

Fort Bend Christian Academy – Advanced Apologetics

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Homosexuality & The Church

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Introduction

Christianity has become a religion of tradition and repetition rather than one of understanding and wisdom. Often, Christians adhere to practices based on what they have done in the past instead of what they actually know from the Bible itself. Because of this Christians have been left susceptible to anything, possibly even heresy. Homosexuality is one of the most divisive issues between Christians and the secular world as Christians have historically condemned and shamed homosexual men and women, deeming them unworthy of salvation and damning them to hell without evidence or justification. The goal of this thesis is to rectify the long-held Christian perspective that homosexual men and women are abominations unworthy of salvation and show that same-sex attraction is not in itself sinful however the action of having sex with people of the same gender is a sin. Through Biblical evidence, cultural and historical reasoning, and genetic and pathological research, it can be determined that although same-sex attraction is not a sin in itself, acting sexually on this attraction would be going against what God intended for mankind and is therefore a sin.

Historical Review

Hebrew Family Dynamic

Understanding the cultural significance of the family dynamic during the time at which the verses discuss homosexuality is incredibly necessary in beginning a discourse on homosexuality and the church. "Honor thy father and mother"¹ was not something to be taken lightly. Often dishonoring ones father and mother resulted in death because of how fiercely they felt this rule needed to be adhered to. The only reason that a child would part from their parents was if they were getting married², however even this was an act through which one honored their father and mother. Marriage all but guaranteed that the family name would continue on into future generations as marriage often gave way to childbearing. In every marriage, childbearing was a necessity rather than a matter of choice as it was considered very shameful and embarrassing when a woman could not bear children.

Taking this into account, it is understandable as to why homosexuality was such an egregious act to commit as it was a direct contradiction of the most strongly held traditions of the Hebrew people at this time. Homosexuality counteracted every cultural marker within the unity of marriage; same-sex marriage was not something that was recognized nor condoned as it was considered an "abomination"³ so unity through marriage was inconceivable and simple science could easily prove that childbearing was not a possibility therefore, homosexual men and women dishonored their parents bringing shame to all involved.

¹ Ephesians 6:2

² Genesis 2:24

³ Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13

Dissecting Leviticus

In order to truly understand the background and basis of beliefs surrounding the common Christian stance of homosexuality, it is important to investigate the actual text evidence of verses and doctrine that feed into the point of view. Through doing so, a clearer picture can be formed of what the Bible actually states and how that correlates with the acuity of how Christians have responded in the past.

Leviticus is the first book that directly addresses homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" and the following verse states similarly, "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"⁴. These verses, at surface level, seem very direct and straight forward, however in order to have an accurate understanding of the Bible, neither context nor the initial language that it was written can be ignored. Not only can the meaning behind these verses be lost in translation but without understanding the context, it is easy to misinterpret the text and hard to decipher whether or not this verse is applicable to all Christians.

In context, Leviticus was a book for the Hebrews living in exile from Egypt after Moses had led them out. It is dually important to note that at this point, God dwelled in the tabernacle where his presence could be near his people. The issue that began to arise as a result of this was that when people entered the tabernacle, they would drop dead. They quickly found out that people were often entering the tabernacle "unclean" and that this uncleanness in the presence of a being so holy and good would kill them instantaneously. The Hebrews were unaware of what could actually make a person "clean" or "unclean". Leviticus was a rule book that gave explicit

⁴ **Leviticus 20:13**

guidelines as to what made the Hebrews either clean or unclean. Several things, including same-sex intercourse, made you too unclean to enter the tabernacle such as menstrual cycles, eating of certain animals, and a litany of other odd situations and actions found in Leviticus. It also provided rules that allowed the newly formed Hebrew preachers of how to act and what to do in certain situations. During their enslavement, the Hebrews had unintentionally formed a diluted culture with the Egyptians. Leviticus was used not only as a rulebook toward cleanliness but also a means to mold and form their own identity and culture. This section of rules was often referred to as the "Holiness Code" which had been first recognized in the nineteenth century.⁵

The two Leviticus verses share a common idea--that partaking in homosexual intercourse is abominable⁶. The word "abomination" has a dual meaning in the original Hebrew word from which it was taken. *Tow'ebah*⁷ can mean "abomination" but is often used to refer to an incorrect or "abominable" ritualistic practice fitting in to the theme of Leviticus.⁸ This term, *tow'ebah*, is used in both Leviticus verses attributing to the concept that the book itself was a book of ritualistic laws and practices. The word *tow'ebah* is also prevalent in other verses throughout not only Leviticus but also in other verses pertaining to homosexual actions. Their have ben Christians in the past that attempt to use this word to justify homosexuality as a means of making the church more "inclusive". One pastor in Oregon attempts to use the cultural significance of Leviticus to completely dismiss the notion that homosexuality could be a sin. He believes that because Leviticus was primarily used toward rules for the Hebrews, he questions the validity in terms of modern day application.⁹

⁵ Holiness Book Reference

⁶ Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13

⁷ Biblegateway.com.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Phillips, Adams. *The Bible Does Not Condemn Homosexuality*. July 16, 2016. Accessed February 2, 2018.

Sodom and Gomorrah

These infamous cities are often the example used of how deplorable people can be and how the world can look when humanity indulges themselves in their temptations. Many people who vie against every part of homosexuality (both the involuntary attraction and intercourse) often bring up this story.

Two angels met Lot at the gates of Sodom. He bowed to them and asked them to stay with him so that they could spend the night and be on their way in the morning. However, the angels refused as they wished to sleep in the square, but Lot insisted so strongly that the angels agreed. Before they were able to retire to bed, all of the men of the town gathered around Lot's house and demanded that he send out the angels so that they could "have sex with them"¹⁰.

"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.'"

The men denied Lot's offer and even went as far as to threaten him and as a result the men became increasingly rowdy so as Lot tried to reason them the angels pulled him in. The angels then struck the men with blindness so that they could not find the door. The angels then spoke, saying,

¹⁰ Genesis 19:5

“Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.”

For this reason, as well as many others, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became infamous for the lengths God was willing to go through to rid the world of these people. Although these cities are the poster children for immorality, it must be called into question why it is so often brought up in the argument against homosexuality.

There are many glaring issues with what happened in Sodom and the least of these, arguably, is homosexuality. These men had not come to have a consensual same-sex relationship with other men, they were there to rape the angels that had gone to Lot’s house. Not only that but rather than trying to turn the men away or dissuade them, he offered up his daughters to be raped instead. Furthermore, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not solely due to the situation that had taken place at Lot’s house. For a while, these cities had fallen prey to their own tempestuous actions. Ezekiel even describes the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah saying, “Behold, these are the sins of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy”.¹¹ Proponents against homosexuality would point to the men of the village attempting to have sex with the angels are partaking in homosexual activity and in a way they are correct (assuming not only that angels have a gender or genitalia but that their species is closely related enough to that of human’s that it could be considered homosexuality).

¹¹ Ezekiel 16:49

One author believes that there is one key word that ties Sodom and Gomorrah to the debate of homosexuality—*tow'ebah*. Opening up the Ezekiel verse to more context illustrates where he believes the connection lies.

“Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.”

The word to hone in on is “abomination” which in Hebrew is *tow'ebah*. This is the word used in both Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to describe homosexuality. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” “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.” The strength of this connection between Sodom and Gomorrah and these Leviticus verses is questionable.

Had the word abomination or *tow'ebah* be tied to only homosexuality, the relationship between these verses would be fairly incriminating, however *tow'ebah* is used a multitude of times throughout the Bible, especially in Leviticus so although Ezekiel may have been referring specifically to homosexuality however there is not enough evidence to indicate this. Furthermore, even if there were, to attribute Sodom’s ultimate downfall to homosexuality alone would be incorrect as Ezekiel lists the multitudinous reasons behind its ultimate demise.

So why is this verse brought up in the case against homosexuality? Its contents lack the information or example necessary for it to be brought up in the discussion. The closest tie it would have to the argument is that the name Sodom is later used to create another term—*sodomy*: copulation with a member of the same sex or animal. However, it is questionable as to whether this term or the story of the sister cities is sufficient enough evidence to prove whether or not homosexuality is in fact a sin.

Paul and the New Testament

Paul's writings are further examples of Biblical text that people tend to focus on when discussing homosexuality in the church. Romans 1:26-27 says,

"For this reason, God gave them up to passions of dishonor; for even their females exchanged the natural use for that which is contrary to nature, and likewise also the males, having left the natural use of the female, were inflamed by their lust for one another, males with males, committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the recompense which was fitting for their error."

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says,

"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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

It is important to understand the historical context of Paul's discussion of homosexuality.

At the time that he was writing his letters he ran into a few note-worthy issues. Now that Gentiles could be a part of the church, a rather large divide began to form between Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians namely in cultural standards. Both sides disagreed what was necessary and proper in terms of what actions lied within the scope of Christianity, one example being whether or not circumcision was necessary. This issue ran into the second issue that Paul began to face at this time. Christianity, in itself, did not have its own defined culture or way of life. There was no definite separation and outline between it and the surrounding cultures making early Christians much more susceptible to outside influences. The Christians who had come from other cultural backgrounds that worshipped pagan gods and false idols were maintaining their former culture while still attempting to follow Christianity. Paul's first order of business was to start drawing the borders and cultural lines the Christianity needed in order to withstand the constantly changing and skewed society around it.

During Paul's lifetime, he witnessed the tyranny and more importantly the sexually immoral example that the kings who reigned during this time set.¹² Gaius Caligula, who reigned just before Paul wrote Romans, was notorious for being a cruel sexual deviant. His biographer, Suetonius, recorded that his personal catchphrase was "Remember that I have the right to do anything to anybody."¹³ He would have parties where in which he would invite his male guests, sleep with their wives, and critique their sexual prowess in front of their husbands. He was often one to cross dress as woman.¹⁴ It was often said that he suffered from terrible headaches and would wander the palace at night in women's dresses and even had an assortment of wigs and jewelry¹⁵ as well as claiming to be a god among men. Caligula was also found to have had

¹² *Caligula*. History.com. 2009.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

multiple same-sex sexual encounters, one of which is believed to have contributed to his demise.¹⁶

Being exposed to this kind of behavior was one of many possible determinants of how Paul chose to write to the newly formed Christians. At the point, because they did not have a cultural backbone nor one focal organized jumping off point to structure themselves with, Gentile-Christians were forced to rely on what they knew personally and what they were already immersed in, making early Christianity diluted with contradicting cultural practices and beliefs. The example set by the king only worsened increased the tolerance of immoral behavior.

Dissecting the New Testament Verses

Understanding what the original text of verses discussing homosexuality is helpful toward deciphering God's actual commands.

"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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

The key word is "homosexuality". "Homosexuality" in Greek is *arsenokoitai*.¹⁷ *Arsenokoitai* is a word that cannot be and has yet to have been found before Paul's time. Many are led to believe that he coined the Greek term. It is a compound of two words, man (*arsen*) and bed (*koite*), and can literally be translated into "bedders of men" or homosexual.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ DeYoung, Kevin. *What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* 2015.

It is also understandable to see where Paul derived the influence to create this new word. The Leviticus verses nearly use this exact compound.

Leviticus 18:22: *meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gynaios* (“you shall not lie with a male as with a woman”)¹⁸

Leviticus 20:13: *hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaios* (“whoever shall lie with a male as with a woman”)¹⁹

It is clear that “from the second text in particular [,] Paul’s use of *arsenokoitai* is almost certainly taken from the Holiness Code of Leviticus.”²⁰

The Idea of One Flesh

After the creation of Eve, God specified the importance of union between man and woman, saying that “a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”²¹ This idea of “one flesh”²² is a topic that is often brought up when it comes to the common Christian viewpoint of homosexuality. The union of man and woman defined a form of relational completeness.

“...the way in which the woman was created indicates that she is the man’s divinely designed complement. In Genesis 2:21, we see the Lord God taking something from the man (one of his ribs) in order to make a helper suitable for him (v. 18). Then verse 22 emphasizes that the woman was not fashioned out of thin air or out of the dust of the ground, but from “the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man.” What makes the woman unique is both that she is like the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Genesis 2:24

²² Ibid.

man (expressed in the covenantal commitment statement “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”) *and* that she is differentiated from the man. The text has sameness and difference in view. Adam delights that the woman is not another animal *and* not another man. She is exactly what the man needs: a suitable helper, equal to the man but also his opposite. She is an *ishah*²³ taken out of *ish*²⁴, a new creation fashioned from the side of man to be something other than a man (2:23).”²⁵

The Bible states that the union of man and wife will make them one flesh, creating the entire image of God. God intended for man to be with woman in the attempt to achieve this. Through both facets, the entire image of God is created—one is a complement to the other fitted like puzzle pieces to form His complete image. Genesis 1:28 explicitly says, "And God blessed them And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..." and in verse 27 it says "...male and female he created them." 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."

This idea of "one flesh" is a topic that is always brought up when it comes to the common Christian viewpoint of homosexuality. The Bible states that the union of man and wife will make them one flesh, creating the entire image of God. God intended for man to be with woman. Through this union, the entire image of God is created—one is a complement to the other. The problem is that most people would argue that if our purpose is to make the complete image of God, are people who abstain from marriage or those who never find a spouse then sinning? Not

²³ The Hebrew word for *woman*

²⁴ The Hebrew word for *man*

²⁵ DeYoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* 2015.

everyone gets married through either willing-choice or because they were never in a position where they could get married. It is not a sin to be unmarried. Using the "one flesh" argument is more for the sake of explaining what would be considered a union recognizable by God rather than to prove whether or not homosexuality is a sin. This argument is necessary in understanding a separate plight that is not often explored in terms of whether or not the Bible condones homosexuality. For argument's sake, if one were to say "Homosexuality is not a sin" then homosexual relationships would have to follow the rules of a heterosexual relationship i.e. no sex before marriage and having a union recognized by God. The issue with this is that it brings forth the question of "Would God recognize a marriage that is a product of the perversion of the intended nature of a holy union?"

The Utility of Marriage

It has not been until recently that people began to marry out of love and affection. This idea of romanticism within a marriage is something that would have been considered foreign in the past. People more often married out of social and religious necessity rather than romantic love. "Marriage was considered too serious a matter to be based on such a fragile emotion. 'If love could grow out of it, that was wonderful,' said Stephanie Coontz, author of *Marriage, Life and History*. 'But that was gravy.' In fact, love and marriage were once widely regarded as incompatible with one another."²⁶ This belief that a marriage was not worth having without some form of passion or love is an idea that many attribute to the rise of romantic art forms and literatures. Others believe that this arrival of love in relationships was introduced during the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries.²⁷ Thinkers during the Enlightenment advocated the

²⁶ The Week Staff. *How Marriage Has Changed Over Centuries*. The Week. 2012.

²⁷ Ibid.

“pursuit of happiness”, perpetuating the idea of attaining love within marriage rather than attempting to attain wealth or status.²⁸ “This trend was augmented by the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the middle class in the 19th century, which enabled young men to select spouse and pay for a wedding, regardless of parental approval.” Because of these influences, many relationships formed out of emotion rather than social necessity and divorce rates increased as people’s seemingly innate need for romance-based happiness became more common. In the 20th century, the traditional construct of marriage began to crumble.²⁹ With the rise of a movement toward gender equality came new standards for gender roles in relationships. The image of a subservient wife was bastardized as being a housewife became something very kitsch and laughable. People were given the ability to pick and choose what they did and did not want in life more than ever before. Divorce became much more prevalent as the goal of achieving personal happiness became more widespread than ever.

In terms of homosexual marriage entering the picture, E.J. Graff, author of *What is Marriage For*, brings up the point that many people believe that the introduction of same-sex marriage shatters the sacredness and long-standing image of a traditional marriage, however Graff argues that this image had dissipated long before the legalization of gay marriage. Graff writes, “In one very real sense, opponents of gay marriage are correct when they say traditional marriage has been undermined. But, for better and for worse, traditional marriage has already been destroyed and the process began long before anyone even dreamed of legalizing same-sex marriage.”³⁰

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

The Christian Response to Homosexuality

During the timeline of the Old Testament, how the Hebrews felt about homosexuality was fairly clear. To the Jews at this time, people of the same-sex lying with each other was considered to be “an abomination”.³¹ It was an unacceptable practice that was punishable by death so naturally it was not tolerated. The same can be said about the new testament verses; although it was no longer a religious rule for them to be stoned to death they were often still ostracized and excommunicated by their community as it was not something tolerated. However, this was not necessarily the case culturally for that time period.

In current western culture, the manner in which Christians recently respond to homosexuality varies greatly as the church, more recently, has not been unified in their beliefs, reactions, and understanding about the touchy topic. Currently, many people struggle with and look down upon those who say that homosexuality is “wrong” or “immoral”. Understandably, more and more people are shifting toward this viewpoint of tolerance as there is an ever-expanding outcry for mass acceptance. Cultural, religious, and sexual intolerance have removed millions from the zeitgeist, especially Christians who have already been in a free fall due to their rejection of science during the Enlightenment.

The belief that Christians held in the past was often one of not only intolerance but disgust. Homosexual individuals were often treated as lepers—outcasts that could not be around the everyday individual. An important example of the “Christian” response to homosexuality is during the rise of homosexuality and LGBTQ+ rights movement throughout the latter half of the 20th century in the US. The reason it is important to bring this up is because, at this point the majority of America held Christian views or at the very least were traditionalists whose

³¹ Refer to *Dissecting the Bible* in this historical review

ideologies tended to align with that of Christianity. At this point there were already a multitude of movements toward equality for many different social groups such as women and African Americans as well as a sexual revolution spreading through the world. There was such a huge movement for the oppressed that eventually other subgroups began to raise their voices—one of which was the homosexual community. Up until this point, homosexuality was not such a hot topic as it is today. It was not only a taboo subject, but there was often no need to talk about it. Openly gay people before this point tended to be few and far between. However, as people became more accustomed and open to exploring their sexuality, homosexuality moved to the forefront.

Due to this new movement, Christians began to form opinions on this new and increasingly popular subculture. For the most part, the homosexual community was met with less than kind responses from the church. Christians at this time believed that the Bible was very clear on the topic of homosexuality and believed that it was absolutely impermissible. Unfortunately, their “religious” rejection of same-sex attraction was met with personal and cultural intolerance leading to volatile and violent responses that began to mar the image of Christianity. Christians could be seen carrying signs with writings such as “God hates fags”³²

³² Debate.org (2018). *Christian Homophobia*. April 8, 2018.



and “Turn or Burn”³³ amongst other things. Although thousands of Christians were willingly quick to respond, the leaders of the church have seldom been found to assuage the increasingly popular public opinion. The Church’s stagnancy has led to the mass assumption that what many Christians were saying was true, that not only are homosexual men and women damned to an eternity in hell, they have no hopes of salvation.

This belief derives from a few verses in the New Testament.

“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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”³⁴

“...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, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:9

contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”³⁵

“For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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.”³⁶

At face value, someone could assume that these types of people (the idolaters, adulterers, murderers and homosexuals) will not “inherit the kingdom of God”. However, if one were to simply continue reading the verses they would understand that the people that have committed these acts are not doomed to a life without God. If this were so than Christ would have to be considered as ineffective. 1 Corinthians 6 specifically negates the opinions of those who believe that homosexual men and women are condemned to hell. Although it begins with,

“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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God”³⁷,

it continues on saying “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

³⁵ 1 Timothy 1:9-11

³⁶ Romans 1:26-27

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:9

As a result of this incredibly harsh response, homosexual Christians have faced a multitude of difficulties when forced to face the realities of their sexuality. Openly gay Christians are often ostracized and cut off from their families.³⁸ Rolling Stone Magazine even notes that there is a “rising number of homeless gay teens [being] cast out by [their] religious families.”³⁹ Bobby Berk, an openly gay man who had been raised in the church, spoke on his experience of being a gay Christian growing up. He said that he had grown up going to a “fire and brimstone church” and that he had “carried his Bible to school every day” and was even “in a Christian rock band and was a deacon in the children’s church.”⁴⁰ He had grown up hearing that “gay people were bad. They were pedophiles. They were evil”.⁴¹ As a result, he spent “every prayer meeting crying and begging God” not to “make him gay”.⁴²

Recently, there have been many Christians coming out of the works to defend homosexuality and even attempt to prove that it is not a sin. A pastor in Oregon wrote an article on Huffington Post attempting to defend openly gay Christians.⁴³ He attempts to prove the point that passages in the old testament must be dismissed on the grounds that they were only cultural laws that do not translate to a world with Christ.⁴⁴ He writes that his goal as a pastor is to welcome people of all cultural and sexual backgrounds to feel welcome in his church and understand that the constant prosecution from other Christians have no foundation of fact or applicable doctrine.

³⁸ Morris, Alex. *The Forsaken: Gay Teens Shunned by Their Religious Families*. Rolling Stone. September 03, 2014.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Queer Eye*. Bobby Berk. United States of America: Netflix, 2018.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Phillips, Adams. *The Bible Does Not Condemn Homosexuality*. July 16, 2016. Accessed February 2, 2018.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Christ's Response to Sin

Christians' guiding light on how to act and think is the Bible. It is through leaders' in the Bible's actions, mistakes, and responses that Christians are to judge how to live their lives. Understanding how they have responded to sin in their own lifetimes is indicative of how Christians are called to respond to sinning and the negative actions of others today.

The greatest example of a man whose lead Christians must follow is Jesus Christ. He set the bar for what Christian behavior should look like. One of the most popular pieces of advice he had in terms of responding to the trespasses of others along with personal hypocrisy is Matthew 7:1-6.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you see it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

This is a passage that is often misinterpreted by Christians. When read, people often think that the verse is saying to not judge one another seeing as we are imperfect people however, the verse is actually saying how people need to practice what they preach. This verse attacks the issue of human hypocrisy, of how Christians are willing to go out of there way to point out one's wrongdoing when they themselves are doing or acting in the same way.

A second example of Christ's response to sin is the story of the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11. While Jesus was at the temple teaching, the scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman they had caught committing adultery. In an attempt to test Jesus, they told him that "... the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" Christ then takes a moment, writes something with his finger on the ground, and then responds with "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." Naturally, those who had come to stone the woman, dropped their stones and walked away for all had sinned.

Although these verses are mostly focused on and used to battle human hypocrisy, the part that is necessary to focus is what Christ says to the woman after everyone leaves.

"When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, 'Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?'

'No, Lord,' she said.

And Jesus said, 'Neither do I. Go and sin no more.'"

This response was incredibly significant not because of what Jesus did but rather because of what he did not do. Christ did not condemn the woman for the mistakes that she made. Instead he urged her to change and repent for her actions. Furthermore, the people who had been ready to stone her death were forced to drop their weapons as they saw that they themselves had no right to condemn her.

The Homosexual Pathology and Surrounding Beliefs

There was (and still currently is) a preconceived notion that homosexuality was something that was chosen, a decision. Not only that but the stigma around homosexual men and

women was that of an unkind perspective. Up until recent history, they were often perceived as pedophilic degenerates with a multitude of diseases. Presently, the stigma toward homosexuality have become increasingly positive especially with the rise of the Pride movement. Differing sexualities have been increasingly prevalent and is often something easily accepted in more recent generations. In fact, those who do not tolerate the spectrum of sexualities are often labelled as homophobic or are bigots in the eyes of society. To not accept homosexuality is now something that would deem you an outcast in the societal zeitgeist. There have recently been a multitude of scientific studies to understand the psyche and pathology behind homosexuality seeing as everything in human behavior is attributed to a function or lack thereof in the human body.

It has been discovered that there are certain differences between the biology of a homosexual man or woman and a heterosexual man or woman. Through testing sample populations of twins in which one was homosexual and the other heterosexual, scientists have noticed certain differences in both their genes and brains. For one, the homosexual twin was often found to have a gene called "Xq28" which was repeatedly present in homosexual subjects leading the researchers to infer that this gene was a possible component that led to the propulsion toward same-sex attraction.⁴⁵ The journal stated that the investigation indicated "a statistical confidence level of more than 99 percent that at least one subtype of male sexual orientation is genetically influenced."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hammer, DH. *A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation*. July 16, 1993.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

In a second study, researches noticed that the two halves of the brain are much more symmetrical in homosexual men and heterosexual woman than they are in heterosexual men and homosexual women.⁴⁷

"These studies have also revealed that the connection in the amygdala (the integrative center for emotions, emotional behavior, and motivation) of gay men resemble those of straight women; in gay women, connections in the amygdala resemble those of straight men...The amygdala has many receptors for sex hormones and is associated with the processing of emotions. Some studies have shown that the corpus callosum - the main connection between the two halves of the brain- has a different structure in gay men than in straight men."⁴⁸

"Perversion" is the word that comes up in Christian vocabulary often when speaking on the topic of homosexuality which is a seemingly derogatory term when describing something that now has its own culture, history, and people-group. However, the term is necessary when understanding what is "wrong" with homosexuality. It is biologically skewed from how humans are supposed to be. People, quite ignorantly, often view homosexuality as a choice. Contrary to this belief, a multitude of studies have been released to prove otherwise. These studies prove almost empirically that homosexuality is a matter of genetic and biological fact rather than pure intent. Same-sex attraction is not something that can be fought or willed away but rather a matter of birth or development.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Understanding the pathology of homosexuality is incredibly necessary in discussing its role and ethicality in Christianity. Whether or not homosexuality can be controlled, deterred, or chosen helps determine whether or not it lives in the realm of sin.

There are a great many people who believe that homosexuality is a willing choice. They believe that people willingly choose to be attracted to people of the same-sex. It is very unrealistic to assume that homosexuality is a deliberate decision. It has not been until recent history that it was actually safe and acceptable to be openly homosexual. For example, in the 1950s if a Christian was openly gay, or more likely, discovered to have been gay they were met with exceedingly violent and turbulent backlash. Not only would they face scrutiny, but they would be ostracized by their community, excommunicated by their church, and cut off from their family. Even worse, many were forced to go through gay aversion therapy.

Aversion therapy is a type of behavior therapy designed to make a patient give up an undesirable habit by causing them to associate it with an unpleasant effect.⁴⁹ Due to a lack of development in the realm of disorders, mental afflictions, and the science thereof, people were very experimental in the ways in which they would treat people for mental disorders. Aversion therapy for homosexuals was often very violent. One example is shock therapy. At the end of this section is an excerpt from a brochure marketing an at home shock therapy kit. This specific device was marketed to be used in the convenience of one's own home. As delightful and convenient as shock therapy is, many were not "fortunate" enough to be able to use this home device. Homosexual men and sometimes women were usually forced to go through much more painful and violent forms of shock therapy. In one form of aversion therapy, men were shown pornographic pictures of other men and if they showed a positive response to the slides a "shock

⁴⁹ Miriam-Webster's Dictionary

was delivered directly to the male patient's genitals". The purpose of this is to have the male subjects associate their attraction to men with physical pain.

If one was gay in the 1940s they were sent to a psych ward against their will and subjected to numerous forms of what would be today considered as torturous, "cruel and inhumane treatments, including castrations, torture drugs, shock therapy, and lobotomies".⁵⁰ With all of these things in mind, one can now understand how "choosing to be gay" is not a reasonable assumption.

⁵⁰ Scot, Jamie. *Shock the Gay Away: Secrets of Early Gay Aversion Therapy Revealed*. December 6, 2017.

VISUALLY KEYED SHOCKER

The Visually Keyed Shocker is a fully automated conditioning device. Now the doctor can be freed of the time consuming part of reinforcement of behavior conditioning. Once the patient has received supportive therapy and a successful conditioning technique is established, most patients can reinforce themselves with little or no supervision. Thus the outpatient can come to the hospital or office as needed. The doctor's time is required only for the usual counseling session and not needed to continue the conditioning therapy.



EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the paired visual stimulus and shock in converting homosexuals to heterosexual activity and in behavior modification of sex deviates is well documented in the bibliography on the front of this page. Basic psychological research and theory indicates the technique should be effective in many types of behavior modification. Promising results have been obtained in treating alcoholism, addictions and compulsions but much further research is needed in these areas. The major application problem remaining thus seems to be in developing the most effective treatment paradigm.

AUTOMATED BEHAVIOR CONDITIONING

FOR

ADDICTION

MASOCHISM

ALCOHOLISM

AGGRESSION

TRANSVESTISM

EXHIBITIONISM

SEXUAL PREFERENCE



HOW IT WORKS

A slide projector is attached to a special aversive shock generator. The edges of the shock slides are marked with ink. Neutral slides do not have marked edges. The slides are automatically advanced. When a shock slide is shown a photo-transistor reads the mark and triggers the shock. The patient is automatically conditioned by the visual stimulus paired with the aversive shock. In the case of some problems it is possible to use escape and or avoidance conditioning. Conditioning here is done by giving the patient a hand button with which he can escape or avoid shock by a proper response.

Determining whether or not homosexuality is a choice or something that develops psychologically or biologically is incredibly important. One of the defining qualities of sin is how it is a choice. Someone has to willingly choose to do the wrong thing. If homosexuality were a choice, then every part of it would be a sin against God. However, if it is something that a

person is born with and can therefore not control then they cannot be held accountable for being attracted to a man or woman of the same sex.

Sin vs. Consequences

The fall of man had a multitude of effects on human kind—being separated from God, being forced to labor and toil for daily necessities, etc. The effect that must be focused on before beginning the discussion of homosexuality are the consequences of sin that humans became susceptible to. Consequences of sin are the things that can naturally negatively affect us such as pain, sickness, and death.

After the fall, humans were born into sin⁵¹ causing them to constantly fall prey to their temptations without any excess effort. Along with this sinful nature came the things that had not existed in the Garden—cancer, autism, down syndrome, polio, influenza, and a litany of other ailments that can inhibit a person. These things are not sins in themselves. Humans became vulnerable to the imperfections of everyday afflictions. This point is important because determining whether or not homosexuality is one of these consequences is necessary in deciphering whether or not it is in fact a sin.

⁵¹ Psalm 51:5

The Proof

Cultural Practice vs. Modern Application

Many question the validity of the verses speaking against homosexuality due to the very heavy Hebrew cultural stigmas surrounding it. Because the rejection of homosexuality was more of a cultural law and issue within the Old Testament, it must be questioned as to whether or not it still must be applied today. Gagnon and Via give four options of deciphering Old Testament Laws:

1. The rules have no validity.⁵²
2. Rules are useful, but if there is a conflict between rule and context, the rule can simply be discarded.⁵³
3. If there is such a conflict, the rule cannot simply be discarded, but there may be certain contextual factors which are weighty enough to override the rule.⁵⁴
4. There are not contextual situations that could override a rule forbidding an act that the rule, by prior determinations, has designated as intrinsically immoral.⁵⁵

The first option is probably the worst course of action. Verses about the actions and characteristics of Christians in the New Testament often refer back to Old Testament so saying that the Old Testament rules have no validity makes the validity of the New Testament and therefore the entire Bible questionable.

⁵² Gagnon, Robert. Via, Dan Otto. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. 2003.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The second option of discarding the law if there is a “conflict between rule and context” is slightly more reasonable however because it is the Bible, a guidebook for Christians that should transcend time and be for the most part applicable regardless of time and constantly changing morals, people must be careful to not cherry pick parts of the Bible and must truly analyze the law to see if it has the reasoning and backing to be able to surpass its cultural context and be used for modern application.

The fourth option that nothing can override an Old Testament law is going a bit to far and leads to the under-analyzation of Old Testament laws. To blindly accept the Old Testament laws would be to ignore all forms of context, both cultural and historical and would also mean that certain parts of the New Testament which label many laws in the Old Testament as no longer necessary are incorrect, questioning the credibility of the entire Bible as a third of it would be incorrect. Furthermore, following and abiding by only the laws of the Old Testament is essentially Judaism, not Christianity.

The third option of researching reasons that are weighty enough to override the law is the most ideal means of approaching the Old Testament laws. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, many of the Old Testament Laws were made null as Jesus’s arrival made some of the former cultural practices unnecessary. For example, many of the dietary restrictions that the Jews had to live under before Christ became unnecessary as his death made everything “clean” again. Using this third option, it is much easier to approach Old Testament Laws because they can be studied through a more analytical and research and knowledge-based perspective.

Validity of Homosexuality Verses

The first mention of rules or laws pertaining to homosexuality is found in Leviticus. Two verses are committed to averting away from same-sex perversions. Leviticus 18:22 says, “You

shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination". As stated earlier, Leviticus was a book riddled with Biblical law. It was essentially just a law book for the Jews who had just been exiled to the desert by the Egyptians. Up until this point, the Jews were living by the laws of their captors; they had no culture of their own because of the hundreds of years they had lived in slavery. These laws were created not only to give them their own culture but to also to set them apart from other cultures.

Leviticus 18:22 is not an exception to this rule. It was written in the context of the Holiness Code which were a set of laws that informed the Jews there of how to stay “pure” or “clean” enough to enter the Tabernacle, a make-shift tent in which God dwelled during the Jews’ exile. The problem they were finding was that whenever people entered the Tabernacle people would randomly drop dead. The issue that they soon realized was happening was that because God is so pure and wholly good and clean, people were unfit to be near him and would die instantaneously as a result. The laws of Leviticus were created as a means of an end to prevent this from happening to others.

Those who are advocates of homosexuality being welcomed in the church and ultimately allowed would use argument option number two—that because the law was seemingly more culture based, it somehow run its course and is no longer a valid law in terms of modern application. This argument toward ignoring this specific law does not hold as the denial and rejection of homosexual practice is repeatedly mentioned throughout the New Testament.

New Testament Verses

“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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”⁵⁶

“...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, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”⁵⁷

“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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.”⁵⁸

Biology vs. Action

The Bible makes it fairly clear that homosexuality is sinful however the real question is what about it is sinful? Upon inspection of each verse, one can see that the verses are very action based rather than referring to the actual biology and pathology of homosexuality. For example, Leviticus 20:13 says, “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.” The operative word in this verse is *lies*. Due to recent studies it is now public knowledge that homosexuality is

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9

⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 1:9-11

⁵⁸ Romans 1:26-27

biological and genetic. In many studies they have found that the two halves of the brain are more symmetrical in homosexual men and heterosexual women. In a second study, scientists drafted a group of twins, one homosexual one and one heterosexual one, to try and find a pathophysiological understanding of homosexuality. What they found was a specific gene prevalent in the homosexual twins in the study. Every twin that was homosexual was found to have the “Xq29” gene. Because of the sexuality of the twin that they found it in, the scientists were led to believe that this was the “gay gene” that they had been searching for at the beginning of this study.

These factors lead to the conclusion that homosexuality is biological and genetic rather than some form of choice. With this in mind, it is important to speculate whether this stops homosexuality from being a sin and if so, what actually makes it a sin? The best way to approach it given the information and knowledge that currently exists, is to look at other sins by example. One example that many people look at is alcoholism. Some people have a genetic predisposition to be alcoholics and the Bible clearly states its grievances with alcoholism.

“...fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”⁵⁹

“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Galatians 5:19-21

⁶⁰ Romans 13:13

Noticeably, the verses are about people that are actively falling prey to their alcoholism, rather than those who possess the predisposition or have stopped themselves from drinking because they are aware of their affliction. Their sin lies in the actions they take based on the affliction they have. It is in this way that homosexuality must be viewed—a genetic or biological behavioral propulsion.

The next question that many Christians often ask is *why wouldn't being gay be the sin itself?* The best way to approach this question is to apply the same question to other genetic or biological afflictions. *Why wouldn't having down syndrome be a sin? Why wouldn't being diabetic be a sin? Why wouldn't having cancer be a sin?* Just like homosexuality, these are all things people can be born with or develop in their lives however unlike homosexuality they are not villainized because Christians understand that the people afflicted with these things cannot control having them or even get rid of them. Down Syndrome, diabetes, cancer, and even homosexuality are all things that fall under the category of consequences of sin—the ill effects that entered the world after the fall of man like death and sadness amongst other things.

The best way to conceptualize it is through boiling it down to one idea, can you repent for it. To repent is to feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin. Being gay is not something that can be stopped, it is not a wrongdoing that can be repented. Repent often comes tandem with change or at least an attempt to change. However, with homosexuality, because it is physically ingrained in a person to be attracted to one sex or another, it is not something that can change.

The next question to answer would then be would being actively homosexual (intercourse between people of the same gender), be sinful seeing as being gay is innate and out of their control. The answer is yes: having sex with a person of the same gender would be defined by the

Bible as a sin. As humans, we are given the power of discernment and with that comes the burden of sentients. Although genetics affect homosexual attraction, it does not it does not affect decision making. The Bible urges people who with struggle with homosexuality to abstain for their desires. This is most likely because of the “one man, one woman, one flesh” argument. When God created the earth, he designated man to be with woman. Through this pairing, they create one flesh. Because God’s initial design was man with woman, many see homosexuality as defying creation’s initial intention.

How Christians Should Respond

How Christians should respond to homosexuality is the question that has been asked the most. People are often already resolved in their beliefs surrounding homosexuality. Some think it is a choice, some believe that it is developmental due to certain psychological factors, and others believe that is a genetic or biological factor that men and women can either develop over time or, more often than not, are born with. As mentioned in the previous section of this thesis, homosexuality is attributed to a biological factor of the body. It is not a choice. With that being said, a discussion must be started on how Christians should respond to it given this new information.

In the past, Christianity often melded with the public opinion. At one point in history, rampant homophobia was the public opinion. Unfortunately, as the modern world evolved and learned more, Christians remained stagnant in their beliefs, mixing personal biases with what they believed to be doctrine. The release of new science and fact-based studies did little to persuade the seemingly morally upright people of God.

It is important for Christians to make sure they do not become like those who had come before them during the Enlightenment—blatantly ignoring science and reason without trying to decipher the truth behind it or its correlation with the Bible. Understanding that homosexuality is not a choice is an incredibly important factor in deciphering how to treat homosexuality. Because people are born with it, they cannot be punished or condemned for it. With that being said, however, they can be held accountable for their actions as they maintain the ability to discern between right and wrong. Homosexuality does not affect discernment, only attraction.

Understanding this, Christians can now go back and look at the example Christ set for Christians of how to respond to homosexuality. The greatest example is probably Jesus's interaction with the adulterous woman.

“Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?’ this they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She

said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’”⁶¹

Jesus does a few noteworthy things in this story. First, he does not condemn the woman. As the Lord, he has every right to condemn her for her adulterous actions, however he says, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” Christ dying on the cross was a signifier for the shift in necessary action. Rather than being condemned and subjected to being stoned to death, the focus has been shifted to repentance and self-correction. Christ longs more for people’s rectification rather than their punishment. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

Second, Christ challenges human hypocrisy by telling the men that only those who had not sinned could kill her. Through one sentence, he put all of humanity in their place by illuminating the fact that people have no right dole out a final judgement for others’ transgressions as they themselves have sinned.

Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”

Luke 6:37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Romans 2:1 “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment to someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

⁶¹ John 8:2-11

Judgement is left solely to God as he is the only one clean enough to do so. No human is blameless and therefore cannot they cannot condemn one another. Humans judging each other, in God's eyes, is like a man who committed assault telling a man who committed theft that he should be ashamed of himself. Both of done wrong and should receive a penalty for their errors. "...you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself."⁶²

When it comes to how Christians should respond to people who are homosexual, they should treat them only with love and acceptance. Heterosexual men and women have no more of a right to the kingdom than homosexual men and women do. Even further, to deny someone of the Church just because of an affliction they possess that they have no means of controlling would be hypocritical as everyone has some imperfection that deviates from what God intended. One would not turn away someone with cancer or Tourette's or the cold.

As for the response to active homosexuality, in the sense of some having intercourse with a person of the same sex, the Christian response should replicate that of how any other sin is treated. In the story of the adulterous woman, she had been called out for her actions but ultimately, she could not be condemned by the others as they were just as sinful as she. Christians need to make sure each are held accountable for their actions but leave the judgement of each other up to God.

⁶² Romans 2:3

Conclusion

Christians are notorious for denying science and reason but in order to truly understand the expanse and extent of God's will, they must at the very least be open to the results that science can bring. Unfortunately, these Christians that are stagnant in their beliefs believe that Christianity and science are mutually exclusive leading to the rejection of ideas that could actually help in furthering the kingdom of God.

Accepting scientific discoveries and studies are essential in order to have a proper discourse into the efficacy and popular issue of homosexuality. Recent studies have proven almost empirically that homosexuality is something innate to themselves. Understanding this can lead to the conclusion that they cannot be penalized for their same-sex attraction as it is a factor out of their control—a consequence of the fall of man that runs tandem with other genetic mutations or abnormalities. The only thing that homosexual men and women can be held accountable for are their actions thereafter. There is no way to combat the idea that homosexual practice (intercourse between people of the same gender) is a sin with Biblical evidence.

Conclusively, homosexual men and women should be as easily accepted as any other church members. As for those who practice homosexuality, their sins should be treated the same as any other sin rather than to the extreme villainized extent that the church has taken it to in the past. Just like any other sin or any other sinner, those who practice homosexuality can be redeemed as “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”⁶³

⁶³ Romans 3:23

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