

Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Loving The Homosexual

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Homosexuality has become a major issue shaping culture in this era, and for the most part the church has done a terrible job of showing gays and lesbians what it means to be loved by God. Whereas in previous generations, gays and lesbians basically kept their preferences and lifestyles quietly hidden away, today there are gay parades, gay magazines, gay sensitivity training in schools and businesses, and policies governing how gays are to be treated in the military.

Historically, most churches stayed as far away as possible from the subject of homosexuality. For example, my father was a pastor, and I've been a pastor for 35 years. In my lifetime, I've never heard of a single pastor who preached a sermon on the subject of homosexuality. The most I've ever heard from the pulpit is a very rare, glancing reference to the subject.

Homosexuality is an issue that forces the church to address its primary role. Is the church primarily called to care for and minister to those outside the "fold?" Or is the church primarily called to organize against those outside the "fold" and thereby force outsiders to at least behave as if they're insiders? When Christ taught his followers to be "salt and light," did he mean his followers were to influence public policy to create laws limiting the influence of homosexuality in culture? Can the church do both ministry and public policy work ~ can it have its cake and eat it too ~ or is the church limited to one or the other approach?

Homosexuality is now such an "in-your-face" cultural issue that churches cannot ignore it ~ although most still try. What follows is a Cliff Notes course on the role of the Christ-follower in regard to the homosexual (gay or lesbian) person.

What Does The Bible Say?

The Bible doesn't actually say much specifically about homosexuality, but when the issue is addressed the Bible calls it "sin." In the Old Testament law, homosexual behavior was condemned and the practice of it called for death by stoning.¹ In the New Testament it is mentioned four times and each time it is again correlated with sin.² So for the average person in the pew the issue seems pretty simple: Homosexuality is sin, it is condemned by God to the point that it called for the death penalty. The Apostle Paul depicts it as part of the process of cultural deterioration, and states clearly that practicing homosexuals will not be allowed into heaven. Boom. Done.

What makes the discussion a bit less cut and dry is that the Bible basically makes the same statements about adultery,³ including the death penalty. Then Christ took the discussion of sin in general to a new level by saying that if a heterosexual person even *looks* with lust at someone else, they've sinned.⁴ Taking the discussion even farther, scripture teaches that if a person sins in even *one* area of their life, it's the same as if they'd broken *all* of God's laws.⁵ So the person who gossips is just as guilty in God's eyes as the murderer.

Making things even less palatable to the average religious person, when Christ was confronted by the most raw, flagrant rebellious sinners of his day, he forgave them and restored their lives.⁶ That is generally not the practice of most religious types. Most religious types tend to withdraw as far as they may from others whom they consider to be rank sinners, and then from a safe distance these folks tend to whisper behind their hands about the sinful practices of those "other people." Yet Christ not only forgave sinners, he pursued them and chose to hang out with them in direct opposition to the social mores of his culture.⁷ Worse yet, he made it very clear that he had not come in order to stroke the egos of religious types, but rather had come to rescue sinners!⁸

One can only imagine the red hot rage flowing from the volcanic eruption of the self-righteous nice people ~ "*You mean to say you actually prefer spending time with those nasty whores and queers over us?!"* So the nice religious people did what nice religious people do when their self-righteousness is questioned: They lost complete emotional control, and murdered him.

Here's where so many religious types get lost ~ they begin to believe in their own press releases ~ they believe they are truly good people and by contrast with *real* sinners such as gays, lesbians, hookers, drug dealers, and people who torture children and puppies, they're good and righteous. Few would go as far as to say that God "owes" them anything due to their goodness and righteousness, but there is a quiet assumption that they are among the Chosen who will enjoy eternity in heaven with Christ. Amen. Oh, and all those *real* sinners won't be in heaven.

It is in the instant of self-comparison that the nice folks of the world face damnation. Christ was extraordinarily firm when he spoke about comparing one's own virtue with that of others. Basically, it's called "judgmentalism." *I'm better than Julie Smith because I never starred in a porno flick. I'm better than Michael Vick because I never tortured dogs.* It's actually the act of comparison that destroys our virtue, because our virtue is not found in and of ourselves. It's found in Christ and his sacrifice for our sin. So the second we begin even thinking about how good we are in comparison to anyone else, we're going light on ourselves, and we're judging others ~ and that brings God's wrath.⁹

So Do We Just Give Homosexuals A Free Pass?

To understand how Christ-followers are called to relate to gays and lesbians, one must only look at how Christ handled sinners like ourselves. Christ never actually used the word "homosexual" in any of his ministry. Nor did he ever teach on, or even refer to the subject. Nor did he go around confronting homosexuals. Nor did he organize his culture to resist homosexuals. Some might argue that no gay person ever got in his face about the subject, and that's more than likely

true. However, it's a moot point, because Christ never got in the face of *any* person in regard to....