

# Some Talking Points on Christianity and Homosexuality

By Jerry S. Maneker

About a year ago, after my giving a talk on how the Bible doesn't condemn, but actually affirms, same-sex love, a woman with a gay brother, raised in a Christian family, asked me to write out "talking points" on the subject of the consistency between Christianity and homosexuality, so that she could share that information with her brother. This article is the result of my answering her request.

Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, stated what is, unfortunately, a profound truth. He said that no matter how big the lie, if it's repeated often enough, people will come to believe it. Just as that axiom proved true in Nazi Germany, it certainly proves itself to be true regarding the relationship between Christianity and homosexuality. For centuries, we have been repeatedly told from assorted pulpits throughout the world that homosexuality is a "sin," so that so many professing Christians and others come to think that it's a no-brainer, that it is, in fact, a "sin."

The fact is, as the Reverend Troy Perry has said, "Jesus came to take away our sins, not our sexuality." In addition, as I have said for many decades, "Never let other people define your reality or put you into bondage to their ways of thinking!"

Simply put, if we remove the patriarchal and legalistic trappings of "Christianity," that presents the false gospel of legalism perfectionism, and exclusion, we see that the only Gospel to be found in Christianity, the Gospel of grace, faith, love, peace, reconciliation, and inclusiveness demands that we embrace all of God's children, we be authentic as God created us to be, and we recognize that we commit a grievous sin when we reject the wonderful gift bestowed upon us by God, the gift of being able to love another person. As Rev. Troy Perry has said, "God didn't create someone whom He could sit around and hate!"

You also commit a grievous sin if you reject the sexual orientation given you by God! We are to never chafe under the sovereign choices of God, and so many LGBT Christians fail to recognize that they are God's gift to the Church and to society! Always remember, God has gifted you with the capacity to love and that you are God's gift to the Church and to this world!

As I read a while back, "We are not here to prove ourselves to the world, but to be ourselves in the world!" This is a good point and truth worth meditating on each and every day of our lives. Read Isaiah 2:22 and Galatians 1:10 for further confirmation of this truth!

I hope these talking points are of help, not merely to address the prejudice of others, prejudice that, unfortunately, rationality and facts are frequently unlikely to penetrate, but that they affirm all of us as God's children, and once and for all erase any possible reason for anyone to have shame or self-loathing because of sexual orientation, or for any other reason. God is not stupid and God doesn't make any mistakes!

Here are the talking points that I hope you find useful:

1. All of the Commandments are fulfilled by loving God and loving others. We are never to judge others. (Matthew 7:1; Romans 2:1) Read Romans 1 in detail and then Romans 2:1.

2. The "clobber passages" in Leviticus and Deuteronomy concern the "Holiness Codes" that have been fulfilled in Jesus. "Toevah" means "abomination" or "detestable" as related to idolatry and cult prostitution that were engaged in by the Canaanites.

3. The Bible also contains prohibitions against eating shell fish; there are also the cultural practices of stoning to death those who commit adultery, stoning to death those who work on the Sabbath, stoning to death recalcitrant children, women not being allowed to talk in the Church, women not being allowed to teach men, women always keeping their heads covered in church, not wearing mixed fibers in one's clothes, etc. Why not picket Safeway for selling shell fish and picket K Mart for selling shirts made of cotton and polyester?

4. The "sin of Sodom" (Genesis 19) has nothing to do with homosexuality. It deals with gang rape. Whenever Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned in the Bible, homosexuality is never mentioned as its sin. Its sins are primarily inhospitality and not taking care of the poor.

5. In a tribal society, living on the edge, surrounded by enemies, homosexual activity is condemned because in this way people can't "be fruitful and multiply." However, we are no longer a tribal society living on the edge; it's inappropriate to blindly translate the cultural practices of ancient societies to contemporary society as witness as a widow having to marry her husband's brother. If she loved that man, that's wonderful. But if she didn't love that man, she still had to marry him and one can't legitimately argue that God is in favor of serial rape!

6. If homosexuality was so important, why is it not mentioned in the Ten Commandments; why did the prophets never write about it; why didn't Jesus ever condemn it? If it were that important, don't you think that it would have been mentioned in at least one of these contexts?

7. Why was the centurion so concerned about this particular slave as recorded in Matthew 8? After all, slaves were a dime a dozen. As it says in Luke, this is a slave who was "dear to him." (Luke 7:2) Why is the Greek word "pais" translated as "servant" in English, when this Greek word is best translated "slave boy?" (See "Our Story Too...Reading the Bible with New Eyes," by Rev. Nancy Wilson, located at <http://www.mccchurch.org/>.) "Doulos" is the Greek word for slave! A slave boy was frequently one who had a romantic-sexual relationship with an older man; that may well be why the centurion was so concerned about this particular slave boy and asked Jesus to heal him. If such a relationship was a sin or in any way inappropriate, wouldn't Jesus have taken this opportunity to condemn or censure the centurion for having such a relationship? Instead, Jesus merely commended the centurion on his faith and promptly proceeded to heal the man's slave boy.

8. Same-sex love is certainly affirmed in reading of the relationship between King David (called "a man after God's own heart") and Jonathan. See 1 Samuel 16:12;20:1-23;35-42;20:41;28:32-34;20:12-17;42; 2 Samuel 1:26. If one reads the account of Deborah, a Judge and esteemed warrior in Israel, one comes away with a feeling that she may well have been transgendered, as she certainly didn't live up to the cultural expectations of how a "woman" is to behave. (See Judges 4:1-24)

9. Particularly in the New Testament, same-sex love is never condemned! What is undoubtedly condemned is male cult prostitution, as seen in the fact that in Corinth, where the Book of Romans was undoubtedly written, there were many religions, one of them being the fertility cult of Aphrodite. Here, sex was frequently a worshipful act in homage to various pagan deities for purposes of fertility, having the crops grow, etc.

10. The word "homosexual" never appears in any biblical manuscript, as it was a word coined in the late 19th Century and first appeared in an English Bible translation, the Revised Standard Version, in 1946. The Greek word used for "homosexual," arsenokoitai, is an obscure word that doesn't seem to appear in any other ancient writings, and may very well have been only used by the Apostle Paul. Its literal meaning is "male bed." No one knows what Paul was referring to but, if he wanted to denote same-sex love, there were other words available to him that he could have easily used.

11. The word translated "effeminate" in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is malakoi. It means "soft." It's used elsewhere in Scripture to denote soft clothing. (Matthew 11:8) In this context it probably refers to people of soft morals, or people who lack courage. In any case, to translate it as "effeminate" in a pejorative way would contradict Paul's assertion of the equality of men and women in Christ. (Galatians 3:28)

12. Regarding the word "para physin" that is usually translated "against nature," this phrase is also used in regard to God's welcoming the gentiles into the fold. (Romans 11:21-24) The phrase is probably best translated, "unexpected," or something not done in the usual way.

13. Biblical principle must always trump biblical practice! The biblical principle is the Gospel, the Good News, of God's grace (unmerited favor) to us that we appropriate through our faith in Him. (Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-9) As Peter J. Gomes writes in his excellent book that I strongly urge you to read, *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*, when we read any passage of the Bible we must try to discern what it says, what it means, the subtext, the context, what we bring to the text, and what we take out of the text. Much of the mind-set and many of the words that appear in Scripture don't mean what we think they mean from our perspective.

14. As Christians we are to show forth the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and live out the Gospel of grace, faith, love, peace, reconciliation, and inclusiveness. We are in no way to align ourselves with wolves in sheep's clothing who stigmatize and oppress gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people for their own psychological, political, social, and financial gains, particularly when they have absolutely no Scriptural authority to do so.

There is much more that can be said on this matter! There are many other web sites as well that deal with the integration of Christianity and homosexuality, such as the web site of the Metropolitan Community Churches, and my blog, *A Christian Voice For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, And Transgender Rights*, that has many relevant links that you may find of interest and might be of help.

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