

Does the Bible Actually Say Anything About Homosexuality?

No. The Bible says nothing about homosexuality because it knows nothing of homosexuality. The Bible assumes that everyone is heterosexual (just as it assumes that the earth is flat and that God lives just beyond the blue dome we call sky).

Within that framework of universal heterosexuality, the Bible knows of:

- Men raping other men in a violent display of their power and dominance over them (Genesis 19)
- A man using another man to relieve sexual tension when his woman is not available (Leviticus 18)
- The Greek and Roman environment where young men first experience sex with older men and then, when they in turn mature, marry women and raise a family (Paul).

It is not surprising that the Bible knows nothing about homosexuality (the innate affectional orientation a small proportion of humans have for members of their own sex). The concept of sexual orientation, and with it homosexual orientation, came into parlance only in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the word "homosexual" - in spite of its anachronistic and improper use in some versions of the Bible to translate words of indeterminate meaning (*malakoi* in 1 Corinthians and *arsenokoitai* in 1 Timothy)

- was not coined until a little more than a hundred years ago.

The Bible knows nothing of what we today mean by "homosexuality." It follows that it can have no concept at all of persons of same-sex affectional orientation living in mutual, equal, consensual relationships where "sexuality [serves] personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love" (Canon XXI, On Marriage, Anglican Church of Canada). This is one of the many things that separates the biblical world-view from our own.



HOWEVER, if we look at the question in another way, the Bible can be seen to say a great deal about gay men and lesbians in their intimate, faithful and loving relationships.

In the creation story we are told that God creates a partner for the solitary original Earth-creature (the Adam), and brings them together into relationship, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," because "it is not good for the Adam to be alone" (Genesis 2). This is as true for the gay man and lesbian woman as it is for heterosexuals. It is not good for us to be alone; we are created for relationship.

As the marriage service says, this joining together of two people in "heart, body, and mind is intended for their mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love," and that, if it may be, "they may be blessed in the procreation, care, and upbringing of

children" (BAS p541). Now that we know that there are people who will naturally seek for that kind of union with a person of their own sex, there is no reason not to believe that God wills the blessing of such an intimate relationship for them as much as for heterosexuals.

With the blessing goes the responsibility. Gay spouses, just like heterosexual ones, are called upon to love one another as they love their own bodies, so that their lives can be a sacrament of Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 3). Lesbian and gay couples living in covenanted relationships of love and faithfulness will be powerful signs of God's "love to this broken world, so that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair" (BAS p546) - especially to the gay community in its brokenness, so much of it caused by the Church and its people.

Christianity has survived the discovery that, no matter what the Bible says, the earth is not flat and at the centre of the universe, and has learned to read the Scriptures in the light of that new knowledge. It has survived the discovery that, no matter what the Bible says, the coloured races were not created by God to be slaves to the white, and is the better for that new knowledge. It will survive the discovery that, no matter what the Bible says, not everyone is heterosexual, and it will learn to read the Scriptures in the light of that new knowledge, and it will be the better for it.

So, once we come to understand the nature of sexual orientation and can then see that

what the Bible says about faithful, loving, sacramental relationships applies to people no matter what their sexual orientation is, the Bible indeed does have much to say about gay men and lesbians - exactly what it has to say about their heterosexual relatives and friends.

Or, to put it better, the Bible has much to say to gay men and lesbians in their relationships. What it has to say to them is what it has to say to their heterosexual relatives and friends: "It is not good for them to be alone. I will provide a partner for them" (Genesis 2.18).

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This pamphlet, and the related pamphlet, *What the Bible really says about lesbians and gay men*, was published by Integrity. Integrity is a justice ministry by gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends in the Anglican Church of Canada. We believe that there is an equal place at God's table for all God's children. We are affiliated with similar organisations in the United States, in Africa, and in Australia. For more information, please get in touch. There are about a dozen chapters of Integrity in Canada, and contact information is on the website..

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