
An Essay About Homosexuality in Reference to the Holy Bible

This essay addresses the current debate in our country over gay rights. It talks briefly about my limited knowledge about the bible before going into specific quotes and passages from the bible that religious activists often use in their arguments against gay rights. It looks at what people around the globe have to say on this issue. I will join in the conversation by using the information gathered to advocate that what people believe about the bible condemning homosexuality is wrong.

My Uncertainty with Religion

My knowledge of the bible comes from the Sundays I spent at church and the summers I spent at Catholic camp. It's important to mention right off that my parents, if anything, would fit somewhere within the agnostic or atheist categories. We went to a Unitarian Universalist church when I was younger maybe because they wanted me to have a larger world view. As for the Catholic camp? That was entirely my own choosing; and all because my best friend went.

Growing up I loved musicals such as *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I think we all can agree that the idea of Jesus is nice. He was a man whose philosophy on life was spreading peace and love; and that's how he lived. As I grew older I began to see a disconnect from Jesus and his teachings and those who called themselves Catholics. It is my own belief that the Jesus I grew up getting to know would be disgusted by groups like the Westboro Baptist Church who are infamous for their slogan "God hates fags." Same-sex marriage has been a defining characteristic in elections over the last few years but we are seeing constant backlash from religious leaders and church groups who claim that homosexuality is a sin. "Sexual issues are tearing our churches apart today as never before. The issue of homosexuality threatens to fracture whole denominations, as the issue of slavery did a hundred and fifty years ago. We naturally turn to the Bible for guidance, and find ourselves mired in interpretative quicksand. Is the Bible able to speak to our confusion on this issue?" (Wink, n.d.).

It has been in my own experience that people are quick to say that yes, the bible does condemn homosexuality but aren't sure exactly where it says so. I set out to find out exactly what passages are often quoted to use in the argument against same-sex marriage and what scholars have said about them.

Genesis 1:28 - Procreation

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“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” (Genesis 1:28, English Standard Version).

Therefore, any sexual activity has to lead towards procreation. If that standard is applied widely, lots of people are now in trouble. “This means any postmenopausal women, infertile women, any man or woman who is sterile, pregnant women (she’s not going to get pregnant again), anyone who chooses to use birth control...” (Dickens, 2009).

Procreation is dangerous. With the world becoming vastly overpopulated at such a quick rate; 3,000 babies are born worldwide every 20 minutes. (World Population Awareness, 2012). Lets be fruitful and multiply in other ways. Multiply the access to health care, birth control, to education and student loans. Lets advocate for the adoption of children who don’t have homes. We need to let go of the idea of procreation before it’s too late. Clearly, procreation is irrelevant to the world we live in.

Genesis 2:22 and 2:23 - Creation of Eve

“And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.” (Genesis 2:22, English Standard Version). “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” (Genesis 2:23, English Standard Version).

This is what is most commonly used in argument against gay marriage. In this passage, Adam who has become lonely asks God for a companion. God creates all these animals, looking for the right one for Adam. None of them fit, so God takes one of Adam’s ribs and creates Eve to be his “helper.”

The Hebrew phrase ezer kenegdo is often translated to helper when in reality it means corresponding help. “A helper like him, a helper who is a mirror image. A corresponding strength... Someone who mirrors back to the earthling his own humanity. Someone with whom that earthling can feel complete, can feel whole. It doesn’t mean servant, or slave... It is most often used to describe God. God is our helper... My help comes from the Lord.” (Dickens, 2009).

It seems to me that if God wants each of his creations to find their ezer kenegdo, their corresponding helper... And it is the human who chooses who that helper is to be. Why would we ever forbid or restrict gay and lesbians from finding someone who they feel complete with?

Genesis 19:1-29 - Sodom and Gomorrah

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“Three angels visited Abraham, God's hand-picked founder of his chosen nation, Israel. They came disguised as men, travelers along the road. Two of them went down to Sodom and Gomorrah, to observe firsthand the wickedness in those cities...” (Zavada, n.d.).

This story is where we get the term sodomy. "...two angels (male) come to Sodom, and Lot, Abraham's nephew, makes them his guests. Later the men of Sodom want to have sex with the guests, but Lot strongly resists this and offers them his two virgin daughters instead” (Oto Via). “Some passages that have been advanced as pertinent to the issue of homosexuality are, in fact, irrelevant. One is the attempted gang rape in Sodom (Gen. 19:1-29). That was a case of ostensibly heterosexual males intent on humiliating strangers by treating them "like women," thus demasculinizing them” (Wink, n.d.). “The two angels, however, struck the men of Sodom blind and rescued Lot, his wife, and his daughters before the Lord rained destruction upon Sodom” (Oto Via). The family is warned to not look back but, of course, the mother does and is turned into a pillar of salt. The rest of the family keeps going and hides up in the mountains. It is then when the two daughters realize that they will not be able to have children because they know what happens to strangers when they enter a new city. “The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.’” (Genesis 19:24, English Standard Version).

“Many believe that texts in Genesis and the rest of the Bible make it clear that Sodom was punished because of the violent, abusive, inhospitable, greedy, and unsympathetic behavior of its citizens towards visitors, widows, the poor and other disadvantaged persons. Liberals often interpret Genesis 19 as condemning homosexual rape simply because it is rape.” (Robinson, 2012).

In our society we teach our children “don’t get raped” instead of “don’t rape.” 54% of rapes go unreported and 94% of rapists will never be sent to prison. (RAINN, 2009). Instead of using Sodom and Gomorrah as a story condemning homosexuality, it should be taught as a way to prevent violence and abuse.

Leviticus 18:22

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22, English Standard Version). This passage is part of the Holiness Code and is what people most commonly quote in their argument against same-sex marriage. “The status of women in ancient Hebrew culture was very much lower than that of a man and barely above that of children and slaves. When a man engaged in sexual intercourse with a woman, he always took a dominant position, as a penetrator; the woman would take a submissive posture. When two men engage in sexual intercourse, one of the men, in effect, takes the role of a woman. When a man takes

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on the low status of a woman, the act makes both ritually impure.” (Robinson, 2009).

In ancient Hebrew culture, when a man married a woman, he owned her. It's common to hear people say man shall not lie with man but forget the rest of the quote. The passage is saying that it is a sin to own another man as you would own a woman. I am sure that when Peter was writing this, he had no idea that thousands of years from then there would be people of the same gender wanting to be married. Peter's knowledge of homosexuality was based on the gay (male with male) prostitution that was so common. “This passage does not refer to gay sex generally, but only to a specific form of homosexual prostitution in Pagan temples. Much of Leviticus deals with the Holiness Code which outlined ways in which the ancient Hebrews were to be set apart to God. Some fertility worship practices found in early Pagan cultures were specifically prohibited; ritual same-sex behavior in Pagan temples was one such practice” (Robinson, 2009).

Conclusion

I guess I just don't understand why all these resources, time and energy is being used in something that isn't doing one thing to decrease the suffering around the world. I only just began looking at just a few of the stories in the bible used to condemn homosexuality. It looks like to me that these stories are being grossly misused and misunderstood. People have blinders on, where they see and hear what they want to.

There is too much suffering in this world. There is also so much you can take from these biblical stories to go out and decrease that suffering. Instead, people are using them to keep others oppressed. There is no doubt in my mind that this is exactly the opposite of what God and Jesus wanted.

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