

What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?

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In both the Old Testament and New Testament, the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful. Some of the most notable passages on the topic include Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; and 1 Timothy 1:10. The Romans passage is probably the most complete statement on the subject, for there the apostle Paul says, “Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error” (Rm 1:26-27). Not only does this passage condemn both male and female homosexuality; it explains why homosexual behavior is wrong. Simply put, it violates God’s design for sexuality. Men were designed to function sexually with women, a fact consistent with human anatomy. (See the article, “Is Homosexuality Natural?”)

The Bible also implies that homosexuality, like other sins, can be overcome. Paul reminds the Corinthians that although some of them were homosexuals, they changed: “Some of you used to be like this. 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” (1Co 6:11; see vv. 9-10 for context).

Some gay advocates try to deny that homosexuality is sinful by noting that Jesus never said anything about it. But Jesus’s silence is irrelevant since he was quiet about several issues that are addressed and prohibited elsewhere in Scripture. Nevertheless, what the Bible *doesn’t* say about homosexuality may in some cases be just as important as what it does say. First, the Bible doesn’t say that homosexual behavior is the worst sin. Though it’s a serious offense to God, we shouldn’t heap special condemnation on homosexuals or feel compelled to make homosexuality the special focus of our witness to the world.

Second, the Bible doesn’t instruct us to be opposed to homosexual *people*. It’s opposed to homosexual *behavior*. While we should vigorously oppose public policies that try to promote homosexuality in culture, we’re called to a relentless love toward all sinners regardless of their particular struggles. This also means we shouldn’t treat Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction as if they have the plague. It’s important to support them in their battles, just like we’d support a Christian struggling to overcome gossip, lying, or an addiction to pornography. The Bible also doesn’t prohibit friendship with gays and lesbians. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:9-12 that we are called to judge and avoid *unrepentant Christians*, not people of this world. We can believe homosexual behavior is wrong and still have kind and congenial relationships with practicing homosexuals, just as Jesus would have done.

Finally, the Bible doesn’t call homosexuals to heterosexuality, but to holiness. Repenting from homosexuality is not about becoming straight (some choose celibacy) but becoming righteous in God’s eyes. What homosexuals need is a pardon from God. They receive that by trusting in Jesus. As the Holy Spirit takes up residence in their lives, God can change their desires by renewing them from the inside out.