries. Yet in the book of Leviticus we see many of God's regulations agreeing with hygiene rules.

In a hot climate, the unclean foods designated in Leviticus are the ones we now know need special care in preservation and preparation.

The same goes for the regulations about mildew and so forth.

In Acts 10, however, God tells Peter that spiritual uncleanliness does not come



from eating certain foods. It's a matter of the heart and the action towards God and others, not what we eat.

Again, part of what God was doing was also to make a separation from the people around them. He keeps saying through Leviticus "I am the LORD". By implication: "You are mine, be holy, be separate".



### 4/ SEXUAL ACTIVITY

The language changes somewhat towards the end of Leviticus, with the regulations about sexual activity. There is a long list, and in the most part it is a list which would meet with common consent today. Do not have sex with your parent, your sibling, an animal and so forth. Doing so would *defile* a person (stop them from being holy).

Notably, chapter 18 starts with a reminder that the heathen nation they had come from (Egypt) and the ones surrounding them where they were going (Canaan) did practise such things. They were to be separate, to be holy.

These regulations are not specifically lifted anywhere in the New Testament, and in fact they are re-enforced. *Sexual immorality* is mentioned several times as being unacceptable for the Christian disciple.

So in 18:22 we read the very strong language *Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable* and again in 20:13 *If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.*

These chapters are in a different context to the others considered in Leviticus, the language is stronger, and also it is less restorative. A person with a 'dreaded skin disease', though excluded from the camp, was given a path back as the disease abated. These verses offer no opportunity for restoration.

To frame 20:13 in its immediate context we see:

v9 curse parents = put to death

v10 commit adultery = put to death

v11 sex with fathers wife = put to death

v12 sex with daughter-in-law = put to death

v13 sex with another man = put to death

v14 marry both woman and her mum = burnt to death

v15 sex with animal = put to death

Now, we're not here about to go off at a tangent about capital punishment. The point is the language is strong, the consequences severe.

With the exception of v13, most people (even non-Christians) would agree even in this part of the 21st Century that the actions mentioned in each verse are not good things to do.

So, within Leviticus which is a book which taught the Israelites how to be holy before God we see that some of it was specifically about OT worship, some of it was about how to look different to the world around them, some of it was to protect them from disease and plague and some if it was in stronger language about controlling sexual behaviour.

*All of it* is about being different to the non-Godly around them.

As Christians today, we are still called to be different to the world around them. This quick skim through Leviticus makes me ask myself the questions

■ Do I try to fit in so as not to stand out, or is my lifestyle distinct from that of the world?

■ Am I casual in my approach to God because I do not have to keep all these rules?

However, to return to our current topic of homosexuality, we need to look at what the New Testament verses teach us before we draw final conclusions. And we will do that next time,

### gay (adj.)

late 14c., "full of joy, merry; light-hearted, carefree;" also "wanton, lewd, lascivious" (late 12c. as a surname, *Philippus de Gay*), from Old French *gai* "joyful, happy; pleasant, agreeably charming; forward, pert" (12c.; cf. Old Spanish *gayo*, Portuguese *gaio*, Italian *gajo*, probably French loan-words). Ultimate origin disputed; perhaps from Frankish \**gahi* (cf. Old High German *wahi* "pretty"), though not all etymologists accept this. Meaning "stately and beautiful; splendid and showily dressed" is from early 14c. The word *gay* by the 1890s had an overall tinge of promiscuity -- a *gay house* was a brothel. The suggestion of immorality in the word can be traced back at least to the 1630s, if not to Chaucer:

But in oure bed he was so fressh and gay  
Whan that he wolde han my bele chose.

Slang meaning "homosexual" (adj.) begins to appear in psychological writing late 1940s, evidently picked up from gay slang and not always easily distinguished from the older sense:

After discharge A.Z. lived for some time at home. He was not happy at the farm and went to a Western city where he associated with a homosexual crowd, being "gay," and wearing female clothes and makeup. He always wished others would make advances to him. ["Rorschach Research Exchange and Journal of Projective Techniques," 1947, p.240]

The association with (male) homosexuality likely got a boost from the term *gay cat*, used as far back as 1893 in American English for "young hobo," one who is new on the road, also one who sometimes does jobs.

"A Gay Cat," said he, "is a loafing laborer, who works maybe a week, gets his wages and vagabonds about hunting for another 'pick and shovel' job. Do you want to know where they got their monica (nickname) 'Gay Cat'? See, Kid, cats sneak about and scratch immediately after chumming with you and then get gay (fresh). That's why we call them 'Gay Cats'." [Leon Ray Livingston ("America's Most Celebrated Tramp"), "Life and Adventures of A-no. 1," 1910]

Quoting a tramp named Frenchy, who might not have known the origin. Gay cats were severely and cruelly abused by "real" tramps and bums, who considered them "an inferior order of beings who begs of and otherwise preys upon the bum -- as it were a jackal following up the king of beasts" [Prof. John J. McCook, "Tramps," in "The Public Treatment of Pauperism," 1893], but some accounts report certain older tramps would dominate a gay cat and employ him as a sort of slave. In "Sociology and Social Research" (1932-33) a paragraph on the "gay cat" phenomenon notes, "Homosexual practices are more common than rare in this group," and *gay cat* "homosexual boy" is attested in N. Erskine's 1933 dictionary of "Underworld & Prison Slang" (*gay* is a Scottish variant of *gay*).

The "Dictionary of American Slang" reports that *gay* (adj.) was used by homosexuals, among themselves, in this sense since at least 1920. Rawson ["Wicked Words"] notes a male prostitute using *gay* in reference to male homosexuals (but also to female prostitutes) in London's notorious Cleveland Street Scandal of 1889. Ayto ["20th Century Words"] calls attention to the ambiguous use of the word in the 1868 song "The Gay Young Clerk in the Dry Goods Store," by U.S. female impersonator Will S. Hays, but the word evidently was not popularly felt in this sense by wider society until the 1950s at the earliest.

"Gay" (or "gai") is now widely used in French, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, Swedish, and Catalan with the same sense as the English. It is coming into use in Germany and among the English-speaking upper classes of many cosmopolitan areas in other countries. [John Boswell, "Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality," 1980]

*Gay* as a noun meaning "a (usually male) homosexual" is attested from 1971; in Middle English it meant "excellent person, noble lady, gallant knight," also "something gay or bright; an ornament or badge" (c.1400).

As a slang word meaning "bad, inferior, undesirable," from 2000.



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