

TRAINING FOR GUYS

36 September 28th 2013

What's the Meaning of all this?

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

There's some dispute about actual meanings in some places, but the thrust of the teaching is that God calls His people to be different to and separate from the world around them. There is strong language used to say that MM and FF sex is wrong in God's sight in several of these passages, but so is all sex outside of MF marriage.

ALL SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS TAKEN FROM NIV UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED



I said we were going to take this slowly, and we've spent several weeks now looking at the verses that mention homosexuality. However, that is only skimming the surface because we have not looked closely at the whole-Bible contexts of subjects such as God's unconditional love, or God's unapproachable holiness, or the plan of Creation, the effects of the Fall and so forth. We don't have time to do that in this series, but it might be worth pausing before you read on and consider how you would answer the following questions:

-  Is there anyone God does not love?
-  How should we treat the people that God loves?
-  Does God accept all behaviour?
-  Does He stop loving those who behave in ways He does not like?
-  How does God reconcile His love and His holiness?
-  How should we reconcile them in our treatment of people?

If we take the Romans passage from a society/culture viewpoint (which is what it describes) rather than an individual viewpoint I think we might agree that our society is quite a way down the slide away from God. Many are God-haters, lust is a strong driving force in the way society thinks (eg the types of film that get made) and so forth.

Archbishop Welby has recently said we have to accept that things have changed. That isn't to say *our message* needs to be different, but it is to say that the Church is no longer listened to in the same way, if at all. We have to work harder to get the message across, and that also means we need to be surer of what it is that we want to be saying.

The Church has had a mixed message on homosexuality: "Sodomites are bound for hell" because God is a holy and unapproachable

God – or "it doesn't matter, God loves everyone whatever we do".

As a result of our reading of these passages, can we find a different message to those two?

I think we can if we start at a different place. Our culture starts with me. What I want, what I feel, what I like, what I desire.

When we become Christians, that ought to change. It is no longer about me, it is all about Him. Consistently God reminds us of that in the Bible, just read Leviticus 18 for example and count the times He says "I am the LORD". That's the traditional English translation of "I am Yahweh" – "I am Who I am". The rules in Leviticus are about the fact that in order to approach God we have to recognise that He is

God and it is all about Him. It's the same in the New Testament. It's not about *me*, it's about *Him*.

"I know I shouldn't be sleeping with my girlfriend, but God knows I just can't help it, He loves me anyway". There is a little truth there mixed with a huge misunderstanding that amounts to a lie.

Yes, God knows you. Yes, God is forgiving. But that statement starts with you and ends with you and God has to fit in with you.

If we want to be more than just a person that is on the fringes of God's Kingdom, we have to re-focus and make God the centre. *In order to come close to God I have to do things God's way.* Paul said *I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.* (1 Corinthians 9:26,27). Elsewhere he expresses his desire for Christ-centredness even more strongly:

⁸ I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God

has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:8–14)

Whatever Paul felt in his body, whatever urges and pulls he had, he sacrificed them to get closer to Jesus and to be more like Him. *It wasn't about Paul, it was about Jesus.*

So, what does this teach us with regard to the current subject?

I think I would say that the great current of our society is away from God. As a result, we find people in all sorts of places that are not where God would want them to be. Some are resolutely facing away from God and want nothing to do with Him, but most are just being swept along by the current. With regard to homosexuality, the current at the moment is certainly towards it becoming a mainstream element of society.

Our call is towards God, to get out of the current of society and into the River of Life. When someone comes to Jesus, it is Jesus we should be talking about with them. Helping them to see Him more clearly. If a person is

homosexual (by birth, nurture, choice – not getting into that here) the point is *it is about Jesus now*. How does the person get closer to Jesus?

It can never be about "Jesus, this is how I am made, I come to you as I am and want you to bless it" it is always about "Jesus, this is how I am now. I lay it down, I give you permission to change anything and everything. I want to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

So there should never be condemnation from us. We are not living in Old Testament times, we are living when Jesus has already made the sacrifice and opened up the Holy of Holies to all who will come to Him. The Way is open. But there is still a path to follow. We don't get into the Holy of Holies just by becoming Christians. The OT Temple gives a picture of levels of the Temple, its different courts and the

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places to stop and perform a ritual on the way. Those teach us about the approach to God.

All are welcome in the outer courts, the way in closer is determined by the extent a person cuts off their old life and makes Jesus the centre.

In writing to Timothy, Paul outlined the outward requirements for a Christian leader (1 Timothy 3:1–13). These outward requirements testify to an inner life that is lived close to Christ. Christian leaders need to be people who have cast off their old ways and come to a place in Christ that is rich in His Presence.

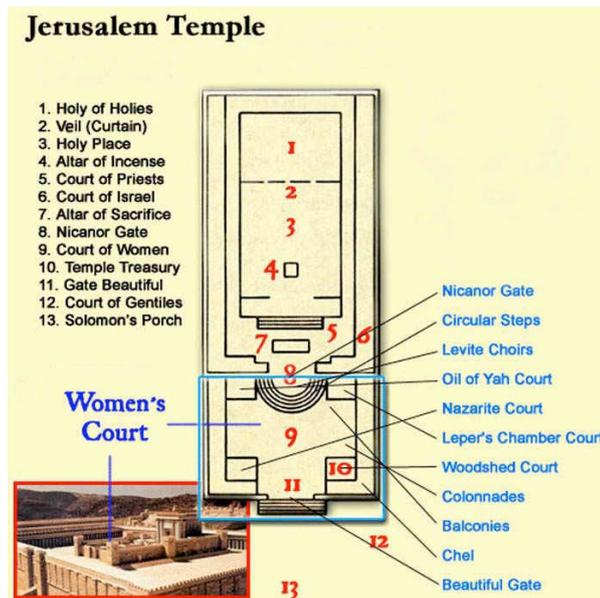
I've wandered again from talking specifically about homosexuality. That's intentional because I want this to be seen in the context of everything. It's not just about homosexuality, it's about *everything*. We can't just come to God and expect Him to bless us *as we are*. We have to be changing all the time.

God is the Unchanging One. We need to be 'changed from glory into glory'. As soon as anyone parks themselves and says "this is me, it's not changing" they stop approaching God.

But it's so unfair. I was made homosexual. I can't get excited by women.

Or is it

God has privileged me that I can lay this facet of myself down in order to be able to know Him and reveal Him in a special way.



You see, the unmarried Christian be they gay or straight is in the same boat... the sex thing is a no-no. But it is society that says sex is a right, a must, don't hold back. Learning to *strike a blow to my body and make it my slave* gives us a spiritual strength in the presence of Jesus that is well worth the effort.

In summary, and taking homosexuality straight on, I would say:

- 📖 Everyone is loved by God and should be welcome in our fellowships
- 📖 It's about God, not you
- 📖 God has designed sex for marriage between man and woman only

📖 Those who desire homosexual sex are not accursed and filthy, we need to love them, welcome them and encourage them towards Jesus

📖 Whilst all can be saved, the path to discipleship requires us to stop doing things that hinder us, and that includes sexual activity outside marriage (MF)

📖 Christian leaders should be outwardly displaying signs of inward holiness, and in particular should have sexual activity sorted.

📖 Our message to the world should not be condemning – **EVER** – but should point people to Jesus.

📖 Jesus sees people as individuals. He does not categorise them. For Him, people are not gay or straight but Jim or Mike or Betty or June. We need to start seeing people as individuals and not as 'one of them'.

But what do you think?

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I've decided to change the order of the next 2 weeks and look at 'David and Jonathan' next and finish the series with 'Gay Marriage'.

WE EXIST FOR GOD,
GOD DOESN'T
EXIST FOR US.