

## Sexuality and Homosexuality

Joel Belz is the CEO and publisher of *World* magazine, a highly respected conservative Christian publication. He recently posed this question in his editorial on August 5, 2003, entitled *One-way Traffic*: “Why is it that institutions and organizations of all kinds regularly drift from the right to the left, from orthodoxy to heterodoxy, from faithfulness to unfaithfulness, from discipline to permissiveness? The pattern is unmistakable. You see it in schools, in churches, in the media, in families, in politics, and therefore quite naturally in societies at large.”<sup>1</sup>

Well-known examples of such a drift are the YMCA, Alcoholics Anonymous, and universities like Harvard, Yale, Princeton and many church denominations. Most started out as strong Christian organizations dedicated to the teaching of God’s word and a Biblical worldview. Today many are purely secular with little, if any, Christian witness.

Mr. Belz’ answer was an appeal to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that everything dissipates its energy and even though once hot—eventually cools off unless it is reenergized or reheated. “Institutions,” he concluded, “become the very thing they were founded to oppose. The only habit to arrest such a drift is to submit ourselves to the preaching of God’s word.”<sup>2</sup>

Could this be what Jesus was referring to in his admonition to the church at Laodicea, “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other*” (Rev. 3:15)? They were in need of the truth of God’s word once again!

Objects (and people) cannot reheat themselves once they’ve cooled off—it takes an energy from outside to bring up the temperature once again. The apostle Paul gave us this directive, “*Be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18). When we quit preaching, believing and obeying God’s word in our churches—especially in light of the world’s view on morality—our light will begin to go out and our salt will lose its taste (Mt. 5:13-14). This is the purpose of this essay. We need to review and teach in our churches, what the Bible says about sexuality and homosexuality. The message is the same. It has not changed.

Let’s look first in Genesis, the book of beginnings. On the sixth day of creation, after God had created all other things, He created man—and woman. “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*” (Gen. 1:26-27). Then God looked upon the man and

the woman and pronounced His approval, *“it was very good”* (Gen. 1:31). The die for all human sexuality had been cast.

In a more detailed account of the creation to confirm this truth, God declared, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”* After that was done, *“The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh’* (Gen. 2:18, 23-24). Jesus repeated these same words to his followers in the context of marriage (Mt. 19:5).

Genesis also gives us an account of the first births from the first marriage in the Bible. It says, *“Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain...later she gave birth to his brother Abel”* (Gen. 4:1-2). The word “wife” is used 312 times in the Bible. It never is used as a synonym for a male person—it always refers to a woman. Nowhere in Scripture do we ever see God’s people in a same sex marriage relationship. The Bible knows nothing of that. It is a human invention. But Scripture does speak of something just as gross. It’s called sodomy (after Sodom) or homosexuality.

So what went wrong? How did homosexuality begin? Is it a sin that has warped man’s perspective of healthy sexuality? All we have to do is stay in the book of Genesis, for the first example of sexual perversion—Sodom and Gomorrah.

God called Abraham to be the father of a great nation and made a covenant with him. Abraham left his home country of Haran with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, and set out for the land of Canaan (modern day Palestine). Eventually he and Lot, because of the size of their two families and herds, decided to part and Lot chose to live in the plains of Jordan in a village called Sodom.

Sometime later, the LORD, accompanied by two of his angels, appeared as man to both Abraham and Sarah to announce that they would have a son in their old age. This caused Sarah to laugh, partly in disbelief, prompting God to say, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” Her son, Isaac, which means “he laughs” was the result!

The two angels continued on towards Sodom where Lot lived and announced to Abraham that it would be destroyed, along with Gomorrah because *“The outcry against”* both cities was *“so great and their sin so grievous”* (Gen. 18:20-21). What was the sin so grievous against Sodom and Gomorrah? It was homosexuality. This is so vividly expressed when the angels came to Lot’s house, and *“all the men from every part of the city of Sodom--both young and old--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 have sex with them”* (Gen. 19:4-5).

Under Levitical law, homosexuality was one of many abominable practices spoken of in Leviticus 18. *“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable”* (vs. 22). That chapter closes with this admonition, *“Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God”* (Lev. 18:29-30). Did Israel heed God’s warnings?

During the time of the kings the Bible tells us that *“Judah did evil in the eyes of the LORD.”* By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes (homosexuals) in the land; *“the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites”* (1 Kgs. 14:22-24).

Recently a member of the Episcopalian clergy in the city where I live was asked his views in regard to that denomination’s recent confirmation of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire. His views are representative of the majority of that church’s governing body in America, the House of Bishops. He is quoted as saying, *“We’ve struggled with this, and we don’t have a problem morally or theologically with homosexuality . . . conservatives take a literal view of Bible passages condemning homosexuality, while liberals take into account historical context. Looking at it through historical context, these passages in the Bible were not addressing a modern, loving, faithful relationship marked by fidelity.”*<sup>3</sup> Notice the shift from right to left that Joel Belz spoke about in my opening remarks--away from the authority of God’s word to man’s opinions.

Interesting enough, 2100 years after Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction, in perhaps a more “modern” biblical era—the age of the Christian church—the New Testament book of Jude makes this statement about that event calling it, *“sexual immorality and perversion ... an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire”* (Jude 7).

In Paul’s letter to the Romans he writes of the wrath of God that is directed toward *“the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness”* (Rom. 1:18). Speaking of homosexuality he speaks of women who *“exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones”* and men who *“abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.”* God labeled it all *“perversion”* (Rom. 1:26-27).

Paul admonished the Corinthians with these strong words, *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he*

*who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).*

As Bible believing Christians, how should we respond to those who are caught up in the homosexual lifestyle? First, we should not fear homosexuals. They are not as different from us as we think. All of us have been involved in varying sinful lifestyles. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). Second, we should realize that at the core of the homosexual struggle, there is a deep-seated sense of rejection. Third, ask the Lord to open a door of communication to share God’s love and forgiveness. Express love and commitment to the person. Hate the sin—but love the sinner (1 Jn. 4:9-10). Fourth, be aware of your own personal struggles and temptations. The apostle Paul told the Romans, *“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment”* (Rom. 12:3). Fifth, instill hope in them that they can change. God can cause any human heart to repent—thousands have overcome. Lastly, pray for them that they might be set free.

In closing, we’re told to always speak *“the truth in love”* (Eph. 4:15). Remember, Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery but said to her, *“Go now and leave your life of sin”* (Jn. 8:11). That’s God’s word to all of us!

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<sup>1</sup> *“One-way Traffic,”* Joel Belz. World Magazine, August 5, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *“Episcopal Vote Divides Local Priests,”* Paul Logan. Albuquerque Journal, August 7, 2003.