

Gay AND Christian?

Yes! It IS Possible!

A Beginner's Guide

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God is perfect. People are not.

This small book will explain how incorrect translations, misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the Original Scriptures have led to unjustified prejudice against gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, and intersex people.

No disrespect for God or God's Holy Word is meant or implied by this booklet. The Bible is the foundation of my faith in Jesus Christ, and my intention is to honour Scripture with ACCURATE information, and through that information to explain that God's love is for ALL.

Without a modern English Translation I would not be a Christian today so I am indebted to the translators. Unfortunately, the translators unwittingly made errors, due to lack of knowledge, that have caused grievous pain to many. My wish is to attempt to alleviate that unnecessary pain.

I pray that you may understand the concepts presented, and that they will lead to the knowledge that God's Holy Word, when understood in the correct context, does not present a hindrance to any of us. We are all welcome at the Lord's Table!

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PREFACE

"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so . . ." unless you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer, in which case you are told that Jesus loves everyone EXCEPT me. Well it's time to set the record straight — if you'll pardon the expression. Jesus loves ESPECIALLY His GLBTIQ children — for the Bible tells me so!

The Protestant Bible is like a library, consisting of 66 books, written by about 40 authors over a period from about 2000 BC to about 70 AD. It is divided into the Old Testament (before Christ), which was written in Hebrew with a few small segments in Aramaic, and the New Testament (after Christ), which was written in Greek. In these 66 books there are 1,189 chapters containing about 31,273 verses. The divisions into chapters and verses occurred for the first time in the Geneva Translation of 1560 for ease of referencing. They are not part of the original texts.

I believe that the original scriptures were God-inspired and contain the truths that God would have us know. I believe that subsequent translations were not necessarily God-inspired, and had to deal with a multitude of issues causing possible misinterpretations or misunderstandings.

Translations may have been written with the best of intentions by God-fearing people who did their very best to convey God's message as they understood it, with their current knowledge of the original languages, customs, traditions and culture of bible times, BUT with their own biases based on their understanding of what they THOUGHT the original scriptures said.

"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ." ~ Eph 6:5

This is from the New Testament. Clearly God supports slavery. So why do we not support slavery today? Because we understand that those verses were written in a certain time period to a certain people. Western Society has evolved into recognizing that slavery is just not right! But this evolution did not come about easily. It took the Civil War in the United States of America to change the hearts of many who wanted to interpret the Bible literally as being the truth for yesterday, today and forever.

We have a fuller understanding of scripture with regard to slavery, and now we also have a fuller understanding of orientation. We MUST put things into perspective!

Jesus' love was INCLUSIVE! Jesus' friends were the marginalized of society — the despised tax collectors, the uneducated, the prostitutes, and the lepers. Doesn't it just make sense that he would choose us (gays) for his close friends if he were here today! So smile because God has a plan for your life and "Jesus loves YOU. This I know, for the Bible tells me so!"

*"It is never legitimate to use the words of Scripture to promote a loveless agenda."
~ The Right Rev. Dr. Peter Short, 38th Moderator of the United Church of Canada*

"God loved the world so much, that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was freely given, that WHOSOEVER believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." ~ John 3:16

SOME ESSENTIAL FACTS

Homosexual, Sodomy, and Sodomite

There is no word in biblical Greek or Hebrew that is the equivalent to the English word *homosexual*. The 1946 Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the New Testament was the first translation to incorrectly use the word *homosexual* (in I Cor 6:9).

There is no word in biblical Greek or Hebrew for *sodomy*. A Sodomite was simply an inhabitant of Sodom, just as a Torontonionian is an inhabitant of Toronto. It was not until after the rise of the hierarchy in the institutional church that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was inaccurately equated with homosexuality and the word *sodomite* came into use.

Any translation using the words *homosexual*, *sodomy*, or *sodomite* are interpretations and are not faithful representations of the original scriptures.

What Did Jesus Say About Homosexuality?

Jesus had nothing to say about homosexuality. Society and the church perceive it to be a sin worthy of ostracizing family and friends but Jesus never mentioned it! He talked about money, adultery, idolatry, divorce, greed, inhospitality, and many other subjects but he never mentioned homosexuality. Rather neglectful of him **IF** being gay were such an abomination — another word usually linked to homosexuals — which has also been mistranslated. The correct interpretation of the word *abomination* refers to impurity and is usually linked with idolatry, not sexuality.

On one occasion Jesus was asked, "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." ~ Matt. 22:36-40

Jesus made it clear that the only law is LOVE. If what you have been told does not agree with Jesus' Great Commandments then what you have been told is wrong. God's love is for ALL, especially gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people! Jesus was the first to reach out to the rejected of society. Jesus reaches out to us now.

Perversion and Abomination

The dictionary defines *perversion* as *a sexual practice regarded as abnormal*. That means that a heterosexual practicing homosexual acts is perverted as in the case of ALL the men of Sodom wanting to engage with the angels (strange flesh). However, since sex with the same gender is natural for a gay person, there is no perversion associated with the sexual act.

Note also that while the word *abomination* has been used with reference to homosexuality, the biblical interpretation of the word *abomination* relates to any act of ritual uncleanness as set out in the Holiness Code such as eating shellfish, trimming your hair, touching the skin of a dead pig (should we stone those who play football?), wearing clothes of two kinds of material (polyester/cotton) — the list is long. How can we discuss one ritual uncleanness (same-sex acts) to the exclusion of all others?

This will be discussed further in the section about Leviticus.

All People Were Thought To Be Heterosexual

When the original scriptures were written, it was assumed that all people were heterosexual. Same-sex acts were common but the concept of homosexuality as an orientation was unknown until about a hundred and forty years ago. The word *homosexual* first appeared in print in German in 1869, and then in English in 1889. Certainly homosexuality existed, just as electricity and magnetism existed, but they were not understood. On that basis alone, we know that the authors of the Bible could not have written knowledgably about homosexuality or about homosexual people.

Wherever same-sex acts are mentioned in scripture it is:

- with regard to ritualistic traditions which were intended to increase the small population of the Hebrews (example: not spilling a man's seed on the ground)
- among the purity codes for the priests (Levitical Law)
- with regard to temple prostitution (idol worship) which was very prevalent among the pagan people who surrounded the Hebrews
- to do with rape, power and violence as in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

If the Bible writers believed that all same-sex acts were committed by heterosexuals then they would assume that all same-sex acts were a choice, acted out for one of the reasons stated above, and as such would be considered *unnatural* and *lustful*. We would consider them *unnatural* and *lustful* today.

We now know that it is *unnatural* for homosexuals to commit opposite-sex acts, therefore it is *unnatural* for a homosexual to be in a sexual relationship with a heterosexual. It is not fair to either person when orientation prevents an all-embracing, all-encompassing love. The two will be unequally yoked.

Same-Sex Love in the Bible

None of the verses used against gays refer to a loving relationship between two people; however you will find examples of same-sex love in the beautiful and romantic story of Ruth and Naomi, a passage that very often is used in marriage ceremonies, and yet the story it tells is of a relationship between two women.

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee (Naomi), [or] to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people [shall be] my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, [if ought] but death part thee and me."

~ Ruth 1:16,17

And of David and Jonathan.

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

~ I Samuel 18:1(b)

"Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." ~ II Samuel 1:26(b)

The Church and Society Have Been Wrong Before

It took the Roman Catholic Church 359 years to admit that they were wrong in accusing Galileo of heresy, condemning him to death unless he recanted that the earth rotates around the sun. It was considered heresy to challenge the biblical belief that the Earth was the centre of the universe.

On May 5, 2001, when Pope John Paul II begged God's forgiveness for sins committed by Roman Catholics against Jews, heretics, and women, he acknowledged that the church has been wrong in the past.

The church has been wrong often. It has misused the Bible to uphold slavery, apartheid, and segregation, to malign Jews and other non-Christian people of faith, to support Hitler's Third Reich, to resist medical science, and to rebuke interracial marriage. The Bible has been misused to execute women as witches, to defend the racism of the Ku Klux Klan, and to perpetrate intolerance and discrimination of women and sexual minorities.

We look at these atrocities now and wonder how society and the church could have been so wrong about what the Bible says. I believe they are wrong again regarding homosexuality.

BIBLE TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

Inspired or Hired

Translations were written for various reasons, not all of them honourable. The King James Version of the Bible (published in 1611), perhaps the most respected translation of all, came into existence because King James had such an intense dislike of the Geneva Bible, the Bible in use at the time. The Geneva Bible's extensive, strongly Protestant marginal notes interpreted and commented on Scripture. It challenged, among other things, the belief in the "divine right of kings", a concept which implied that kings were the breathing images of God and were endowed with divine authority, a concept that James wished to continue. King James was so infuriated by the Geneva Bible that he considered it "seditious" and made its ownership a felony. Hardly a God-inspired reason for establishing a new translation!

While some of the translators knew both Greek and Hebrew, the King James Version was not "translated out of the original tongues" as claims its introductory page. In the preface of the first edition the translators stated that it was not their purpose to make a new translation, but to make a good one better. The King James Version was a revision of the (English) Bishop's Bible (1568), which was a revision of the (English) Great Bible (1539). James gave the 47 scholars, who were the translators, instructions to ensure that the new translation would conform to his concept for the Church of England.

The translators were not necessarily inspired of God. They were paid to translate according to the agenda that would please King James.

Historians have established that King James was not heterosexual so it is somewhat bizarre that it is the King James Version that has been used with great violence against homosexuals.

Interpretation and Context

Meanings of words are sometimes lost or changed. As an example, to *fear* God is not to be afraid of God but to *respect* and *trust* in God.

Translators must also deal with text where perhaps there is no comparable word for the original Hebrew or Greek word, so they have used a contemporary word that did not originally exist, based on what THEY THOUGHT the original word meant. In some cases they "thought" wrong. See <http://christiangays.com/articles/malakoi.shtml> re translation of *arsenokoitai* and *malakos*.

The Old Testament was written with a vocabulary of about 5,800 words, and the New Testament with about 4,800 words. There are currently about 540,000 words in the English language.

Translators Sometimes Interpret Incorrectly For Their Own Reasons

The most accurate translation of the word *Abba* is *Daddy*, but the translators of the King James Bible felt that the term *Daddy* was not reverent enough and so, with the best of intentions, but for their own reasons, they translated *Abba* (Daddy) into *Father*, a term which is much more formal and rather distant compared to *Daddy*.

Do you regard God as your Father — or your Daddy? Think about it. The essence is the same but the connotation is quite different. Our God wants us to approach Him as a loving Daddy (or Mommy since God is Spirit encompassing the qualities of all genders). But many people think of God as a stern *Father* waiting to crack the whip when you sin. Instead of thinking of God as *Father* stop now and think for just a moment of God as *Daddy* or *Mommy*. This is a more accurate translation than *Father*.

Some Words Can Have More Than One Meaning

In Hebrew, *Exodus* means "these are the names" since this is the book in which many of Israel's ancestors are recorded.

In the Greek version of the Old Testament (The Septuagint), *Exodus* means "exit" or "the way out" referring to God leading the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt.

So in one very important word, *Exodus*, we can see two very different interpretations between the Hebrew and the Greek. In this case both words are accurate although distinctly different. Language and interpretation are complicated. There are so many possibilities.

Translating From One Language to Another

My sister-in-law's first language is French and she spoke very little English when we first met, but even her limited English was better than my French and so we conversed mainly in English.

I vividly remember going to a restaurant for breakfast with my sister-in-law and she ordered a *difficult* egg. Neither the waitress nor any of us at the table could figure out what she wanted. After a long while, we finally deduced that what she wanted was a *hard-boiled* egg.

At that time her understanding of the word *hard* was *difficult* but as you can see it was not the correct word for the situation even though *hard* does indeed mean *difficult*.

Interpretation or Literal Translations

"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." ~ Matt 10:5,6

Jesus says clearly here that the gospel is NOT for the Gentiles or the Samaritans, only for the Jews, but we do not accept that literal translation because we KNOW that the gospel is for ALL! Instead, we "interpret" these verses based on the context of the whole Bible as Jesus telling the disciples to START evangelizing in their hometowns. Once again, Jesus was speaking to a certain people (His disciples) at a certain time (the beginning of the faith).

In the same way we cannot select a few verses that some think refer to homosexuality and take them out of the context of the overall message of the Bible. Surely we are to include Gentiles and Samaritans NOW just as we are to include gays and lesbians NOW.

English Idioms

If I said, "Grandpa kicked the bucket" you would understand that I mean he died, but if someone was unfamiliar with this idiom they would simply think that grandpa kicked a bucket, which probably wouldn't make any sense at all within the context of the conversation.

If you ask me if I thought I'd win the race and I replied, "It'll be a piece of cake" you would know that I mean it will be easy, but a person trying to translate literally, word for word, would definitely have difficulty in conveying the idea using the word "cake".

Try to literally translate the following, assuming that you don't know what they mean: cry over spilt milk, cold turkey, dead heat, everything but the kitchen sink, lend me your ear, mad as a hatter, let the cat out of the bag, nose out of joint, off limits, off the hook, on the fence, out on a limb, over my dead body, preaching to the choir, rock the boat, sick as a dog, start from scratch, the pot calling the kettle black, third wheel, tie the knot, under the gun, when pigs fly, apple of your eye, skeletons in the closet, shake a leg, neck and neck, he's in the doghouse, etc.

Hebrew Idioms

While Greek culture viewed the world through the mind (abstract thought), and Ancient Hebrew culture viewed the world through the senses (concrete thought), you will understand the difficulty in translating when, for example we read "slow to nose". If we didn't know that the nose flares when angry, this idiom wouldn't make any sense whatever in a direct Hebrew to English translation. Instead of the literal translation we say, "slow to anger".

Here are a few Hebrew idioms with their meanings in brackets. Seed or loins (descendents), small of hand (weak), knew no quiet in their bellies (greedy), kneel over (to have sex with), break teeth (to make powerless), lift horn (to defy God), ears are uncircumcised (doesn't listen), spread feet (to offer self for sex), beauty in the eyes (accepted), bone of the day (noontime), eye (spring), face fell (sad), functional in the eye (pleases), lift up your face (accept you), one shoulder (in agreement), sea (west), uncover the nakedness (to have sexual relations)

Printers' Errors

Throughout history, printers' errors and peculiar translations have appeared in Bibles published throughout the world.

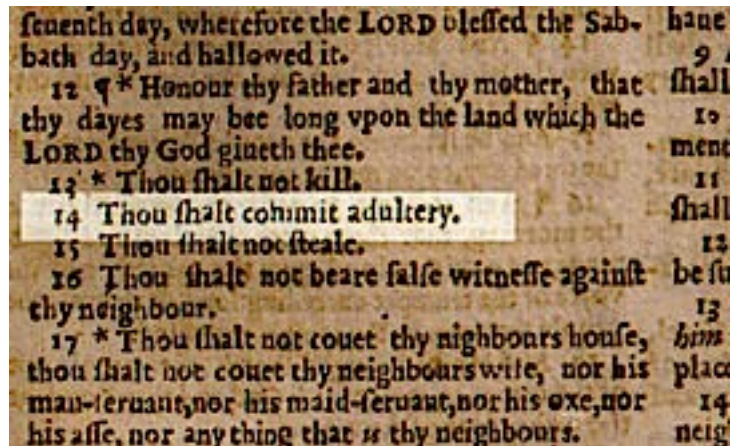
1562: The second edition of the Geneva Bible, Matthew 5:9 reads "Blessed are the placemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"; it should read "peacemakers". In its chapter heading for Luke 21 it has "Christ condemne the poor widow" rather than "commendeth".

1631: In the King James Version, "not" is omitted from Exodus 20:14 making the seventh commandment read,

"Thou shalt commit adultery."

The printers were fined £300 and most of the copies were recalled immediately.

Only 11 copies are known to exist today.



1653: KJV, Omits "not" before the word "inherit" making I Corinthians 6:9 read "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God?..."

1716: KJV, John 8:11 reads "Go and sin on more" rather than "Go and sin no more".

1717: KJV, The chapter heading for Luke 20 reads "The Parable of the Vinegar" instead of "The Parable of the Vineyard." This particular version was so full of errors that one copy sold for \$5,000 in 2008.

1763: KJV, Psalm 14:1 reads, "the fool hath said in his heart there is a God", rather than "... there is no God". The printers were fined £3,000 and all copies ordered destroyed.

1792: KJV, The name Philip is substituted for Peter as the apostle who would deny Jesus in Luke 22:34.

1801: KJV, "Murmerers" is printed as "murderers", making Jude 16 read: "These are murderers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

1804: KJV, I Kings 8:19 reads "thy son that shall come forth out of thy lions", rather than "loins", and in Numbers 25:18 "They murderer shall surely be put together" rather than "... put to death".

1990's: A large American Bible publisher produced a new Red Letter Edition, bound in leather. A mistake was made in printing the Book of Timothy and the film plate containing the red-letter text was omitted. Thousands of the misprinted bibles had to be destroyed.

These are just a few of the many Printer errors that have occurred within our sacred Bibles.

Languages Constantly Change

New words are always being added to languages and others take on different or added meanings. For example only recently have we begun using the words *internet* and *software* as part of everyday speech, and *hardware* used to be something that was used to fasten things together.

Gay used to mean happy, *queer* meant odd, and *straight* meant *not crooked*. Today these words have completely different meanings.

What Canadians would call an *elevator*, the English would call a *lift*, a *baby carriage* is a *pram*, the *trunk* of a car is the *boot*, and a *gay person* or a *cigarette* is called a *fag*. In Canada we eat *chocolate bars* (whether or not they have chocolate in them) while Americans eat *candy bars*. Canadians sit on a *chesterfield*, drink *pop* and use *serviettes* with their *poutine*, but Americans sit on a *sofa*, drink *soda* and use *napkins*, and don't have anything comparable to *poutine*. Even within our own countries some words don't make sense. We park on a *driveway* and drive on a *parkway*, and why are feet smelly and noses runny?

There will always be misunderstandings and confusion within each language, not to mention trying to translate into another language, because of location, historical period, and cultural differences.

NEW DISCOVERIES LEAD TO NEW UNDERSTANDING

Ancient Texts Found

Archaeologists continue to find documents that help translators understand the ancient Hebrew and Greek languages better. Among those, the discoveries of the Nag Hammadi Texts in 1945, and the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, a huge collection of manuscripts found between 1947 and 1956, are enabling Bible scholars to learn more about the culture and social classes of those who lived in Israel and the surrounding areas during Bible times, and they are now able to clarify some of our previous misunderstandings of certain words.

For example, the translators of the King James Version were not sure about one of the Hebrew words in the original texts, so in I Samuel 17:22 they translated this unknown word as *his carriage* and *keeper of the carriage* based on the context of the story.

"David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army."

The translators of the Revised Standard Version (published in 1952) had the benefit of more recently discovered Hebrew documents to give a more accurate translation. They realized that the previously unknown word did not refer to David's *carriage* but to his *carried things*. In other words, the correct word was *baggage* or *luggage*, not *carriage*. So the same verse in the Revised Standard Version is translated more accurately:

"David left his things with the man in charge of the baggage, and ran to the ranks."

Quite a different interpretation from the King James Version!

Another example:

And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years [for] a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian prisoners, and the Ethiopian captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with [their] buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. ~ Isaiah 20:3,4

Without knowing the culture of the people at this time we might assume that Isaiah went around in the nude for three years, especially where we read specifically that their "buttocks [were] uncovered" and it was to the "shame of Egypt". It has since been discovered that the word "naked" in verse 3 denotes "the state of one who has laid aside his loose outer garment (Latin: *nudus*) and appears clothed only in a long tunic or under robe worn next to the skin."

In Isaiah's day a person would express suffering or tragedy by going barefoot. Isaiah was a wealthy prophet. The tunic or robe that he chose to wear was that of a servant. Certainly Isaiah had a distressing message for these people, but the point is that it appears in this translation that he was nude, when in reality he was not naked at all, as we understand the word *naked* today.

And so with this new information we would hope that with each new revision the translators would reflect more accurately the intention of the original scriptures.

THE SIN OF SODOM WAS NOT HOMOSEXUALITY!

For years, people have accepted without question that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality. A more careful examination of the story itself combined with other passages in both Old and New Testaments will indicate this not to be so.

The story in Genesis 18, 19 tells of two angels who came to Lot's house to rescue his family from the impending destruction of the city "because of its great wickedness".

*The LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me."
~ Gen 18:20,21*

Notice that the exact form of wickedness is not mentioned. The story continues:

*Before they (the two angels) had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — to the last man — surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can know them."
~ Gen 19:4,5*

It has been estimated that gays represent only about 10% of the population. If "*ALL the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — to the last man*" took part in this attempted rape then 90% of them were heterosexuals!

*Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."
~ Gen 19:6-8*

If these men were gay this substitution would hardly have been tempting but since, as mentioned above, the concept of a "gay orientation" was unknown at that time, Lot would have presumed that all the men were heterosexual.

Lot's offer of his virgin daughters shows that women had no value in this culture. The men, on the other hand, were guests, and hospitality was a vital part of the culture in those days of no refrigeration, or restaurants and hotels to accommodate travellers. It was not just a matter of good manners. A traveller could die without the hospitality of strangers, and so it was a matter of honour that Lot protect his guests.

Lot was an outsider in Sodom who was never accepted. His guests were also outsiders, and the Sodomites (inhabitants of Sodom) didn't like outsiders. The Sodomites were not looking for a love affair with the strangers (angels). They wanted to dominate them through rape, making the men take the part of a valueless woman, which was the worst possible form of humiliation.

The case against gays is based on the attempted rape of the angels, but does it stand up to scrutiny? There are several things to consider

Recall please that God mentions how grievous the sin of Sodom was BEFORE the attempted rape of the angels, so this is NOT the reason that God decided to destroy the city.

There are 48 references in the Bible to Sodom (see Addendum for partial list) and not one of them mentions homosexuality or rape! The overwhelming themes are idolatry, immorality and inhospitality. To be specific they are referred to as: rebellion, corruption, injustice, murder, greed, theft, covetousness, arrogance, gluttony, haughtiness, lawlessness, blaspheming, mistreating the poor, adultery, lying by priests and prophets, oppression, pride, false prophets, cruelty and failure to care for the young, poor and needy, living after ungodliness, gross immorality, insulting and mocking the people of the Lord, etc.

This attempted rape of the angels at Sodom was about violence and domination committed mainly by heterosexuals. There is no similarity between rape and a loving relationship, between an act of violence and an act of love.

Sodom was a detestable city full of gross indecency, immorality and inhospitality, but the attempted rape of the angels on which prejudice against gays is based was NOT the reason for the destruction of the city.

Some would say that the "immorality" mentioned is homosexuality but I challenge anyone to substantiate that accusation. There is just no foundation for it. Certainly there are immoral gays just as there are immoral straights but homosexuality, of and by itself, carries no implication of morality or immorality any more than does heterosexuality.

A nearly identical story is found in Judges 19. However in this case the men DO rape the concubine who is offered in exchange for the guests. The men abused her all night and the woman died as a result, but I have never seen this passage used against heterosexuals although the outcome was much more dire.

Jesus mentions Sodom only twice, once when he had been accused of being a glutton and a drunkard, and then when he told his disciples to go out in pairs to every city where He intended to visit. Jesus said:

But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.
~ Luke 10:10-12

Does it appear that Christ was talking about homosexuality with this reference to Sodom? No! He was referring to the inhospitality of towns that did not welcome them. The hospitality that would be so vital to their survival corresponds exactly to the original story of Sodom in which hospitality was the issue with Lot and the angels.

Surely if Jesus used the story of Sodom to illustrate His message of inhospitality then does it not follow that Sodom's sin had more to do with inhospitality than with homosexuality?

There are six "clobber verses" in the Bible that are used against gays. Just as the sin of Sodom has been misrepresented, so have the other verses.

LEVITICUS – MARY'S MUSINGS

Most of you will know that many people use the Old Testament laws to discriminate against gays, specifically Lev 18:22.

"It is disgusting for a man to have sex with another man." ~ Lev 18:22

That seems pretty straightforward, but let's put it into context here. What are some of the verses surrounding this verse?

"So don't follow the customs of Egypt where you used to live or those of Canaan where I am bringing you." ~ Lev 18:3

"Now don't do these sickening things that make the land filthy. Instead, obey my laws and teachings. Then the land won't become sick of you and vomit you up, just as it did them. If any of you do these vulgar, disgusting things, you will be unclean and no longer belong to my people. I am the Lord your God, and I forbid you to follow their sickening way of life." ~ Lev 18: 26-30

WOW! That's strong language! And it comes in the middle of all the things that are forbidden, including:

"You may eat any animal that has divided hoofs and chews the cud. But you must not eat animals such as camels, rock badgers, and rabbits that chew the cud but don't have divided hoofs. And you must not eat pigs — they have divided hoofs, but don't chew the cud. All of these animals are unclean, and you are forbidden even to touch their dead bodies.

You may eat anything that lives in water and has fins and scales. But it would be disgusting for you to eat anything else that lives in water, and you must not even touch their dead bodies." ~ Lev 11:3-12

So having had a lovely seafood platter of scallops, shrimp and a lobster tail the other night (none of which have fins or scales) I had to put these verses into perspective this morning while doing my devotions.

Were I not under the blood of Jesus Christ it would be necessary for me to obey all of these dietary restrictions to be acceptable to God (ritually clean). If I were not under grace through the blood of my Saviour I would be "disgusting" and considered to be following a "sickening way of life".

But THANK GOD! I am no longer under law but under grace so the verses about a man having sex with another man carry no more weight than the restrictive dietary rules. These Levitical Laws were part of the Holiness Code of Israel and they were vital for the Jews for good reasons when they were written, but Jews no longer abide by the majority of these laws, nor do Christians, so why should gays be subject to them?

So if anyone tries to use Leviticus against you ask if they've eaten shellfish or pork this week, and then please remind them that their job (according to Jesus) is to love you, not to judge you.

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ~ Matt 7:12

A CLOSER LOOK AT ROMANS CHAPTER 1

Many of us are painfully aware that two of the most-used Bible verses against gays are Romans 1:26 and 27. It is important to know the truth of these verses, first for self-acceptance, and then to educate those who would use them against us.

So let's look more closely at these two verses in Romans that have done so much damage to our community.

Rom 1:26,27

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Whenever a passage of scripture starts with "therefore" or as in this translation "Because of this", it behooves us to see what came before since this is the consequence of the previous passage. We can't just take these two verses out of context without examining the surrounding verses. We need to know "Because of **what????**" The section that comes before this starts at Romans 1:18 and continues to the end of the chapter - verse 32. So let's see to whom Paul is addressing. Are these two verses directed at you? Let me show you why I think not.

Rom 1:18,19

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of **men who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*

Are you godless or wicked? I suspect you would not be reading this literature if you were. If you're not godless or wicked, are you suppressing the truth about our one Holy, Almighty God—i.e. are you promoting other gods and goddesses? No? Then I guess you're not included in this passage. Let's go on and see if Paul is including you in any of the other verses that surround those two damning verses, 26 and 27.

Rom 1:20-23

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

*For although they knew God, **they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him**, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.***

So do you glorify God and give thanks to God? You do? Wonderful! Do you worship idols that look like man or birds or animals? You don't? Then I guess Paul is not talking to you in these passages either.

It's very clear that what Paul is describing here is the trading of the "truth" of The One Almighty God in exchange for the lie of the worship and prostitution practices of the pagan temple gods and goddesses.

Rom 1:24,25

Therefore God gave them (WHO? Oh yes. We just covered that. God gave **those who were godless and wicked, those who didn't glorify Him or give thanks to Him**) *over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.*

Here we go again with that old topic of idol worship. This was a big problem of the new Christians, and one that is addressed often in scripture. Pagans, for whom idol worship was the norm, surrounded the Jews and early Christians, but God didn't want God's chosen people to have anything to do with that. Our God is a jealous God!

Rom 1:26,27

Because of this, (There it is folks! "Because of this" - i.e. the reasons given above - godless, wicked, idol worshippers), *God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

Perversion is "deviation from the norm". Since Paul is speaking of "men abandoning *natural* relations with women" then it seems obvious to me that Paul is speaking to straight men here since it would be *unnatural* for a gay man to have sexual relations with women. Likewise for the women who were exchanging *natural* relations for *unnatural* ones. We're talking about straight women here folks — not we lovely lesbians for whom loving other women is *natural*. We haven't *exchanged* anything!

Rom 1:28

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

Again, would you be reading this information if you did not wish to retain the knowledge of God? Of course not! You are here to learn more about God, so I guess that Paul isn't speaking to you in this passage either.

Rom 1:29-32

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Well there may be times when our imperfect human nature may cause us to be somewhat greedy or to disobey our parents. We might gossip occasionally or even boast now and then, but this is not who we truly are, and we certainly don't fit into any of the other categories in this paragraph of God-haters, inventing evil, heartless, etc., and we definitely don't approve of those who practice them.

It seems overwhelmingly evident to me that Paul was not addressing we who love the Lord but those who were getting involved in the pagan practices and rituals of the Hebrews' neighbours. It has been my observation over the years that in addition to God's love for ALL, one overwhelming theme in Scripture is God's protective nature of God's people, and God's intolerance for idolatry. I believe that this passage of Scripture is about idolatry, not homosexuality.

This portion of scripture was written for a certain people in a certain time period. It does not apply to us today.

So if anyone suggests that you are not acceptable to God because you are gay based on Romans 1:26, 27, please suggest that Paul was addressing heterosexual (for whom same-sex sex was *unnatural*) God-haters, the wicked, and those who were worshipping idols. You do not fall within those categories.

PETER'S REVELATION – MAY IT ALSO BE YOURS

"He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

*The voice spoke to him a second time, "**Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.**"*

*This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven."
~ Acts 10:11-16*

"Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." ~ Acts 10:34-35

God was preparing Peter to meet Cornelius, a Gentile. Until this vision, Peter had preached that the Gospel (Good News) was for the Jews only, as directed by Jesus in Matt 10:5,6, which we previously discussed.

"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

Peter had been demanding that anyone who wanted to become a Christian must first be circumcised and become a Jew. When Cornelius arrived at Peter's door, Peter realized that his vision was about inclusion — that Christianity was for all who would accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin. The Good News was, and is, for ALL — Jew and Gentile, straight and gay!

GAY BY GOD. PROUD BY CHOICE!

Gay by God

PRIDE in being gay is not something that comes naturally when we live in a world that tells us we are "evil" and "immoral". For most of us it is first a road of self-awareness, and then of self-acceptance. We then need to take a further step to determine the consequences of our "Coming Out" to family, friends, and co-workers. For many the losses are not worth revealing the truth and so they remain closeted. This is understandable.

For those who are able to accept themselves for who they are and have risked the consequences of being "Out" there is deserved PRIDE in acknowledging the truth.

Although no "gay gene" has yet been found research does indicate that the gay brain is wired differently than the straight brain, but whether or not research confirms it, I know that God made me gay.

From as early an age as I can remember, I hated dresses and having my hair curled. I wanted to wear boy's jeans with a fly and lots of big deep pockets instead of girl's jeans with the zipper at the side. I wanted high cut runners, not tennis shoes, and my favourite piece of clothing was my brown hunter's cap with the big peak and fur earflaps from Cousin Jimmy.

I suppose the fact that I went to an all-girls school and an all-girls camp each summer may have added to the environment aspect but I know now that I was gay long before I ever started school. I had simple crushes on my female teachers and when I was twelve I fell deeply, madly, excruciatingly in LOVE with my swimming counsellor at camp.

It was only when I started sharing with others how much in love I was that I found out that it was "unacceptable" to love another female. Well how ridiculous is that! Why Not? Who can dictate another's feelings? How can ANY love, in the most innocent and pure sense of the word be "wrong"?

My mother kept saying it was "unhealthy". I had no concept that she was referring to mental health and she couldn't bring herself to explain it. I just couldn't grasp what health had to do with loving someone.

I soon learned that it wasn't wise to tell anyone about this "love that dares not speak its name". It was a way to be very quickly ridiculed and ostracized. I learned that the word "lesbian" was so awful that a person just did not say it so how could my mother possibly explain it to me if she couldn't say the word.

I was someone so awful that it couldn't even be talked about! Well what does that do for a person's self-esteem! So I learned to keep my secret — but something inside of me told me that I wasn't a bad person for loving another female. I just could not feel badly when this person gave me so much joy just by her mere presence around me. She was straight and it was like a big sister relationship to her but to me, she was the love of my life, and I just could not feel like it was wrong.

So after years of indoctrination by society and the church, insisting that I am an abomination to God and that I will spend eternity in the fires of hell, I have done the research to know with certainty that God loves me just as I am, with no need to change my orientation, and I celebrate my uniqueness by CHOOSING to be PROUD that God has created me gay.

Proud by Choice!

I am PROUD that I knew intrinsically, in spite of being surrounded by all the negative messages, that I was not bad.

I am PROUD that although it took a lot of years to come to terms with my sexuality, I finally arrived and accepted myself for who I am. Until that time there was a HOLE in me and now, in its place, there is a WHOLE me.

I am PROUD of the fact that God has chosen me to be among a select few, estimated at only 10% of the population. I am blessed.

I am PROUD that there are thousands of famous gays and lesbians who have made a positive impact on every aspect of society and our culture.

I am PROUD of the heritage from which we have come and of those courageous few who took the lead for our cause in spite of the dangers and criticism of the masses.

I am PROUD of the millions of others who fight quietly to hold on to their dignity in spite of the persecution of those who claim to love them but would reject them if they only knew.

Due to the extreme persecution perpetrated by the Christian church on gays it was as hard for me to come "Out" as a Christian in the Gay community as it was for me to come "Out" as a Gay in the Christian community. Thank God Christianity is not based on Christians . . . "God save me from Your followers". Christianity is based on Christ, and Christ stood for an inclusive, loving membership of faith for ALL. Jesus was the first Advocate for women's rights, for the rights and inclusion of people of all cultures and races, for the disenfranchised and the rejected of society. It only follows that Jesus is an Advocate for gays.

So I am PROUD of the Christian Gays who are willing to stand up and not let others attempt to steal their faith away from them.

It is hard to have self-esteem when external forces bombard us with subliminal and overt messages that we are "evil" and "immoral". So I am PROUD that many of us are able to dismiss that negativity knowing that it's a lie.

It was not so long ago when it was illegal for interracial couples to wed. It was emotionally repulsive for many whites to even conceive of the idea.

It is no longer unusual to see mixed-race couples, and in time, I believe that people will regard same-sex marriages with as little thought as we now view mixed-race marriages.

In my lifetime, we have come a long way from when the "L" word was so awful that it could not be said, even by ourselves, to the legalizing of marriage for same-sex Canadian couples.

This has not happened by itself. It has been the result of pioneers fighting on our behalf and we owe them all our support and a huge debt of gratitude. It is those brave men and women who have allowed us today to take PRIDE in who we are as individuals and as a community.

We have not won the war and many still need to remain closeted for safety and economic reasons, and because they need the acceptance and love of family and friends but the day is coming when we will ALL be able to stand tall and PROUD as the people we were created to be, and we will be accepted for who we are with no need for secrets and lies. May that day be soon!

MORAL ISSUES? FAMILY VALUES? I THINK NOT! (GAY MARRIAGE)

I hear daily about "moral issues" and "family values". They don't mean "morality" or "family". They mean gay marriage so why not call it what it is — anti-gay prejudice! They're talking about keeping their "club" reserved for only those who fit their qualifications.

Traditional marriage, according to them, means one man and one woman, but marriage according to the Bible:

- consists of one man and one or more women and concubines
- women are the property of their father until married, and then become the property of their husband
- if a woman is not a virgin at the time of marriage she shall be stoned
- a rapist must marry his victim
- if a man dies childless, his brother must marry the widow
- inter-faith marriages are forbidden
- divorce is forbidden

So let's stop referring to this subject as if the Bible supports the concept of only one man to one woman! It does NOT!

Moral values involve loving and caring for humanity, animals and our planet. Immoral values are the opposite — leaders who preach bigotry based on lies like "Traditional Marriage", those who would rather restrict civil liberties of some because they don't fit arbitrary standards, and those who don't care as much about poverty and homelessness as they do about restricting the rights of people who only want to love each other and have that love recognized. Where is the morality here — the couple who love each other or those who would reject them? Some would say that the ideal family is one man, one woman and children, but couples often divorce, and children and parents become part of a blended family. Do they deserve less support than the "ideal" family?

What about the daughter who takes care of her elderly mother? Is this not family? Do they not deserve family benefits? What about the couple who cannot, or have chosen not to have children? God commanded us to multiply and they're not doing their part. Should we spurn them as less than ideal families? Of course not! Families are made of love, not blood or even marriage.

It is essential to understand that today's "marriage" is NOT the "Traditional Marriage" of Biblical times. Thank God! Each man and woman may now choose his or her partner. We accept inter-racial and inter-faith marriages, and a woman no longer has to marry her rapist. Perhaps now is the time for marriage to continue its evolution, to embrace a more inclusive attitude.

Being gay is not a choice. Who would ever choose to be hated, humiliated, threatened, rejected by family, friends and church, and in some cases beaten, even to death? How absurd to suggest that it is a choice!

Gays are only asking to have their LOVE — A VERY MORAL ISSUE — be recognized with the same benefits as their heterosexual neighbours. Contemporary marriage will not be eroded by the inclusion of others who wish to commit to a lifetime of love. The world needs more love, not less. Inclusion, i.e. Gay Marriage, is the MORAL position!

ADDENDUM

More References to Sodom

Deuteronomy 29:17-26 - the sin - idolatry and images to false gods - *"Why has the Lord done this to the land? . . . It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord . . ."*

Deuteronomy 32:32-38 - the sin - idolatry - *"He will say 'Now where are their gods?'"*

Isaiah 1:2-23 - the sin - idolatry, rebellion, injustice, murder, greed, theft, covetousness, mistreating the poor - *"They have rebelled against Me."*

Isaiah 3:8-19 - the sin - idolatry, arrogance - *"Their words and deeds are against the Lord, defying His glorious Presence"*

Jeremiah 23:10-14 - the sin - idolatry, adultery, lying by priests and prophets - *"Both prophet and priest are godless. . . . They prophesied by Baal and led My people astray."*

Jeremiah 49:16-18 - the sin - idolatry, arrogance, oppression, pride of the heart - *"The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you. . . ."*

Jeremiah 50:2-40 - the sin - idolatry, pride, false prophets - *"Her images will be put to shame and her idols filled with terror. . . . For she has defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. . . . Their shepherds have led them astray."*

Lamentations 4:3-6 - the sin - cruelty and failure to care for the young and poor - *"My people have become heartless."*

Ezekiel 16:49-50 - the sin - *"Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned: they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me."*

Amos 4:1-11 - the sin - idolatry, oppression, mistreating the poor - *"I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom yet you have not returned to Me."*

Zephaniah 2:8-11 - the sin - idolatry, pride, mocking - *"This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the Lord Almighty. The Lord will be awesome to them when He destroys all the gods of the land."*

Luke 17:26-29 - Jesus speaking - No specific sins mentioned

II Peter 2:1-22 - the sin - idolatry, living after ungodliness, lawlessness, arrogance, blaspheming, adultery, greed, corruption, depravity, boasting, lust - *"But there were also false prophets among the people"*

Jude 1:7-8 - the sin - sexual immorality and perversion, i.e. fornication after strange flesh (angels, see Genesis 6:1) KJV

TIMELINE OF BIBLE TRANSLATION HISTORY

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- 1400 BC:** The first written Word of God: the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses.
- 500 BC:** Completion of all Original Hebrew Manuscripts, which make up the 39 Books of the Old Testament.
- 200 BC:** Completion of the Septuagint Greek Manuscripts, which contain the 39 Old Testament Books and 14 Apocrypha Books.
- 1st Century AD:** Completion of all Original Greek Manuscripts, which make up the 27 Books of the New Testament.
- 315 AD:** Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, identifies the 27 books of the New Testament, which are today recognized as the canon of scripture.
- 382 AD:** Jerome's Latin Vulgate Manuscripts produced, which contain all 80 Books (39 Old Testament. + 14 Apocrypha + 27 New Testament).
- 500 AD:** Scriptures have been translated into over 500 languages.
- 600 AD:** Latin was the only language allowed for Scripture.
- 995 AD:** Anglo-Saxon (early roots of English language) translations of the New Testament produced.
- 1384 AD:** Wycliffe is the first person to produce a (hand-written) manuscript copy of the Complete Bible, all 80 Books.
- 1455 AD:** Gutenberg invents the printing press; books may now be mass-produced instead of individually hand-written. The first book ever printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.
- 1516 AD:** Erasmus produces a Greek/Latin Parallel New Testament.
- 1522 AD:** Martin Luther's German New Testament.
- 1526 AD:** William Tyndale's New Testament; the first New Testament printed in the English Language.
- 1535 AD:** Myles Coverdale's Bible; the first Complete Bible printed in the English language (80 Books: O.T. & N.T. & Apocrypha).
- 1537 AD:** Tyndale-Matthews Bible; the second Complete Bible printed in English. Done by John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers (80 Books).
- 1539 AD:** The "Great Bible" printed; the first English language Bible authorized for public use (80 Books).
- 1560 AD:** The Geneva Bible printed; the first English language Bible to add numbered verses to each chapter (80 Books).
- 1568 AD:** The Bishops Bible printed; of which the King James was a Revision (80 Books).

1609 AD: The Douay Old Testament is added to the Rheims New Testament (of 1582), making the first Complete English Catholic Bible; translated from the Latin Vulgate (80 Books).

1611 AD: The King James Bible printed; originally with all 80 books. The Apocrypha was officially removed in 1885 leaving only 66 books.

1782 AD: Robert Aitken's Bible; the first English language Bible (KJV) printed in America.

1791 AD: Isaac Collins and Isaiah Thomas respectively produce the first Family Bible and first Illustrated Bible printed in America. Both were King James Versions, with all 80 Books.

1808 AD: Jane Aitken's Bible (Daughter of Robert Aitken); the first Bible to be printed by a woman.

1833 AD: Noah Webster's Bible; after producing his famous dictionary, Webster printed his own revision of the King James Bible.

1841 AD: English Hexapla New Testament; an early textual comparison showing the Greek and 6 famous English translations in parallel columns.

1846 AD: The Illuminated Bible; the most lavishly illustrated Bible printed in America. A King James Version with all 80 Books.

1885 AD: The "English Revised Version" Bible; the first major English revision of the KJV.

1901 AD: The "American Standard Version"; the first major American revision of the KJV.

1971 AD: The "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is published as a "modern and accurate word for word English translation" of the Bible.

1973 AD: The "New International Version" (NIV) is published as a "modern and accurate phrase for phrase English translation" of the Bible.

1982 AD: The "New King James Version" (NKJV) is published as a "modern English version maintaining the original style of the King James."

2002 AD: The English Standard Version (ESV) is published as a translation to bridge the gap between the accuracy of the NASB and the readability of the NIV.

THE GOOD NEWS!

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."
~ Romans 8:1-2*

And Jesus said,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ~ John 3:16, 17

*"All people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."
~ John 13:35*