

UK legal Gay History

- 1290 First mention in English common law of a punishment for homosexuality
- 1533 Buggery Act introduced by Henry VIII Sodomy punishable by hanging.
- 1885 Amendment created the offence of 'gross indecency' and thus became the first specifically anti-homosexual act.
- 1895 The trials of Oscar Wilde and his sentencing to two years prison with hard labour under the 1885 Act.
- 1956 The Sexual Offences Act became law - much police activity against homosexuals in the UK for the rest of the century.
- 1967 Sexual Offences Act came into force in England and Wales and decriminalised homosexual acts between two men over 21 years of age and 'in private.'
- 1980 Male homosexuality decriminalised in Scotland.
- 1982 Male homosexuality decriminalised in Northern Ireland
- 1988 Section 28, preventing the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local authorities, came into force
- 1994 House of Commons voted to reduce gay male age of consent to 18.
- 2000 Government lifts the ban on lesbian and gay men serving in the armed forces.
- 2001 Age of homosexual consent reduced to 16 in line with heterosexual consent.
- 2002 Equal rights granted to same sex couples applying for adoption.
- 2003 Law making it illegal to discriminate against lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the workplace.
Repeal of Section 28
- 2004 Sexual Offences Act abolishes the crimes of buggery and gross indecency. Civil Partnership Act giving same-sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples.
- 2005 Same sex couples can apply for joint adoption of children.
- 2006 The Equality Act 2006 makes discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the provision of goods and services illegal.
- 2014 Same sex marriage permitted.

Sexual Orientation

The concept of sexual orientation assumes that a person has an enduring sexual attraction or preference. There are three main categories:

Heterosexuality - attraction to the opposite sex

Homosexuality - Gay: male having attraction to male - Lesbian: females having attraction to females

Bisexuality - attraction to both the same and opposite sex

(Asexuality - possible 4th category - lack of sexual attraction)

Nature

For the LGB community it has been important to attempt to prove that sexual orientation is fixed at birth and mainly genetic and cannot be changed. In which case homosexuality, for example, is like being left handed, black skinned or having blue eyes. This means that there is emphasis on finding out your true orientation and living out your life according to this orientation. This has produced the 'coming out' culture. The LGB community have been very successful at promoting this concept of sexual orientation and it is accepted very widely in society. It has resulted in extensive human rights protection of LGB and the adoption of gay and lesbian marriage in various countries.

There is currently no strong evidence for a homosexual gene.

Nurture

Others including some Christians have argued that sexual orientation may be partly innate at birth but is also greatly

influenced by people's experience - eg relationships with parents and siblings, sexual abuse, boarding schools, experiments in adolescence, viewing pornography etc. This view of sexual orientation gives more scope for change.

Other Classifications

Some prefer to use different classifications which are less fixed than the usual LGB categories. eg 'Same sex attracted' 'Male attracted', 'Female attracted' etc. You may have these factors in different amounts.

Sexual identity statistics

Below are the results from the UK Office for National statistics which is a person's perception of their own sexual orientation - this may be called their sexual identity

The percentages of lesbian gay bisexual (LGB) is higher for 18-24 year olds and is also higher in certain parts of the country eg London.

More males than females identified themselves as LGB.

These percentages may seem quite low given the high profile given to LGB in our current society. It may be that people simply do not admit to their orientation.

Figures vary in different countries and in urban and rural environments.

Same sex activity

When people are asked if they have had gay or lesbian sex in person or online, the percentages are considerably higher. It appears that many people may experiment with same sex activity but do not ultimately identify with a gay or lesbian orientation.

ONS	Heterosexual	Gay/Lesbian	Bisexual	Other	Don't know No response
2009	94.2%	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%	3.8%
2016	93.4%	1.2%	0.8%	0.5%	4.1%

Is Homosexuality a Sin?

What do we mean by "homosexuality"? Here are a few features which we might consider as homosexuality.

- **Same Sex Attraction**
- **Same Sex Temptation**
- **Same Sex Thinking ***
- **Same Sex Activity ***
- **Same Sex Orientation**

As with heterosexuality, attraction, temptation and orientation are not sinful. It is thinking and activity which may become sinful

Homosexuality in New Testament times

Jesus and Paul lived in Israel which was an occupied Jewish state. The Jewish law prohibited male homosexual behaviour. The world at the time was dominated by Roman and Greek cultures where homosexual activity was common. Paul was called to preach the gospel to gentiles and travelled extensively. His letters were often addressed to Greek and Roman converts.

Roman Homosexuality:

It was common for Roman men to have sex with both men and women. Roman citizens would only behave as the masculine partner in these relationships. Homosexuality would not be with other

citizens but with slaves, prostitutes, entertainers and as war rape. Youths between 12 and 20 were preferred as partners.

Greek Homosexuality:

Pederasty - It was common for young male citizens (aged 12-17) to be attached to an older citizen who would be his mentor and educator. This relationship was expected to be loving and sexual but did not usually involve penetration since this was seen as demeaning and feminising for the passive partner.

In certain situations, Greek soldiers were encouraged to have similar loving relationships with each other because it encouraged heroic support for each other. Greek men also had sex (including penetration) with male slaves and prostitutes.

Bible Passages

Old Testament Law

Leviticus 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. ESV

22 You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. NASB

22 "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable. NIV

22 "Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin. NLT

Context of Leviticus 18

This chapter starts and finishes with warnings about emulating the behaviour of the Egyptians or Canaanites. Most of the activities mentioned are of a sexual nature. The law about homosexuality fits comfortably in this chapter. Chapter 20 adds punishments for these offences.

Lev 18:1-5 You shall not do as they do in Egypt where you came from or in Canaan where you are going...

6-18 You shall not have sex with a close relative (incest)

19 Do not have sex with a woman during her period

20 Do not have sex with your neighbour's wife

21 Do not sacrifice your children to Molech

22 Do not have sex with another man as with a woman

23 Men and women should not have sex with animals

27-30 All these detestable activities are practiced by the people of the land where you are going - so avoid...

Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. ESV

13 If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. NASB

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. NIV

13 "If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offence. NLT

Deuteronomy 23:17 No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. 18 You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the Lord your God to pay any vow, because the Lord your God detests them both. NIV

Sodom and Gomorrah

Traditionally the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah has been linked with homosexual behaviour. This is because the

story includes a threat of homosexual gang rape on Lot's angel visitors. This connection has been so strong that the word Sodomy has been used throughout history to describe various homosexual acts and even bestiality.

The Bible does not state directly that homosexual behaviour was the most significant sin of Sodom and Gomorrah or the main reason for its destruction.

There is a verse in Jude which suggests that sexual deviance was a significant sin.

Gen 13:13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Gen 18:20 Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."

Jude 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

There is another case of threatened homosexual gang rape in Judges 22-26. This becomes a very sad story of heterosexual rape.

New Testament

1Co 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ESV

nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, NASB

nor men who have sex with men NIV

or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality NLT

Two Greek words: μαλακοὶ οὔτε ἀρσενικοῖται (malakos arsenokoitēs)

1Ti 1:8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. ESV

and homosexuals NASB

for those practicing homosexuality NIV

or who practice homosexuality NLT

One Greek word : arsenokoites

The Greek words

malakos: fine, soft, effeminate, male prostitute, boy kept for homosexual relations (catamite), a male homosexual who is the passive sex partner

arsenokoites: (arsen and koite - see below) men who have sex with men

arsen: male, man

koite: bed, marriage bed, sleeping with, sexual intercourse, conception

The letter to the Corinthians was written to Greek converts from a culture where homosexuality was common. Paul's use of these two words would have made it clear that he was warning about general homosexual behaviour as well as pederasty and prostitution.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

These comments indicate that Paul believed that both gay and lesbian sexual acts were sinful and contrary to nature. These verses are straightforward and included in a general passage about the sinfulness of mankind and its consequences.

Is Homosexuality a Sin? - Information Sheet

John Robertshaw Jan 2018

Non-Christians

Non-Christians are not particularly interested in our Bible views and interpretation since the Bible is not relevant to them.

It is, however, our job as Christians to preach the gospel to non-Christians in whatever way we can. Our gospel message need to be a positive message of salvation but that message will include that fact that we are all sinners. There are of course many types of sin far more common than homosexuality.

LGB Christians

LGB Christians have various responses:

1) Have doubts about the Bible being the word of God - they have views similar to secular homosexuals but consider themselves Christians. They are quite at ease with homosexual activities.

2) Believe the Bible passages at face value as do traditional Christians. They abstain from homosexual activities. They may be content to remain non-active homosexuals or they may try to develop heterosexually.

3) Believe that the Bible is the word of God but do not believe that the Bible forbids homosexual behaviour. These have many involved arguments about the Bible passages and the general teaching of the Bible.

Statement of belief

"The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement works for the full inclusion of gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the Christian churches. We believe that human sexuality in all its richness is a gift of God gladly to be accepted, enjoyed and honoured as a way both of expressing and growing in love, and that it is entirely compatible with the Christian faith not only to love another person of the same sex, but to express that love fully in a personal sexual relationship."

LGB Argument

The meaning of the homosexuality laws in Leviticus are debated.

My Counter

They are indeed debated by the LGB community. However, the meaning of these laws has been well established for millennia they have been consistently understood and translated in the same way.

LGB Argument

Leviticus is full of laws about many things which do not seem to apply to us today - eg not eating pork or shell-fish etc - is the law on homosexuality relevant? If homosexuality is such an important sin, why wasn't it included in the 10 commandments? Surely now we

are not under the Old Testament Law but under grace.

My Counter

The place of the Old Testament Law in New Testament times is an important subject and was a challenge to the early Christians. Laws are in different categories: ritual, covenant, moral. When Paul returned from preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, he needed to know which, if any, Old Testament Laws were relevant to the Gentiles. A decision on this topic was reached by the early church in Acts 15.

Only these rules were given:

- You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols
- You should not eat blood
- You should not eat meat from strangled animals (ie with blood still in it)
- You should abstain from sexual immorality (Greek porneia)

The first of these was to prevent participation in idolatry. The second and third go back before Moses to Noah and were given for all mankind. The last one is related to the laws of Moses.

How were the Gentile Christians to know what was meant by immorality? By looking at the Old Testament Laws (Rom 7:7). The laws on homosexuality in Leviticus sit comfortably with other universal laws regarding immorality. Other similar laws cover incest, bestiality, prostitution, rape, sex outside marriage etc.

The Old Testament Law are not a way to be saved - we are saved by God's grace and our faith - but the law still does guide our way of life (Matt 5:17-20).

LGB Argument

Love is the new big commandment. As long as homosexual relationships are based on love, there can be no problem.

My Counter

The Christian message has many facets including repentance, sin, Jesus, the cross, grace, faith, the Holy Spirit, love, judgement etc... Beware of concentrating on just one facet.

LGB Argument

The Greek word arsenokoites in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 is uncommon and obscure and its meaning is debated.

My Counter

This is an uncommon word but its meaning is not debated by translators - only by the LGB community. The meaning is clear from the combination of two words which are used more often on their own.

LGB Argument

The Greek words in 1 Corinthians 6:9

and 1 Timothy 1:10 suggest that Paul is talking about pederasty and prostitution and not the equal loving relationships of modern gay people.

My Counter

Paul, as a Jew, was familiar with the Old Testament, would have understood any homosexuality to be sin. He uses these two words which comprehensively cover general homosexuality and the pederasty and prostitution common in the world he is writing to.

LGB Argument

In Romans Chapter 1, the behaviour described is lustful passions and not the loving relationships of modern day homosexual. When it speaks about unnatural behaviour, it means behaviour against your nature - eg a person with heterosexual orientation engaging in homosexual acts.

My Counter

This passage is very straightforward Greek and easily and accurately translated. Translators and commentators believe that it refers to general homosexual behaviour by men and women. The argument about unnatural behaviour and orientation is a contrived argument depending on LGB beliefs.

LGB Argument

Jesus had nothing to say about homosexuality - why not if it was so important?

My Counter

Homosexuality would be very uncommon to Jesus's audience because they were Jews who knew the laws of Moses.

When Paul took the gospel to the gentile Greeks and Romans, he addressed this sin which was common in these cultures.

Jesus believed that the only appropriate sexual relationship for human beings was monogamous heterosexual marriage.

Matthew 19:4 "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

LGB Argument

Surely there are homosexual relationships in the Bible - what about David and Jonathan.

My Counter

There is no proof for any homosexual relationships in the Bible. David and Jonathan were certainly very close friends with a strong bond and a lot of love - there is, however, no evidence of any sexual contact.

Sex - Male and Female

Bible Base

The creation of humankind in two sexes, male and female, is fundamental to the Bible narrative.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..."ESV

It is assumed that they will marry, become man and wife with different and defined roles, and will reproduce.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Scientific Base

We now know that the sex of a person is primarily defined by genetics. Females have 46 chromosomes including two Xs. Males have 46 chromosomes including

one X and one Y. The difference in chromosomes affect the development of human beings from conception and the body develops different internal and external genitalia and different levels of various hormones.

Sex Assignment

The sex of a baby is generally decided at birth by the external genitalia. Often this can also be predicted before birth from scans.

Intersex

It is difficult to assign sex at birth in around 1 in 1,500 cases. This can be due to chromosome abnormalities, hormone levels or developmental problems. Medical treatment and/or surgery is used to clarify the sex. Some people, who have a clearly defined sex at birth, discover that they have genetic, hormonal or developmental problems later in life and may need medical help. Some intersex problems are minor and do not cause significant problems.

Gender - Masculine and Feminine

Definition

Gender is used to describe the social and cultural roles within a society of the sexes. These may vary considerably between different cultures.

Typical gender specific issues may be names, clothing, hairstyles, makeup, occupation, sports, roles in society - generally cues we use to assume the sex of individuals.

Relevant areas for Christians are the differing Biblical roles of men and women in the church and within marriage. eg

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...

Transgender

Some people are uncomfortable with their assigned biological sex. They may

then go to considerable lengths to adopt the lifestyle of a gender different from that associated with their assigned sex. This may involve hormone treatment or surgery in order to change their body to align with their chosen gender. They cannot, however, change the chromosomes which determined their birth sex.

The Bible does not directly address transgender but it does assume the unity of biological sex and gender identity. There is also the whole area of being content with the way that God has made us. The verses about homosexuality warn us about taking on the opposite sexual roles. There are two verses which may also relate to this subject.

Deut 22:5 "A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.

1 Cor 11:14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

Being Friends

- It is important for Christians to be friendly and natural with all sorts of people.
- We should avoid any kind of joking, sarcasm, or criticism of individuals.
- As Christians we need to be able to explain our own position clearly but realise that other people may be coming from a completely different

perspective. Try to understand them.

- Remember that sexuality is a very important, sensitive and emotional issue to many people
- Don't be a hypocrite. We need to examine our own sexual morality - What do we do? What do we think? What do we watch? What do we listen to? What do we read? What do we laugh at? What do we browse? Beware of the beam in your own eye!

Jesus and Marriage

Matthew 19:4 He (Jesus) answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ESV

Jesus emphasised the creation of male and female and assumed that men and women would engage in life-long monogamous heterosexual marriage and that this would be the setting for bringing up children in a family. He condemned adultery and divorce, practices which undermine his view of marriage and family.

God did not make another man as a companion for Adam, but he made a woman who was not a mirror image but who was complementary. When they come together they are described as becoming "one flesh" (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5, Mark 10:8, 1 Cor 6:16, Eph 5:31). This is a physical, sexual, and spiritual union. It is even used as a picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5). No other setting for sex is supported in the Bible.

Gay literature often states that Jesus said nothing directly about homosexuality. This may be true but he reinforces the heterosexual institution of marriage ordained by God

This is arguably the most powerful Biblical case against homosexual behaviour and relationships. It is based on the whole Biblical positive view of marriage, sex, and family and not just negative verses about homosexuality in particular.

Jesus also taught about marriage in the after-life:

Luke 20:34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. NIV

Jesus is teaching that sex and gender are only for this life and will be of no consequence after the resurrection.

In fact the only marriage made in heaven is that between Jesus and his bride, the people of God.

Rev 19:9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." ESV

Sexual Immorality

There are two Greek words - porneia (sexual immorality) and pornos (sexually immoral person). Of course we get our words porn and pornography from these words. These words are used throughout the New Testament as generic descriptions of sexual immorality sometimes connected with other words. From their knowledge of the Old Testament, the Jews would have included incest, adultery, prostitution, rape, homosexuality, bestiality, ritual sex, orgies etc as sexual immorality.

- Jesus said it comes from a person's heart (Matt 15:17, Mark 7:21)
- Jesus says it may be grounds for divorce (Matt 5:32, 19:9)
- Avoidance of idolatry, eating polluted meat and blood and sexual immorality were the only laws given to the new gentile Christians (Acts 15)

Paul warns against sexual immorality in many of his letters:

- Incest is immorality
- It's OK to mix with immoral unbelievers
- But we should not eat with immoral people who claim to be believers
- Sexually immoral will not inherit the Kingdom of God
- Your body is made for the Lord, not for sexual immorality
- Sexual immorality is a sin against your own body
- Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit
- Good marriage relationships should prevent sexual immorality
- There should not be a hint of sexual immorality - or obscenity or coarse joking - they are improper for God's people
- Sexual immorality belongs to our earthly nature - it is an act of the flesh
- The wrath of God is coming because of these things
- It is God's will that we should be holy and avoid sexual immorality - we should control our own bodies

Jude and Revelation

- Beware of immoral people slipping in among you
- Sexual immorality was a significant sin of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Sexual immorality was a problem in some of the seven churches Jesus wrote to
- The sexually immoral will be consigned to the lake of fire
- They will be outside the new Jerusalem

Our bodies

Romans 6:13 (NLT) **Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin.** Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. **So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.**

Romans 8:11 (NLT) The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, **he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.**

Romans 12:1 (NLT) And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to **give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice**—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

1 Corinthians 6:13 (NLT) ... **But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord,** and the Lord cares about our bodies. 14 And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

15 **Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ?** Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 **And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her?** For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." 17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

18 **Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one**

does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

1 Corinthians 9:27 (NLT) **I discipline my body** like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

2 Corinthians 4:8(NLT) We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. 9 We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. 10 Through suffering, **our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NLT) For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. **We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.**

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NLT) Because we have these promises, dear friends, **let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit.** And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NLT) God's will is for you to be holy, **so stay away from all sexual sin. 4 Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor—5 not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.**

About our bodies

Believers

The Bible verses above highlight the attitudes that Christians should have to their body:

- They belong to God - bought at a price
- They are temples of the Holy Spirit
- We should use them for the glory and honour of God and for his Kingdom
- We should keep our bodies holy and avoid sexual immorality

Our bodies are our primary asset here on earth to use for serving God. It is our responsibility to look after them and keep them holy and healthy for God's use. We need to be careful what we do, what we see and what we hear.

The World

This is a very different view from the world round about who emphasise having control and ownership of our bodies and using them for our own enjoy-

ment.

We live in a sex obsessed society for whom satisfying and enjoyable sex has a very high priority.

Digital imagery, models, pornography, the internet and media generally present unrealistic ideal standards for appearance and sexual performance. Young people, particularly, can be easily disappointed and depressed with their own bodies and sex in the real world!

In wealthy countries, huge amounts are spent on beauty, fashion and even cosmetic surgery with an aim of making people more beautiful and attractive.

Of course it is important that cosmetic surgery etc. is available for those with genuine defects and that our resources are used for people in real need.

As Christians, we can be examples of people who are content with the bodies and lives that God has given us.

Habits and Health

- Some homosexuals have many partners and even in “stable” relationships, casual sex with others may be considered acceptable and even encouraged.
- There appears to be a high rate of mental illness, depression, drug abuse, physical abuse, self harm and suicide among homosexuals. The homosexual community (eg Stonewall) believe that this is mainly due to the negative attitudes in society towards homosexuals causing feelings of rejection.
- Some sexual practices are physically risky and more commonly practiced by gay and bisexual people. Anal sex for example does not have the same natural defences as vaginal sex and exposes the participants to tissue damage, incontinence and a host of sexually transmitted diseases. Unfortunately gay men are likely to carry a number of STIs, viral infections, HIV, parasites and even some cancers. Gay men may also take more health risks since the success of drugs controlling HIV and AIDS.

Bites

It's just the way I am

This is a common argument to justify homosexuality. But we do not justify violence, theft, adultery or child abuse because it is just the way people are!

Same sex relationships work

Many would argue that affectionate homosexual relationships based on love work as well, if not better, than heterosexual relationships.

For Christians, the issue ultimately is not whether something works, but “is it right?”

It doesn't hurt anyone else

Some would argue that it doesn't matter what you do as long as you don't harm anyone else.

Firstly the effect you have on other people is hard to measure - people are vulnerable.

Secondly a relevant Bible verse states that sexual sins are also actually against your own body (1 Cor 6:18-20). As Christians, our first obligation is to please God, not to please ourselves or to pursue personal pleasure.

It is natural

It is obvious that the purpose of our biological sex organs are for procreation and continuance of the human race. This is true for many other organisms. Heterosexual sexual intercourse facilitates this process and this is clearly the

most “natural” sexual act. As human beings, we also recognise, of course, that sexual intercourse can be a powerful expression of love between a man and woman particularly in a stable partnership or marriage. There are many cases where love is not involved eg one-night stand, prostitution, rape etc.

Homosexual sex does not have the same purpose of procreation and so is not “natural” in this sense. Homosexuals would argue that the expression of love is similar and this is why there has been pressure for equality of homosexual partnerships and marriage.

LGBT vers Christians

LGBT people see evangelical Christians as their enemy and homophobic since they are a group who believe that homosexuality is a sin. As LGBT practice becomes more acceptable, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold a view which is different from that prevailing in society. There have been a number of law cases where Christians have refused to provide services for LGBT people. This has become a human rights issue and is a challenge for young Christians.

We will not change society by condemnation of this particular sin. The way to change society has always been the same for 2000 years: The relevant and effective proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit transforming lives.

Same-sex attracted Christians

Some Christians will be same sex attracted. What are they supposed to do?

Firstly there is the call to all Christians:

Luke 9:23 “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ESV

This is the basis for being a disciple of Jesus and requires consideration of our life and its purpose in the service of God and his kingdom.

Remain a Single Person

1 Corinthians 7:32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. ...34 An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. NIV

Paul generally recommended a single lifestyle for Christians. Jesus and Paul were both single people.

Serving God can be much more flexible and even risky since you have much fewer responsibilities in this world.

Life can be uncluttered.

Having close Christian friends of both sexes married and unmarried will enable you to feel fully a part of the larger family of God.

Engage in heterosexual marriage

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ESV

This is the backdrop for the creation of Eve as a perfect companion and helper for Adam in his work in the Garden of Eden. She was Eve not Steve!

Christian marriage is about a man and woman serving God together as best friends. There are many opportunities for working this out:

- Serving God together as a married couple
- Supporting each other in individual gifting and roles
- Enjoying love and tenderness together
- Bringing up children together
- Creation of a home together and hospitality

If one of the partners is same sex attracted, there will need to be support, love and understanding from the other partner and sex may be a little more difficult. Sex, however, does occupy a relatively small amount of time in the grand scheme of things and needs to be kept in perspective!

A short answer to the question!

The Bible teaches that homosexual activity is a sin. The Bible does not emphasise this sin - it is one of many. The Bible does not comment directly on same sex attraction or recognise sexual orientation.

So for a “Bible believing Christian” it would be sinful to engage in homosexual acts.

Homosexuality is not considered wrong or sinful according to the law in many developed democratic countries. Homosexuality is considered to be an orientation or a chosen lifestyle.

As Christians we aim to be tolerant and compassionate to everyone in society around us but are aware that all of us are sinners and under God's judgement. The only way to be saved is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ - this is our gospel.