

Marriage Cannon - Some Information for Consideration by John Crowe – October 28, 2018

Matthew 19:11-12 New International Version (NIV)

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Some say, though that Jesus said that marriage is a union of man and woman. What God has joined together let no man break apart. He was answering a question put to him by the Pharisees as to whether or not a man may divorce his wife, not a question of same sex marriage. Divorce is now accepted by the Christian church even though Jesus said no.

Almost all of new testament verses that speak out against homosexuality are from Paul's letters. But in 1 Corinthians 11; 14, he also says that long hair on a man is a disgrace. A lot of what Paul was writing was aimed at a patriarchal society and culture.

Leviticus 18: 22 and Leviticus 20:13 are part of the Holiness Code, a code of purity, which speaks out against homosexuality. Leviticus also speaks out against a lot of other things as well, including eating of "unclean" animals and birds, Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material, 26 "Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. 27 "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. 28 "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves.

Regarding priests ... No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; 19 no man with a crippled foot or hand, 20 or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. Because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the Lord, who makes them holy."

We can't cherry pick what mosaic laws we are to follow and which ones not to follow.

While the Jewish prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Zephaniah refer vaguely to the sin of Sodom, Ezekiel specifies that the city was destroyed because of its commission of social injustice:

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

During the first century AD, Jewish writers Philo and Josephus were the first writers to assert that the sins of Sodom included homosexuality. It wasn't until the end of the first century AD that the sin of Sodom was identified as homosexuality.

Here is a website

<https://medium.com/@adamnicholasphillips/the-bible-does-not-condemn-homosexuality-seriously-it-doesn-t-13ae949d6619>

Some words from a retired Methodist preacher.

At the heart of the claim that the Bible is clear "that homosexuality is forbidden by God" is poor biblical scholarship and a cultural bias read into the Bible. The Bible says nothing about "homosexuality" as an innate dimension of personality. Sexual orientation was not

understood in biblical times. There are references in the Bible to same-gender sexual behavior, and all of them are undeniably negative. But what is condemned in these passages is the violence, idolatry and exploitation related to the behavior, not the same-gender nature of the behavior. There are references in the Bible to different-gender sexual behavior that are just as condemning for the same reasons. But no one claims that the condemnation is because the behavior was between a man and a woman.

There was no word in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek for "homosexual" or "homosexuality." These words were invented near the end of the 19th century when psychoanalysts began to discover and understand sexuality as an essential part of the human personality in all of its diversity. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that the Bible says anything at all about it. The writers of the Bible had neither the understanding of it nor the language for it.

There is only one reference to sexual behavior between women, and that is in Romans 1:26. The context of this reference has to do with Gentiles rejecting the true God to pursue false gods; i.e., idolatry. And, the sexual behavior described is orgiastic, not that of a loving, mutual, caring, committed relationship. What is condemned is the worship of false gods.

Sexuality is a wonderful gift from God. It is more than genital behavior. It's the way we embody and express ourselves in the world. But we cannot love another person intimately without embodying that love, without using our bodies to love. And that does involve genital behavior. Sexual love is for the purpose of giving and receiving pleasure with our most intimate partner. It is a means of deepening and strengthening the intimate union that exists. This can only be healthy and good if our behavior is consistent with who we are and with whom we love, and when we are true to our own sexuality and orientation.

In regard to marriage, it's important to remember that the Bible was written in a patriarchal culture that assumed men were in control and women were subject to them. Marriage was not an equal partnership, but a matter of a man owning a woman or women as property. Women provided men companionship, children and labor. Certainly, love between the man and woman or women could develop, but love was not the basis of marriage. Consequently, the biblical concept of marriage is not appropriate today. We no longer accept the inferiority of women and superiority of men. We no longer accept marriage to be a property transaction. The concept of marriage has evolved throughout history. Today, we understand it to be a voluntary spiritual relationship based on love, respect, mutuality and commitment. What really matters is the quality of the relationship, not the gender of the persons involved. And marriage is created not by religious ceremony or civil government. It is created by the persons involved who make their commitments to one another. Whether or not there is a religious ceremony to celebrate the marriage or marriage license to legalize it, the marriage two people make together in private is real and valid and should be honored as such. I hasten to add that marriage should never be understood as a requirement for two people in relationship. Intimate relationships must not always create a marriage commitment. Marriage is a lifelong commitment that not everyone is willing to make or should make. Being single in an intimate relationship is an honorable choice.

How do I view God's position on "homosexuality?" I believe lesbian, gay and bisexual people to be a part of God's wondrous creation, created to be just who they are, and completely loved and treasured by God. I believe God does not intend for any one to be alone but to live in companionship. And I believe God expects healthy loving relationships to include sexual love. The Bible doesn't say this, of course. But neither does it deny it. I believe this to be true not only because of the Bible's emphasis on the goodness of God's

creation and the supreme value of love, but because of the greater understanding of human nature that we have available to us today. I do not believe that God intends us to live in the small world of ancient biblical culture, but rather in God's larger evolving world informed by science, reason and experience.

Thanks for your question. Blessings on you!

Peace,

Jimmy Creech

*Creech was a United Methodist pastor for nearly 30 years and has been at the center of the controversy around the blessing of gay and lesbian unions in the church. Creech also wrote the foreword to "Mixed Blessings," a Human Rights Campaign Foundation report about organized religion and gay and lesbian Americans.*