

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DOESN'T THE BIBLE SAY BEING LGBTQ IS WRONG?

People's views about what the Bible has to say are often determined by how they read the Bible. Some people believe that the Bible is the perfect word of God, meaning it cannot have any errors, and everything written in it is true for all time. However, others acknowledged that the Bible is a book inspired by God, but written by people in a particular context, who may have put some of their own personal belief into what they were writing. This way of interpreting the Bible is called "hermeneutics" and is practiced by Biblical scholars the world over.

Queer theology begins with the premise that being attracted to a person of the same sex will be entirely normal for some people and this will inform the way you read, understand and live out the story we find in the Bible. It also assumes a different society and understanding of human beings than those writing the Bible had in the 1st century.

THE BIBLE AND HATING OTHERS

In many churches and belief systems there is a big assumption that homosexuality is the worst possible sin. This leads LGBTQ people grappling with faith to question themselves and their right to exist. Many people who take a literal reading of the Bible believe God condemns people who are outside of traditional heterosexuality, and often feel justified in expressing their hatred towards LGBTQ people.

Homophobia is an attitude of hatred towards those who are homosexual. It is an attitude that is directly related to a significant percentage of suicides amongst teenagers and mid life men. It also directly relates to incidences of bullying and social isolation as well mental health problems.

BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The Bible does not offer a coherent view about what we now understand by the word homosexuality. There are verses in the Old Testament Holiness Code in Leviticus that denounce homosexual practices but it is important to remember this was written in the context of a nomadic and early settler culture that was ensuring the production of children as social security.

There are also a few brief mentions of temple prostitution in the New Testament. It is not at all clear that the word used for homosexuality is the same as the word and ideas that we use today. What is most clear is that these few verses have been taken out of context and then with a big intellectual jump are used as a form of 'gay bashing'. The general and overarching message of the Bible is that God loves us, in a manner that knows no impediment or boundary in expressing that love. God does not hate queer folk.

Patterns of behaviour that sustain love, affection and friendship are expressed through a variety of forms within the Bible. The idea of the modern family unit is not found in the scriptures, as the Old Testament included families with multiple wives, while the Roman family included extended relatives and slaves.

The words of Jesus in particular focus on breaking down prejudice based on difference and opening up the family to be one of welcome and hospitality to all. There is evidence throughout Church history of same sex relationships that are based on love that clearly exhibit the spirit of Jesus, and his words and actions.

THE GLORY OF GOD IS A PERSON FULLY ALIVE

We live in a period of history when LGBTQ Christians can make public their commitment to love and expect acceptance. The church needs LGBTQ examples of thriving human beings, heroes and heroines, models of the rich contribution that LGBTQ people make to the church and the world. LGBT people are refusing to be considered lepers in God's kingdom but live lives as sons and daughters of God, living out the mystery and marvel of being human, made in God's image, a God of infinite variety and grace.

SUMMARY

People have different ways of reading the Bible, straight up, or with a more interpretive framework.

There are a handful of texts used to excuse homophobia. When taken in their historical context these may actually be speaking about other things.

Jesus modeled an example of acceptance.

LGBTQ are made in the image of God, and can show the glory of God by living their discipleship.

FURTHER READING

'What the Bible really says about Homosexuality', Daniel A. Helminiak.

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