

Apologia Talks

Homosexuality and the Church

by Rev. Rance Settle

Introduction:

There is in our society today a great misconception about what the word "freedom" really means. Society often takes this word to mean "a release from all obligations, distinctions or responsibilities" and therefore, no one should be allowed to impose their ideologies or morals upon another person. If you take this definition of "freedom" to its inevitable conclusion, then society can convince itself that there is no absolute right or wrong or any absolute truth in the world. Therefore, if there's no real "right" or "wrong," then there's no right or wrong behavior. And if that's true, then how can homosexuality be labeled "wrong" by anyone?

Some supposed Christian churches try to make this argument, too. Citing "Christian freedom," these churches claim that there is much liberty in the freedom we have gained through the Gospel, particularly from anything relating to the Law. We have gained so much freedom, they claim, that now there should be no condemning of behavior in our churches and our culture, because "evil" behavior is a matter of opinion. And besides, if two people "love" each other, be they gay or straight, how can that behavior be called "evil"?

The typical counterpoint to homosexuality in confessional Christian circles is to respond with a quote from Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." This isn't a bad argument, mind you, but the arguments in favor of homosexuality are compelling and Christians can give a far better answer than just "the Bible says homosexuality is wrong." We can show the world that homosexuality is not only undesirable, but it goes against the very order that God has ordained since the beginning of time, with the practice for or against having tremendous ramifications for the future of society and the Christian Church in America.

Scripture Connect

In order to see what God's design looks like, we need to go back pre-Fall to see what God's original intentions were with mankind. If we read Genesis 2, we can see that God shows His purpose for man and woman by establishing marriage on earth and giving them distinct roles within that relationship. The man is steward over creation, charged with naming the animals and caring for the Garden of Eden. The woman comes from man, named by the man, and is to be the helper of the man. Both man and woman are equally important and both have equal value before God. However, right from the start, the two are not the same and are not interchangeable, neither in their roles nor in their gender, neither in their behaviors nor in how they relate sexually. They each have distinct roles to do in creation, possessing manifest physical, emotional and psychological differences. It is a reflection of Godly order in creation—just as the Trinity relates to itself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: each one distinct, yet co-equal.

The way men and women related to one another radically changed after the Fall, where people lived for themselves, instead of God. St. Paul's poster child example of the effects of the Fall is in his Letter to the Romans. He says, "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" (Romans 1:26b-27). Paul holds up homosexuality as a behavior that has gone completely against God's design and the fundamental relationship between a man and a woman that was established at creation. Homosexuality is the epitome of living for the self instead of others--and ignores God's Will.

Doctrinal Quotation

Luther was very clear on his stance concerning homosexuality and the debased behavior it creates in society. Luther argues that the homosexual practices of Sodom are nothing short of the work of the devil:

"The heinous conduct of the people of Sodom is extraordinary, inasmuch as they departed from the natural passion and longing of the male for the female, which was implanted into nature by God, and desired what is altogether contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversity? Undoubtedly from Satan, who, after people have once turned away from the fear of God, so powerfully suppresses nature that he blots out the natural desire and stirs up a desire that is contrary to nature." (Luther, M. (1999, c1961). Vol. 3: Luther's works, vol. 3: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (3:255). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.)

Luther also claimed that if you erode the definition of marriage, you erode the entire culture. He long held that marriage, as defined in God's Word, between one man and one woman, was the key foundation to society itself. We continue to see the fruit of Luther's warning today in our fight to keep marriage legally defined as between one man and one woman. "For if you do away with the marriage bond and permit promiscuous passions, the laws and all decency go to ruin together with discipline. But when these are destroyed, no government remains; only beastliness and savagery are left." (Luther, M. (1999, c1961). Vol. 3: Luther's works, vol. 3: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (3:256). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.)

Application

How do we respond to the modern-day arguments in favor of homosexuality? Let us pose the most common ones in Argument/Response style, adapted from an article by Joe Dallas entitled, "Responding to Pro-Gay Theology":

Argument: In 1993, Dr. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute studied 40 pairs of non-identical gay brothers and claimed that 33 of the pairs had inherited the same X-linked genetic markers, thus indicating a genetic cause for homosexuality. (Hamer, Dean. "A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation," *Science*, 261, July 16, 1993, p. 321- 327.)

Response: The argument is misleading and studies show conflicting information. Not only has Hamer's results have yet to be replicated or confirmed by further research, a later, similar study actually contradicted Hamer's conclusions. George Ebers of the University of Western Ontario examined 52 pairs of gay brothers, and found "no evidence for a linkage of homosexuality to markers on the X-chromosome or elsewhere." ("Gay Genes Revisited: Doubts Arise over Research on the Biology of Homosexuality" Scientific American, November 1995, p. 26.) Besides, the Hamer study assumes "inborn" means "morally acceptable." Even if we someday find a genetic predisposition it only proves the effects of a sinful world are alive and well. Just because something is inborn does not make it normal, any more than other inherited traits of obesity, alcoholism, and others are normal. (See Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12; John 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:1-54)

Argument: "Sexual orientation simply cannot be changed, and would be harmful if tried. This is just how God made me." The "I-tried-to-change-but-I-couldn't" argument is quite popular among homosexuals who have accepted their orientation and insist others do the same.

Response: St. Paul makes the opposite claim, clearly stating homosexuals can change, when he says: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders... will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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" (1 Cor 6: 9-11). For example, if a person has a tendency to be a child molester, their task isn't to indulge in it but to resist the urge!

Argument: "10% of the Population Is Gay. Could So Many People Be Wrong?"

Response: The argument is exaggerated. Dr. Kinsey, who first published data in 1948, did NOT claim 10% of the male population was homosexual. Future studies by the Kinsey Institute, in fact, would confirm that sexual orientation is not necessarily fixed, and may change throughout a person's lifespan. Second, subsequent studies have disproved the 10% claim. Besides, if the population of homosexuals could be proven to be 90%, would that make it okay in God's eyes?

Argument: "Some gay couples can be just as loving as straight married couples. Isn't that what God wants--couples who love each other?"

Response: Gay couples can appear very loving and monogamous sometimes. I'm sure Solomon loved his many wives, and I'm sure a man can "fall in love" with someone who is not his wife, but does love sanction or justify every type of relationship? Absolutely not! Agape love--God's love, creates boundaries for behavior and is designed to glorify God and protect us at the same time.

Conclusion

What is true "freedom," then? "Freedom," according to God's Word, is being "rightly ordered in God's creation," not being free to live how we wish. God's order is the only place where real freedom happens! Yes, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has set us free from condemnation and guilt (Galatians 3:28-29), but it does not subvert our roles in creation. While we live here on earth, we

do what God has given us to do in His order of creation, not living for ourselves, but living in service toward one another, thanking God for the roles we have been given in Christ. If we resist this God-given order, our churches, our schools, and as Luther says, society itself will pay the price for our undermining these roles, and we will have all traded the slavery to the Law for the slavery of sin. Which is no freedom at all.

For further reading:

Joe Dallas, "Answering the Gay-Christian Argument". www.equip.org

Transcript from "Issues, etc.", "Same-sex Marriage".

http://issuesetcarchive.org/issues_site/resource/archives/wilken-koukl.htm

LCMS Website, "A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families".

<https://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CIC/minhomfam.pdf>