

Melbourne Inclusive Church

Come as you are

Faith and Sexuality

An interactive approach to what the Bible
says about homosexuality

“¹ Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:1-2



Our Vision

A world where people know and express the all-inclusive love of God demonstrated through the life of Jesus Christ.

Our Mission

To create community where people feel safe to connect with God and others. We offer Biblical truth and teaching about faith and sexuality and offer life applicable teaching and tools. We encourage authentic worship of God and fellowship with one another.

Statement of Inclusivity

Melbourne Inclusive Church (MIC) is a contemporary, Spirit-filled Christian church dedicated to sharing the inclusive love of Jesus Christ. We boldly and proudly proclaim Christ's equal love for all people regardless of their ability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, gender, or culture.

Our Values



Inclusion

We believe God made you who you are and has a plan for you. Being LGBTIQ or Straight is part of that plan.



Living on Purpose

We are about helping you realize your God-given dreams. The Passion placed in your DNA is God's calling in your life.



Bridge Building

We are an inclusive, bridge building church. We are active in the LGBTIQ affirming spaces and we take our place in the Christian and wider community.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and background

The objectives of this course are to inform and equip the Body of Christ to properly divide and interpret the Word of God in regard to what Scripture says about homosexuality. In addition the course will help point out areas of internalised homophobia born out of traditional teachings and societal stereotyping.

This course, while dealing with theological issues is not meant to be an academic course. Rather the goal is to bring practical understanding of what the Bible is saying (or not saying) with regard to homosexuality through study and dialogue. The ultimate goal is to see our communities and families set free from the belief that God condemns; does not love; or chooses to change any of His lgbtiq children. Our desire is to see lgbtiq people of faith fully reconciled with their faith and living their God given dreams....fully equipped in the Word and fully powerful through the Spirit of God.

1.2 The truth shall set you free

Jesus told those who believed in him that if they obeyed what he said they were then truly his disciples. He gave them the truth and said to them that the truth would set them free. Who the Son sets free is free indeed.

"It may take some time to "de-program" yourself from what we were all taught by well intentioned, God-fearing people, many of whom we love dearly. It took a long time for many people to "de-program" from what they had been taught about the Bible supporting slavery, both in Old and New Testament that would indicate that God supports slavery.

The problem with the interpretation of these verses is that they weren't considered in light of the culture of the day in which they were written, or with any historical background taken into consideration.

It's really hard to de-program, but it's essential that you do it. You must start from the opposite perspective than what you have been taught. You have always been taught that homosexuality is wrong. I want you now to think that homosexuality is NOT wrong, but absolutely RIGHT, and then start reading from that perspective.

After you have read everything on these pages and from other resources and have prayed about it, you can make an educated decision as to which theory makes more sense to you, since you will then have the perspective of seeing both sides. Right now, you only know one side. It is impossible for you to make an educated decision.” (Townesley n.d.)

Change is a process. Whatever your understanding let’s invite God into this process. Ask God to remove any fear you have and trust that Holy Spirit will guide your understanding. The Spirit guides us in all truth so relax, be open, and let the truth set you free.

1.3 A safe environment

This will be maintained as a safe environment for all people (lgbtiq or straight) who truly want to learn more about what the Bible says about homosexuality. This is NOT an “ex-gay” ministry and our objective is not to make people “straight” but to allow people to come to the realisation of the truth of who they are intrinsically, through the truth of God’s Word and the guidance of Holy Spirit. We believe that God loves all of us and that God created our inner most beings and knew us long before our birth. We believe that all the days ordained for you were written before one of them came to be. You are no mistake and God has a great plan for your life.

1.4 Study and share

We cannot give away what we do not possess. In order to share our faith with family, friends, and the wider church we must be sure of what we believe on this issue. Very few others are sharing this truth with our community; very few are educating the wider church communities. We as a fully inclusive Christian church play a key role in sharing the love of God for all people. The truth of God’s inclusive love serves as a sandwich to the hungry and a cool drink to those who thirst. This truth begs the question; why are we not sharing our faith? If not us, then who? If not now, then when? Let’s learn and grow together in this truth and then be faithful to give this gift away....for the blessing of our community and to the glory of our loving God.

1.5 Method

The Scriptures outlined below are what have become known as the clobber passages. We will examine each one of these Scriptures (among others) in their context and original language wherever possible to help keep the original intent intact.

Scriptures Covered (Clobber passages)	
<u>Old Testament</u>	
Genesis 19:1-25	Sodom and Gomorrah
Leviticus 18:19-22	The Holiness Code
Leviticus 20:13-18	Abomination
<u>New Testament</u>	
Romans 1:24-27	What is Natural?
1 Corinthians 6:9	Homosexual?
1 Timothy 1:10	Loving commitment

We will use exegesis as our method of interpreting the text and will take into consideration the time, culture and historical backgrounds in drawing our conclusions.

2.0 Homophobia

We cannot study such an important topic without looking at how LGBTIQ people get to this place of feeling ashamed and guilty and believe the negativity spoken about them. To do this we'll look at the context with which we shape our life, the perceptions that shape our beliefs, and some of the popular beliefs about LGBTIQ persons. In addition we will review some definitions of homophobia and look at how dialogue is changing the course of how people view the LGBTIQ community.

2.1 Context that shape our lives

Much of what is said about LGBTIQ persons comes from people whose positions we value. Parents, Pastors, extended family, role models, peers all influence the context in which we shape our lives.

Much of what is said about homosexuality is linked with words such as: “wrong”; “abnormal”; “perverse”. We hear phrases like “God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve”.

All people, not just LGBTIQ people grow up with these same stereotypes that serve to distort the truth about what it means to be LGBTIQ.

2.2 Perceptions that shape our beliefs

Before looking at scriptures related to homosexuality it is important for us to understand the way in which we draw from our own contexts and how we reach the conclusions we do regarding what the Bible says about homosexuality. To do this we need understand the context of homophobia and its effect on our community today.

Homophobia, causes people see themselves and others through a distorted lens. Much like if you put on a pair of glasses that were not prescribed for you, you would not see very well. The same applies in this context. We can have a distorted view of homosexuality, simply by the world or environment in which we grow up. These views help to shape our beliefs. Homophobia is not limited to straight people, LGBTIQ people themselves are not exempt from homophobia, because we've all grown up with these distorted views toward LGBTIQ people; many times long before we even come to the realization of our own sexual orientation or gender identity.

Awareness is the first step whether LGBTIQ or straight. This is where most straight allies begin their study. They sense these feelings of homophobia yet have a deep love for someone they know or have met who are LGBTIQ. For LGBT people, there must be an awareness and an understanding of what homophobia really is and how it affects us; how it hurts and destroys our lives and the effect

it has on our relationships including our relationship with God. When we see ourselves through a distorted lens we alter the way we think God views us as well.

2.3 Eisegesis versus Exegesis

Exegesis and eisegesis are two conflicting approaches in Bible study. Exegesis which is the method we are using is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word exegesis literally means “to lead out of.” That means that we are led by the text, in context and through the use of original language.

When we look at scripture through our distorted lens, however, one born out of our own context and perceptions we are more apt to use eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a passage based on a subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means “to lead into,” which means the interpreter injects his or her own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever they want.

2 Timothy 2:15 instructs us to use exegetical methods:

“¹⁵ Present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

We must let the biblical text speak for itself because the use of eisegesis easily lends itself to error when the reader attempts to align the text with their own preconceived notions. Exegesis allows us to agree with the Bible; eisegesis seeks to force the Bible to agree with us.

What I find funny is that LGBTIQ people are typically accused of using eisegesis to promote a “gay agenda” and this accusation typically comes from people who have not studied at all.

Interestingly many churches have not actually studied the scriptures they claim relate to homosexuality. This makes sense to some degree as most people only study what is relative to their own life. Also interesting is that most people who do study (whether they believed homosexuality was right or wrong) have landed on the side of “this did not say what I thought it said”.

A great example of this is found in the book “Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality, Explode the Myths, Heal the Church” in which Jack Rogers, a Ph.D and then Presbyterian minister was asked to be a member of a task force to investigate whether LGBTIQ persons should be allowed ordination in the Presbyterian church. Jack Rogers was opposed to the ordination of LGBTIQ people and initially said no. The head of staff, a friend of Jack’s asked him to reconsider as a personal favour and Jack finally said yes. As a result he went on what he says was an uncomfortable journey which ended with his

book and this quote. “Most Christians have been told at one time or another that the Bible condemns all homosexual relationships. That view is simply incorrect” (Rogers 2009, 66).

2.4 Common attitudes and opinions

When Thomas Gray coined the phrase “ignorance is bliss” he was clearly not talking about the stigma caused by ignorance related to homosexuality. So many attitudes and opinions have been formed out of sheer ignorance on the issue.

Speaking the truth in love is only helpful if you have studied the subject well. Making statements because my Mama said so or making assumptions without proper study can be truly harmful. A Christian’s first port of call should always be to love and to treat others as ourselves.

Asking questions, having dialogue with others is very different to condemning what we do not understand. Sadly homophobia is the first distorted lens that people approach the bible with when investing homosexuality and faith. Following are a few mis-perceptions.

2.4.1 Promiscuity

There is an exaggerated belief that that all LGBTIQ people are sexually promiscuous, more so than any other class of people on the planet. The LGBTIQ community is blamed for hurricanes and diseases not to mention the destruction of marriages.

We are considered wrong because we do not fit the mould of typical heterosexual *stereotypes* and what people should be and what is considered to be *natural or normal* in the context of these stereotypes. These negative connotations used over and over again become a standard of what constitutes truth according to many societies.

2.4.2 Compromising my faith

Many heterosexist people are fearful that by interacting, or entering into dialogue with LGBTIQ persons they would be compromising their Christian faith and therefore many are not even open to hear or listen to an LGBTIQ persons story.

The thinking is that even giving this topic a thought would “subject” people to compromise their faith. This is really sad, as it leaves very little opportunity for dialogue with people on an open level as to what homosexuality actually is and who homosexual people actually are and are not. That is, of course, that not all LGBTIQ people are lustful, promiscuous or perverts, just like not all heterosexual people are lustful, promiscuous or perverts.

2.4.3 Derogatory terms and stereotypes

Today when we hear terms like “Fag, queer, dyke, puff, queen”, in reference to homosexual people. These terms are usually linked with the derogatory terms like pervert, sex maniac, promiscuous or other negative connotations.

Even unaccepting Pastors speaking on homosexuality, mention negative words reinforcing the stereotype. We hear words like pervert” or “homosexuality the abomination”.

Many ministers and televangelists preach negatively about homosexual people, almost always linking LGBTIQ people to lust and evil. They take “license” to preach against homosexuality as some misconstrued aberration based on their own ignorance, fear and homophobia and their opinions of what does or doesn’t constitute morality and which groups should be included or excluded.

It is no wonder LGBTIQ people, especially people of faith stay hidden in the closet. It is also no wonder that non-believers aren’t interested in church or matters of faith if this is the treatment they can expect. Even the newspapers contribute to this by titling crimes that are committed by LGBTIQ people as “gay murderer” gay paedophile”, again this just reinforces the stereotypes.

These stigmas and stereotypes, of who LGBTIQ people are stay attached, they stick like glue and are not easily changed when people are not ready to listen or enter into respectful dialogue.

Many LGBTIQ organizations and some affirming & inclusive churches are now deliberately using these terms openly in a positive proud way, to remove the stigmatization that has distorted perceptions of who LGBTIQ people are.

2.4.4 Other Examples

Below are some other examples of homophobia we hear and see in the church.

“Your sin is no greater than any other sin”. This is another way of saying love the sinner, hate the sin. This is a “cop out” because sin is sin! Christ has come to set us free from sin. We all sin but our sexual orientation is not a sin. Jesus came to save us of our sin not change who God created us to be.

Homosexuality is a sexual orientation; it is who we are created to be by a God who loves us and does not make mistakes.

Sin is about who we worship and the way we behave not about our sexual orientation. Whether we are heterosexual or homosexual we are accountable for behaviour.

“We choose” a “lifestyle” of sin. I am not sure who would choose a life of rejection from family, friends, peers, the workplace and the church. Who would choose to have less rights than any other human being; it doesn't make sense.

My life (and many of you as well) is one of dedication to and worship of God and my Saviour Christ Jesus. That's a choice but my sexual orientation, not my choice, God made me who I am and that is the case for the majority of LGBTIQ people today.

There are perhaps a very small percentage of heterosexual people who are more comfortable with being in same gender relationships due to circumstantial trauma, e.g. rape or family violence but the numbers here are very small.

2.5 The impact to LGBTIQ persons

Hearing something negative spoken about you once will most likely have little impact. Hearing the same thing over and over causes what we hear to be etched on our minds. Before long we are playing this record over and over in our heads and it hurts; particularly when these words are spoken by people we love and respect.

Sadly in this process many LGBTIQ people become, themselves homophobic. These negative influences can affect the way we see ourselves in a really unhealthy way and lead to some very unhealthy behaviours. Many LGBTIQ people feel that since no one close to them accepts them that their only recourse is to look for love in all the wrong places. The longing for love and companionship can lead to depression, the use of alcohol and drugs and sadly for so many attempts at suicide; some successful.

Until recently there has been very little said in a positive light to counteract these hurtful words and while we still have a long way to go, things are getting better. More and more people and organisations are being educated. A leading contributor to this movement is the willingness of the LGBTIQ community to “come out” and share their stories.

Coming out is also a first step toward healing and a healthy life. The closet can be a very toxic place where people live in guilt and shame and many live double lives. The coming out process however is just that, a process and must be done at a person's own pace and not forced by others.

I pray that by the end of this course you will have discovered the truth about what God and the Word of God have to say about you. I pray that God's own Spirit will speak a word of love and

acceptance to you. Knowing the truth through study is so very important but feeling the love of God is something that no one can take from you. God does love you and you are free to come just as you are, anything less would be “unnatural”.

2.6 Definitions of homophobia

Understanding the meaning of homophobia is essential in assessing our own feelings toward ourselves or others. We will look at four distinct but interrelated types of homophobia that will help us understand how “real” homophobia is in our society today. Some of you may be saying “well I’m not really affected by this”. If that’s you I think it’s wonderful but knowing these definitions may assist you in helping others. So let’s have a look at the definitions of homophobia.

2.6.1 Personal homophobia (Internalised)

This is prejudice based on a personal belief that LGBTIQ people are sinful, immoral, sick, inferior to heterosexuals, or incomplete. Personal homophobia is experienced as feelings of fear, discomfort, dislike, hatred, or disgust with same-sex sexuality.

Anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, can experience personal homophobia; but when this happens with LGBTIQ people, it is called internalised homophobia.

Internalised homophobia is very common among LGBTIQ people who have not come out of the closet yet. In addition internalised homophobia is common with LBGTIQ people of faith who feel that they are “less than” in God’s eyes and may be rejected even in the LGBTIQ community and thus feel that no one would want to hear what they have to say. They accept the stigma attached to being an LGBTIQ person without realizing that their experience is the result of oppression and ignorance.

2.6.2 Interpersonal homophobia

This is individual behaviour based on a personal homophobia. This hatred or dislike may be expressed by name-calling, telling “jokes”, verbal and physical harassment, and other individual acts of discrimination. Interpersonal homophobia, in its extreme, results in LGBTIQ persons being physically assaulted for no other reason than homophobia.

Most people act out their fears of LGBTIQ people, in non-violent, more commonplace ways. Relatives often shun their LGBTIQ family members; co-workers are distant and cold. Many heterosexual friends aren't interested in hearing about their LGBTIQ friends' relationships, which to some degree is a “passive” form of interpersonal Homophobia.

2.6.3 Institutional homophobia

This refers to the many ways in which government, businesses, churches, and other institutions discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation. Institutional homophobia is also known as being heterosexist.

Institutional homophobia is reflected in religious organizations that have stated or implicit policies against LGBTIQ persons; who refuse to allocate resources for services and governments which fail to insure the rights of all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation. This of course includes marriage equality. This is also where we see churches refusing to allow LGBTIQ people of faith to service in ministries and in extreme cases where we see the church expose someone publicly for their sexual orientation.

2.6.4 Cultural homophobia

Refers to social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being LGBTIQ and that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Cultural homophobia is also known as being heterosexist. Cultural homophobia is spelled out each day in TV shows and print advertisements where virtually every character is heterosexual, every relationship involves a female and a male, and every "normal" child is presumed to be attracted to and will eventually marry someone of the opposite sex. In the few cases where LGBTIQ persons are portrayed, they are usually portrayed as unhappy, stereotyped, engaged in self-destructive behaviours, or ambivalent about their sexual orientation.

Again we must acknowledge that things are getting much better. We've seen the emergence of many TV shows that now feature LGBTIQ people, couples and even families with children. The more we come out and take our rightful place in society and the church the more norms will be developed related to sexual orientation and equality for all people.

2.7 Dialogue dignifies debate divides

Mentioned previously was the fact that progress has been made in the acceptance of LGBTIQ persons mainly as a result of relationships and conversations. Coming out and sharing our stories with those we trust is causing people to go back and really study and reflect on what they've been told in the past.

We need dialogue because of the diversity in our different backgrounds. Often being different is seen as wrong instead of enriching but diversity means we recognise the “we” in our society.

2.7.1 Dialogue as a preferred method

We use dialogue as the preferred method to deal with diversity, as a life-enhancing alternative to debate, argumentation, apathy and rejection, as an attitude towards life, and a life skill.

2.7.2 Dialogue as a choice

Understanding the difference between dialogue and debate empowers us as individuals, to discern when we are taking part in dialogue and when we are busy with debate in any conversation and offers us a choice.

2.7.3 Dialogue needs a safe space

What is a safe space? Space refers to our internal (our internal space) and external, (our environment) and the interaction between both spaces. A safe space is where we are internally and externally protected and affirmed to reveal who we are and what we think and feel. Our behaviour has an impact on the space we occupy.

2.7.4 Dialogue calls for specific skills

How can I listen? How do I manage conflict?

In dialogue it is important that you are authentic and compassionate in your communication. Knowing and sharing your life story creates realness, gives exposure to diversity and supports people to connect as human beings. It is also very important to know how to listen actively and manage conflict constructively.

2.7.5 Dialogue needs stories not theology

People, sharing their journeys, this is dialogue and the exposure of it brings relationships to a place of acceptance or at minimum respect for one another.

2.7.6 Dialogue requires integration and support

The integration of dialogue as a method to manage and deal with diversity as an alternative to debate starts with knowledge about the dialogue process and a commitment to use dialogue.

2.7.7 The Dialogue process

The dialogue starts with an awareness of diversity and the wonder it holds for us as human beings, it flows into safe dialogues allowing for exploration and understanding of one another. Alliances form of people who are willing to be educated and form new understanding; these people become the agents of change to an inclusive and equally enriching life for all people.



(Inclusive & Affirming Ministires 2017)

3.0 Genesis (Sodom and Gomorrah)

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah found in Genesis 19 has traditionally been used to condemn homosexuality. Further study of the context reveals the sin of inhospitality which in that day and age could be considered a matter of life or death.

Key Words	Key Scripture: Genesis 19:1-25
Abomination	Sodomite
<i>ish</i>	Detestable
Prostitute	Yada
Sodomy	

¹ The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ² “My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.” “No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.” ³ But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. ⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom---both young and old---surrounded the house. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷ and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. ⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.” ⁹ “Get out of our way,” they replied. “This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! We’ll treat you worse than them.” They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹ Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door. ¹² The two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here---sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³ because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.” ¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

¹⁵ With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished. ” ¹⁶ When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. ¹⁷ As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!” ¹⁸ But Lot said to them, “No, my lords, please! ¹⁹ Your servant has found favour in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. ²⁰ Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it---it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared.” ²¹ He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²² But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.) ²³ By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴ Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah---from the Lord out of the heavens. ²⁵ Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities---and also the vegetation in the land.”

3.1 The traditional interpretation

The traditional interpretation of this text is that the destruction of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is God's wrath against the sin of homosexuality.

3.2 Observations

3.2.1 Sodom and Gomorrah already doomed.

God had already decreed judgement on these cities because of their wicked behaviour before the alleged “homosexual” incident. Genesis 18 tells us that God spoke to Abraham about the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and warned him of the impending doom. Here we see an exchange between God and Abraham for the lives of those in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18:20-33 NIV

²⁰ Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹ that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If

not, I will know.”²² The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.²³ Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”²⁶ The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”²⁷ Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,²⁸ what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?” “If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”²⁹ Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?” He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”³⁰ Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”³¹ Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”³² Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”³³ When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.”

Point to ponder:

- God said that for the sake of ten he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.....does this mean that all but ten people were homosexuals?

3.2.2 The Law of Hospitality

There was a very strong emphasis on hospitality to strangers in biblical times. People travelled great distances, many times on foot. Travellers would arrive at the city gates and be offered shelter in the home of a local. Once a person came under the protection of your home you were obligated to care for and protect this person. This is where we see Lot saying in verse 8

⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”

Jesus himself had something to say about breaking the law of hospitality. We read where when Jesus send out the twelve he told them this Matthew 10:5-15

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. ⁹ “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts--- ¹⁰ no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ¹² As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”

3.2.3 Lot was an alien in post war Sodom and Gomorrah

In Genesis 13 we read where Abram and Lot separated ways. Lot chose to go to Sodom but was not originally from Sodom. Then in Genesis 14 we read about how the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah had joined other forces to go to war. During the war they were pushed back. They lost people and goods. Lot and others were taken captive. Abram formed a group of men who rescued Lot and brought Lot and the people and their possessions back to Sodom.

There was a great deal of suspicion in foreigners after the war. Here is this alien Lot at the city gates and he's inviting these strangers into this home. Can you see how the rumours would be running rampant? Who is this alien and what are these men planning? We see this in verse 9 where they say....

⁹ “Get out of our way,” they replied. “This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them.”

3.2.5 Violent acts

Acts of violence, through forced anal intercourse, (or possibly gang rape) against men was a common practice in these days, particularly in demonstrations of dominion with prisoners of war. Today we see examples of this played out in our prisons. This is not an act of sexual gratification in many cases but rather one of dominance and power.

3.3 The context

3.3.1 All the men of the city

Verse 4 calls our attention to ALL the men of the city.

⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom---both young and old---surrounded the house.

The Hebrew word here for men is Strong's 376 *ish* which can be male or female it means mortals. I have never known of any city where ALL the people are gay! We talk all the time about a 10% figure but 100% not likely. Also if this term is referring to all mortals then woman and children are part of the make-up of the crowd. This sits more with the mob mentality that is seeking to know who is visiting and why.

3.3.2 To "know" you is to yada you

The word know that we see in verse 5 has several meanings in the original language.

The Hebrew word here is *Yada* – and can be used to mean: "have thorough knowledge of". The other meaning attributed to *yada*, is to know sexually but is very rarely used to explain sexual intercourse. In this case however *yada* could quite easily mean homosexual rape but that does not mean they were homosexual. The people of Sodom could have quite easily felt threatened by these strangers as seen with the threat to assault Lot.

3.3.3 Lot offers his daughters

Lot offers his two daughters to these people. He knew these people fairly well so if Lot knew or thought that the men were gay why would he have offered his daughters to them?

We see a similar story in Judges 19 where a man was traveling with his concubine. They stop in the city square but no one will take them in. Finally an old man takes them in and men surround the house saying bring this man out that we may have sex with him. This time they actually offer the concubine and she is raped and abused her all night.

3.3.4 Does not agree with other Scriptures

Proper exegesis requires the following of rules of interpretation to find a common theme within Scripture. What is written or interpreted within scripture must line up with the scripture being studied. We do not see a correlation here with the rest of Scripture.

3.4 The word sodomy

To put this plainly a sodomite was a person from Sodom. The Hebrew word for male cult prostitute

is Qadesh. This word has been mistranslated in some versions of the bible as the word sodomite. This is where the word Sodomy is taken out of context and we are told that sodomy is against the law. In fact the word sodomy is a modern word, and it has been taken out of context when used in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nowadays it is used in a court of law to define sexual relations with “men on men”. Many believe that this word sodomy actually comes from this passage however it does not mean what some have claimed it to mean. The original word is Qadesh and actually means male cult prostitute. Whether gay or straight, we stand under the same judgment if we worship idols and treat others with injustice.

3.5 The sin of Sodom

So what is the sin of Sodom?

Ezekiel 16:48-50 does a great job of answering our question.

“⁴⁹ Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.

3.5.1 Detestable

The word detestable (some also use the word abomination) refers to the worship of idols in the original language and is the word *toebah* (*Strong's 8441*).

Sodom's sins were that of injustice, selfishness and idolatry and the need for material possessions. Many people today suffer from the same sin.



4.0 Leviticus (The holiness code)

The book of Leviticus includes a collection of laws known as the Holiness Code, so named because the dominant idea in Leviticus is God’s command: “² You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” Leviticus 19:2

Leviticus means “about the Levites”. The Levites were God’s priests, descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Aaron and his family were chosen from this tribe to serve as priests and to offer sacrifices. God appointed the rest of the Levites to the service of the tabernacle, to assist the priests in the worship in the sanctuary.

Key Words	Key Scriptures
	Leviticus 18:21-23 Leviticus 20:13

<i>Levite</i>	<i>Holy</i>
<i>Apis</i>	<i>Molech (Moloch)</i>
<i>Abomination</i>	<i>Qadash</i>
<i>Qadesh</i>	<i>Ishtar</i>
<i>Asherah</i>	

²¹ “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. ²² “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable. ²³ “Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.”

Leviticus 18:21-23 NIV

¹³ 'If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

Leviticus 20:13 NIV

4.1 Traditional interpretation

The two key verses for our discussion on the book of Leviticus are frequently used to condemn homosexuality. They are probably the most commonly known verses out of all the so-called clobber passages and the most misunderstood as well when read literally but applied to today’s culture and way of thinking.

The book seems quite strange to modern readers. The sacrificial worship it describes is so far removed from today’s believers that its very unfamiliarity prevents some from reading Leviticus at all. Those who do can easily misconstrue what the verses are saying. We see this very clearly in the way some have interpreted these verses and used their misinterpretation to condemn homosexuality. Yet Leviticus plays an essential role in God’s Word and makes a vital contribution to our understanding of God’s relationship with humankind. We need to understand the book in order to bring proper understanding about what the scriptures are and are not saying about homosexuality.

4.2 Historical background

The Book of Leviticus is the third book of Moses and one of the five books of the law known as the Pentateuch. Leviticus to some degree causes a break in the flow of events in the story of God's people. From Genesis through Exodus we hear of this great story about God creating a nation and a people who would represent him to the rest of the world. But before they make the move from Mount Sinai to the edge of the Promise Land God needs to emphasize the personal, priestly, and national holiness that was a necessary part of their story and identity.

The book is broken out into four segments

I. The Offerings (1:1-7:38)

II. The Priesthood (8:1-10:20)

III. Cleanness and Uncleanness (11:1-16:34)

IV. The Holiness Code (17:1-27:34)

The opening sections of the book deal with right forms of worship inside the tabernacle. The second section deals with the conditions for the representative priesthood followed by acceptability of the worshipers, in other words what is considered clean and unclean. The rest of the book (where we will focus our attention) was called the holiness code and was devoted to right living, with becoming holy and staying holy. Where Exodus emphasized *where* to worship God, Leviticus deals with the *why* and the *how* to worship God.

In Leviticus 20:26 we again read the main purpose for the holiness code.

²⁶You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own."

The holiness code illustrates God's requirement for them to follow him alone and to stand out as the *holy* representatives of a relational God.

The word *holy* here is the Hebrew word *qadosh* (*Strong's 6918*) and means *holy, singled out, consecrated for*.

Holiness was a point of differentiation, so much so that the word holy with its derivatives occurs eighty-five times within these eleven chapters of the holiness code. The difference between God's holiness and Israel's holiness is that God's is intrinsic, while theirs is derived from their relationship

with God. Our God is relational and a good parent to his children. God is showing his children how they will stand out in the land that they will soon inherit as their own.

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt; they had wandered in the desert, they had been subject to attacks from other tribes, starvation, and infectious diseases. They needed cohesiveness, cleanliness, and order in every aspect of their lives. They wanted to keep pure their manner of worshiping God, who had brought them to this land. They were struggling for their own identity. Failure to form a tight knit community could threaten their long-term survival. They needed a code for living.

This is why God said to them in **Leviticus 18:1-4**

¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the Lord your God.’ ³ You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴ You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God.”

Israel’s neighbours among the ancient Near Eastern nations practiced sacrificial worship and like the Israelites these sacrifices were designed to appease the gods and to ensure continuance of divine favour. But there were certain differences that existed between the Israelite’s system and those of the ancient Near East. One minor difference was a lack of burning sacrifices by fire in Mesopotamia as the Israelites did. A more significant difference was that the Mesopotamians commonly used the sacrificial animal as a means of clairvoyance, in order to discern the future actions of the gods. Secondly the most distinctive aspect of the Israelite sacrificial system is the way it was linked to the covenantal relationship with God which we know is a shadow of what Jesus would become for us as the Lamb of God, the ultimate once for all sacrifice. The sacrifices make up a major ingredient of the covenant bond between Israel and God, the other nations had nothing comparable. A third feature of Israel’s use of the sacrifices is her concept of holiness. Israel’s notion of the term “holy” was based on the greater moral and ethical nature of God.

The Israelites have a covenant relationship with God and now the Lord sends Moses with instructions for proper worship. The Israelites were not to worship like their neighbours, and they were not to worship other gods. These behaviours were idolatrous and dangerous to their survival as a nation.

4.3 Unlawful sexual relations (in context)



One of the gods of Egypt where they had come out of captivity was the god, Apis. Apis was a fertility god, and the idol representing Apis was in the shape of a bull. As part of their worship, people would go and have sex with the priests and priestesses who served Apis. They believed that this encounter would cause fruitfulness with their land, crops and childbearing.

Exodus 32:17-25 gives us a glimpse of how easily the people were enticed into pagan worship practices by the people around them.

Moses was on the mountain receiving the 10 Commandments and he comes down to find idol worship in the camp. This is what God is addressing before they enter the promise land.

“¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, “There is the sound of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ Moses replied: “It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. ²¹ He said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” ²² “Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil. ²³ They said to me, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.’ ²⁴ So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!” ²⁵ Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies.”

Now; in Leviticus, we see another god, Molek and a prohibition to not sacrifice to Molek and thus dishonour God. This leads us to our first passage used to condemn homosexuality in the book of Leviticus.

4.3.1 Leviticus 18:21-23

“²¹ “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molek, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. ²² “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman;

that is detestable. ²³ “Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.”

Leviticus 18:21-23 NIV

²¹ And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to ¹¹Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD. ²² Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination. ²³ Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion.”

Leviticus 18:21-23 KJV



In the passage we see God's command to not live like the Canaanites. Reference is made here about a god named Molek (also referred to as Moloch) who was worshiped in the Middle East and in both Egypt and Canaan. According to the Jewish tradition, the cult idol Molek was made of brass, hollow, and with hands positioned so that something laid in the hands of the idol would fall into the fire below. This practice of laying a child across the hands and committing the child to the fire was termed 'pass through the fire of Molek'. In addition to children there were products of soil, fruits, a calf or sheep and even a cat or a dog.

When the signal was given the priests of Moloch marched into the temple and around the figure to pay homage to the god. Young men would sell their bodies to the adorers of their god, depositing on the altar of the idol the money earned. Within the temple, too there were dogs trained for the same purpose and the coins received from the rental or sale of these animals, called the 'price of a dog' went to the priests of Moloch (Goldberg, 1930).

Point to ponder:

- Do we believe that verse 21 and 22 are connected? If so what is God condemning, a loving same sex relationship or idol worship?

This leads us to the second passage that is similar. The difference here is that Leviticus 20:13 also describes a punishment for what is being condemned, that of death.

4.3.2 Leviticus 20:13

¹³ 'If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

Leviticus 20:13 NIV

¹³ If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them”

Leviticus 20:13 KJV

Here again we see this prohibition against a man lying with mankind as with a woman. And like Leviticus 18:22 we see the word abomination used. This word and an understanding of the surrounding culture hold the key for us in understanding that what God is dealing with in both passages is the issue of idolatry.

For us in the 21st century it seems strange to be talking about people worshipping false gods in sexual ways and by offering human sacrifices. Yet this was the case and still is in some parts of the world where these pagan gods are worshiped.

4.4 Terms to consider

4.4.1 Abomination

When we examine both passages in the KJV we see the appearance of the word abomination. This is the word most of us are familiar with when used to condemn homosexuality in the book of Leviticus, but what does the word actually mean?

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible the word used in these passages is Strong's 8441.

תועבה **tôw'êbâh**, *to-ay-baw'*; or

תֵּעִבָּה **tô'êbâh**, *to-ay-baw'*; fem. act. part. of 8581; prop. something *disgusting* (mor.), i.e. (as noun) an *abhorrence*; espec. *idolatry* or (concr.) an *idol*:—abominable (custom,

thing), abomination (Strong, 2009).

This Hebrew word has a primary meaning of an association with idolatry or concretely of an idol itself. What we see thus far from the context is a prohibition against idolatry.

Every time the Hebrew word *tô'êbâh* is used in the Old Testament, it is always referring to an idol or to idolatry. Here are few examples.

Deuteronomy 7:25-26

²⁵ The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for *it is* an abomination to the LORD thy God. ²⁶ Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for *it is* a cursed thing. (The Holy Bible: King James Version, 2009)

Jeremiah 2:7 and 11

⁷ And I brought you into [†]a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination (The Holy Bible: King James Version, 2009).

¹¹ Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit (The Holy Bible: King James Version, 2009).

Malachi 2:11

¹¹ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god (The Holy Bible: King James Version, 2009).

In each of these cases when the word abomination is used we see the same word in Hebrew *tô'êbâh*. The issue of idolatry is being addressed. All through the scriptures we see it written where God says, I will be their God and they will be my people or I am holy, therefore you be holy. We know that on this side of the cross Jesus provides our means of holiness and we will be known by our fruit. But in the Old Testament we see a priesthood representing God and outlining how the people of God would maintain holiness and not become defiled by the nations around them.

Another important reason for the strict adherence in worship is because these other nations had priests as well that served these false Gods. The differences however are stark and give us additional insight into the passages in question.

4.4.2 Qadash v Qadesh

There were two different names for Priests in the Old Testament

Qadash

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible #6942

קָדָשׁ *qâdâsh*, *kaw-dash'*; a prim. root; to be (causat. make, pronounce or observe as) clean (ceremonially or morally):—appoint, bid, consecrate, dedicate, defile, hallow, (be, keep) holy (-er, place), keep, prepare, proclaim, purify, sanctify (-ied one, self), × wholly (Strong, 2009).

Qadesh

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible #6945

קָדֵשׁ *qâdêsh*, *kaw-dashe'*; from 6942; a (quasi) sacred person, i.e. (techn.) a (male) devotee (by prostitution) to licentious idolatry:—sodomite, unclean (Strong, 2009).

The Bible distinguishes the activities of these pagan priests involved in cultic worship practices from the priests who were called to be holy and to serve Yahweh God. The following verses help us to see how much God disliked the *qadeshim*.

Deuteronomy 23:17-19 (KJV)

¹⁷ There shall be no whore (#6948 Qadeshah) of the daughter of Israel, or a sodomite (#6945 Qadesh) of the sons of Israel. ¹⁸ Thou shall not bring the hire of a whore or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abominations (#8441 to 'ebah) unto the Lord thy God."

4.4.3 "As a woman"

Relationships that are prohibited in Leviticus 18 and 20 are considered wickedness but only in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 do we see a particular relationship that is considered idolatrous.

The prohibitions of Leviticus 18 and 20 are directed to Hebrew males and let them know with whom they are not to have sexual relationships. All of these type of illicit sexual relationships would have

taken place in these cultic worship experiences. However, God considered only one of them, the lying with a man as woman as particularly idolatrous. Why?

A male priest or qadesh would oftentimes wear female attire; so would the male prostitutes involved in these pagan cults. In Babylonian and Assyrian culture their male temple priests associated with the goddess Ishtar. The goddess Ishtar was also worshipped by the Canaanites as Asherah. These cultic priests would become “as a woman”. They would adopt female attire and some would become eunuchs as part of their service to the pagan deity. Mixing gender roles was not a matter of personal preference or orientation but rather a cultural signifier and a uniting of oneself with a pagan deity.

Other scholars believe that this “as a woman” refers to the dominate role played by men during this time period. Women were considered property and of lower status, as well as being sexually dominated and controlled. So to lie with a man as with a woman would have been reducing the man to property and in effect defiling the image of God. This is however exactly how men would have treated the male temple prostitutes – in a controlling and abusive manner, and also is how individuals would have been treated in the sacred sexual orgies with which Baal was worshipped. They would have lied with other men “as with a woman” (Waskow, 2008).

4.5 Conclusion

First off let us be thankful on this side of the cross because:

“²³ Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.”

Galatians 3:23-25 NIV

“³ Again I declare to every man [*or woman*] who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴ You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love”.

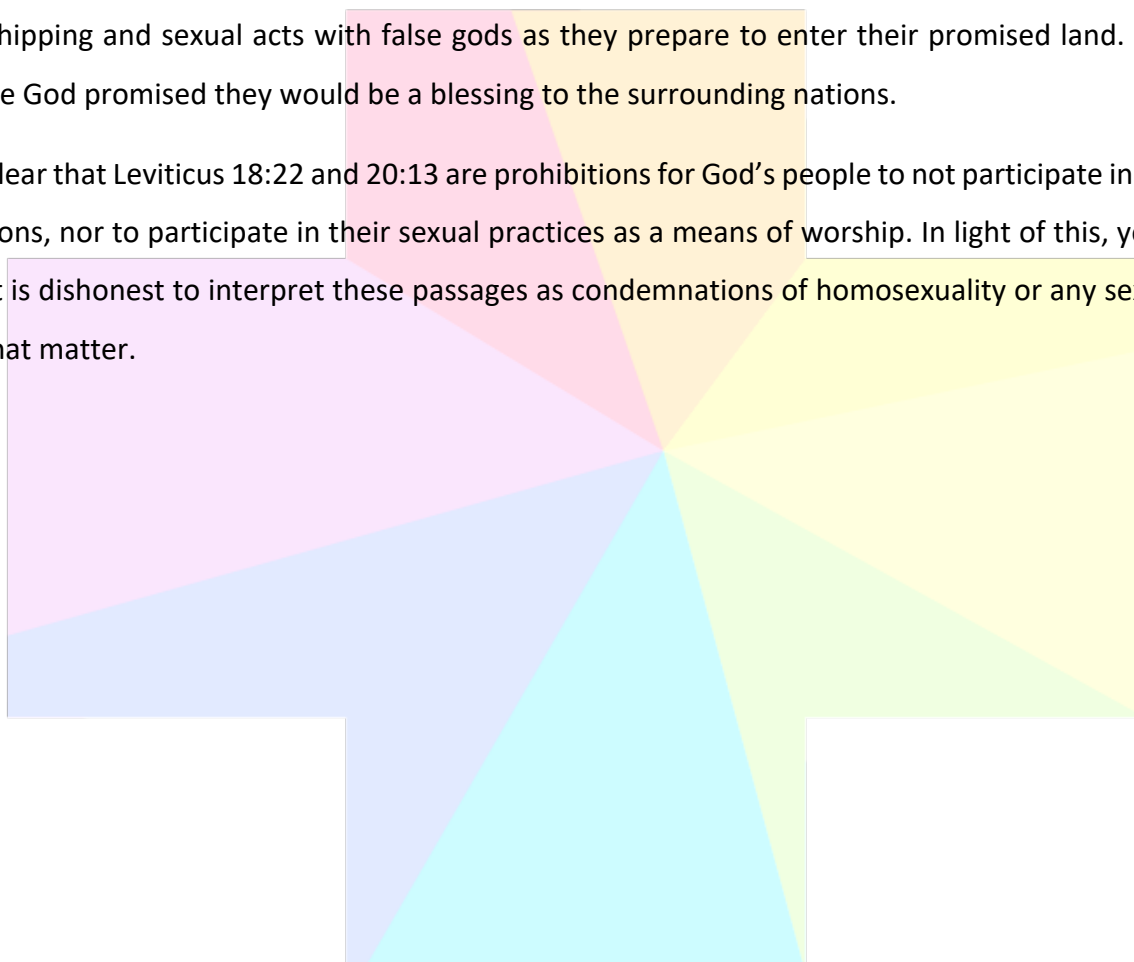
Galatians 5:3-6 NIV

As New Testament Christians we are no longer obligated to follow the Old Testament laws. This is because Jesus Christ came to fulfil the law and usher in a season of love and grace.

While we are no longer under the law and no longer need to struggle to figure out what we can and cannot do it is important to understand the Old Testament scriptures, particularly where these scriptures are used to condemn loving same sex relationships.

We can see from these passages a beautiful picture of a loving, holy God establishing a means of covenant, protection and worship with his people. We see this covenant threatened by the worshipping and sexual acts with false gods as they prepare to enter their promised land. A land where God promised they would be a blessing to the surrounding nations.

It is clear that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are prohibitions for God’s people to not participate in pagan religions, nor to participate in their sexual practices as a means of worship. In light of this, you can see it is dishonest to interpret these passages as condemnations of homosexuality or any sexuality for that matter.



5.0 Romans -What does “Natural” mean?

The book of Romans is the book where Paul provides us with a theological masterpiece on the grace of God. Interestingly however, Paul begins the book by describing those who have rejected God’s goodness in order to follow after a lie. This lie is the worshipping of something other than God, which is idolatry. Many had turned away from a loving and relational God to worship false gods and idols.

Key Words and phrases	Key Scriptures
	Romans 1:26-27
<i>Natural</i>	<i>Lust</i>
<i>Shameful</i>	<i>Within themselves</i>

<i>allasso paradidomi Metallaso</i>	<i>they exchanged God gave them over sebazomai</i>

“¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. “²⁸ Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Romans 1:18-31 [NIV]

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“¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. ²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²² Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³

And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶ That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷ And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved." ²⁸ Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹ Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behaviour, and gossip. ³⁰ They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹ They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy."

Romans 1:18-31 [NLT]

5.1 Traditional interpretation

Question: What have you heard or been told that this passage means?

Question: Why do you feel that this passage speaks about homosexuality?

The traditional interpretation is that because Paul mentions woman having sex with woman and men having sex with men that this somehow refers specifically to same-sex attracted people and goes against nature. These phrases about lust and shameful behaviours have been somehow attached to same-sex attracted people in loving relationships. One can assume however that this kind of thinking would apply to those who have never encountered a loving Christian same-sex couple or those who have not actually studied these passages but rather taken a literal approach to their understanding.

5.2 Historical background

Paul's letter to the believers in Rome is believed to have been written from Corinth between 54-59 AD. Paul had heard of the church there in Rome but had not yet visited.

During the time of Paul's missionary journeys from 47-57, the fertility cult religions would have been in full bloom throughout the Gentile cities where he travelled. Rome was already known for their religions that were centred on the gods and in fact the Romans actually had a set of public gods- Jupiter & Mars.

During the 1st century Rome officially adopted the first of the eastern religions, the cult of Cybele. This Syrian goddess, Cybele, was known as Aphrodite in much of the Greco-Roman world. These gods were associated with idolatry, sexual rituals, fertility rites and temple prostitution.

During this same time period the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians experienced tensions with regard to the observance of Jewish laws. The Jewish Christians thought they were superior because they continued to cling to the law yet the Gentiles felt no obligation to do so. Many Christians had fallen away from the faith and returned to paganism. They made images of pagan gods in the form of men, birds, animals and reptiles for their religious rituals.

5.3 Paul's polemic against idolatry

When we look at the verses that precede the key verses (26 and 27) we see very clearly what Paul is addressing and quite forcefully. Paul is addressing idolatry.

In verse 22 Paul speaks specifically about idols when he mentions how people have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

Then in verse 25 Paul states *"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator."*

This is a reference to what the prophet Jeremiah was warning against in Jeremiah 2:11

"¹¹ Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols."

In verse 25 Paul uses the phrase ***"worshiped and served created things"*** which is the only time this Greek word for worship [Strong's G4573 *sebazomai* σεβάζομαι] is used in the New Testament. This

phrase in Greek usage is a reference to cultic worship or to worship in a pagan cult and specifically in Rome.

So there is a whole lot of idolatry going on in Rome and sexual activity associated with the gods of this culture. There are men having sex with men and woman having sex with woman but is God really referring to loving homosexual relationships? The text clearly answers this question.

5.4 Examining the text

The beginning of verse 24 starts with “therefore” and verse 26 starts with “*Because of this*” which means that Paul is summing up his previous argument regarding the topic of idolatry.

The key verses then go on to say that

*“women turned **against** the **natural** way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with **lust** for each other. Men did **shameful** things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered **within themselves** the penalty they deserved.”*

These words are important, because they tell us to whom Paul is referring. From the text, he is obviously writing about women with a heterosexual orientation, who had previously engaged in only heterosexual sex, who had “exchanged” or “turned against” their normal/inborn behaviours for same-sex activities. That is, they deviated from their heterosexual orientation and engaged in sexual behaviour with other women. Similarly, he describes men with a heterosexual orientation who had “abandoned” their normal/inborn behaviours and engaged in same-sex activities. In both cases, Paul is describing individuals with a heterosexual orientation, who were engaging in same-sex behaviour. In normal life, these are very unusual activities, because heterosexuals typically have a strong aversion to engaging in same-sex behaviour. However, with regard to these pagan sex rituals at the time, they appear to have abandoned their normal feelings of abhorrence and tried same-sex behaviour.

It appears that they had exchanged what was “*natural*” for them to undertake what was not natural. This was done as worship to pagan gods.

In addition in verse 27 Paul writes that men involved in idolatry “*suffered **within themselves** the penalty they deserved.*”

The only factor that differentiated the male and female worshipers in these cults was that of emasculation or castration. The myth of Attis, the lover of Cybele attests to this. Every March on the

Day of Blood young men would re-enact Attis mutilating himself. Even a priest of Cybele would be stabbed to death as part of the re-enactment.

These passages alone should be sufficient to support the case for idolatry where these same sex sexual encounters were involved but just so we are certain let's examine the definition of some key words.

Lust G819

[ἀτιμία](#) atimia **dishonour, disrespect,**
common use

Shameful G3806

[πάθος](#) pathos **passion; lustful passion**
or desire, sexual passion

Natural G5446

[φυσικός](#) phusikos foo-see-kos'- according to nature, governed by mere natural instincts.

The word "*nature*" refers to the character of the person or group of persons or what is common. It does not mean what we understand to be a universal law or truth. In other words homosexual orientation is natural in those who have a genetic disposition to it.

So if we were to re-read these verses with interpretation we would say something like.

Women turned **against** their **natural (instincts)** and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with **lust (dishonour, disrespect)** for each other. Men did **shameful (lustful)** things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered **within themselves (castration or emasculation)** the penalty they deserved.

Paul uses this very phrase in Romans 11 of going "*against nature*" in reference to God's role in grafting Gentile Christian believers as wild olive shoots into the Jews who are the olive tree. So, this helps us to understand that going "*against nature*" is not something morally evil but rather something unusual or uncommon. It would be unusual for heterosexual men and woman to engage in homosexuality and vice-verse for same sex attracted people to engage in sexual behaviour with someone of the opposite sex.

Additionally Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11:14 that “nature teaches us that long hair dishonours a man”. Compare that with Samson’s statement in Judges 16:17, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother’s womb.” Was it unnatural for Samson to have long hair? Wouldn’t it seem that nature shows us that hair grows long? Paul, however, tells us that according to nature, or the “norm” having long hair dishonours a man.

It would also seem that nature would show us that circumcision is unnatural. The writings of Paul, however indicate to us that it is “natural” for Jews and “unnatural” for Gentiles to be circumcised. Could this be because it simply ran contrary to the Gentile’s nature? When Paul uses the term natural, is it possible that he is referring to accepted social practices of the time rather than the divine scheme of things?

The text, in context, shows us that Paul is addressing the exchanging of a relationship with God for idolatry. The problem with much of the general Christian community is that homophobia prevents people from seeing the difference between what Paul is describing here and committed monogamous loving relationships between two life partners of the same sex.

Question: What is your natural disposition?

Question: What is homosexuality to you?

Question: What does it mean to go against nature?

Question: Are we talking about nature in terms of our innate inclinations or are in terms of the female and male anatomy?

5.5 Understanding the passage structure

Another way to understand what Paul is trying to convey is to look at the passage structures. Here we’ll examine the parallelism and grammar being used.

5.5.1 Parallelism

Extremely common in Hebraic and Greek literature, parallelism involves repeating a thought a different way for emphasis. It is possible that Paul who is not a stranger to public speaking, and a very learned man would have been familiar with this common device of emphasis and through the structure of this passage, Paul appears to be using this technique to emphasize God’s wrath against the sin of idolatry.

Looking at Romans 1:23-28:

The primary pattern we see is the usage of phrases “they exchanged” (v23 G236 allasso, v 25,26 G3337 metallasso, metallasso comes from the root allasso) and “God gave them over” (v24,26,28 G3860 paradidomi) which encloses three parallel thoughts between versus 23-28. To make it clearer, look at the table below:

Romans 1:23:31			
Outline	They exchanged (metallasso)	This led to	Which led God to give them over to (paradidomi)
vs. 23a-24	God’s glory (23a)	Make images of animals and men to worship (23b)	Sinful desires/sexual impurity/degrading their bodies (24)
vs. 25-26a	God’s truth for a lie (25a)	Worship created things (25b)	Shameful lusts (26a)
vs. 26b-31	Natural relations for unnatural (26b)	Stop believing in God (28a)	a depraved mind, to do evil things (28b-31)

Looking at the first two parallel passages (v 23-24 and 25-26a), we see the repeated phrases “they exchanged” and “God gave them over” very graphically describing idol worship as it would have been found in Greek and Roman cultic rituals of the time of Paul’s writing.

The third parallel part is similar with the Greek words metallasso and paradidomi, but doesn't quite follow the pattern of the first two parts. In the first two parts, we see that God has given them over to wicked behaviour (v28). However, in both of the first two parts we see that what they exchanged for God were clearly idolatrous behaviours, while in the third part, we see only sexual behaviours.

Following parallelism, and in order to preserve the symmetry of the parallel verses it is safe to conclude that the third parallel similarly refers to cultic idolatry. Interpreting the passage in this manner preserves the symmetry inherent within the text.

Another example of parallelism: emphasis on "all are the same"

Chapter one: He pointed out all the sins the Gentiles did

Chapter two: He started to point out all the sins of the Jews and saying that they are not better.

Chapter three: (point of reference), verse 22 he points out that " we are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we ALL can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done".

The primary focus of this chapter is on Gentiles who stop worshipping God and who "exchange/substitute" the worship of idols with the worship of God. We can easily assume then that the substitution here could be extended metaphorically to anything that takes our focus off of God (eg, busyness, human philosophies etc). That said, Paul's language here seems to be specifically addressing idol worship.

5.5.2 Grammar

Romans 1:23:31			
Outline	They exchanged (metallasso)	This led to	Which led God to give them over to (paradidomi)
	Forgone	Action	Consequence
vs. 23a-24	God's glory (23a)	Make images of animals and men to worship (23b)	Sinful desires/sexual impurity/degrading their bodies (24)

vs. 25-26a	God's truth for a lie (25a)	Worship created things (25b)	Shameful lusts (26a)
vs. 26b-31	Natural relations for unnatural (26b)	Stop believing in God (28a)	a depraved mind, to do evil things (28b-31)

Within the first two parallels, we see that the **consequence** came about because of the action. God gave them over to evil behaviours because of certain actions they did. God does not necessarily give them over because of the exchange itself (which is what was **forgone**), but **because of actions taken as a result of the exchange** (in the second parallel, they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, but the resulting action is that they worshipped and served created things"). In the third parallel, they exchange natural relations for those that are against nature but it was not those exchanges that caused God to give them over. Those exchanges resulted in the action of verse 28, "they did not think it worthwhile to retain a knowledge of God" which is what caused God to give them over. The cultic sexual behaviour was a key part of the process of them rejecting belief in God, just as making idols and worshipping idols was a key part of the process in v23-26a.

5.6 Conclusion

We must exercise proper hermeneutics in determining if these passages condemn loving same sex relationships. This means that if we apply these passages to our world today we must ask: Is there any reasonable similarity between the contexts of then and now. If we do this correctly, we conclude that no, the answer is that we cannot take this text as an overall condemnation of homosexual orientation.

We must conclude then, that Paul was describing in the best understanding he knew of his worldview at the time, pagan worship which went against the knowledge of an all loving and relational God.

Question: How does your sexuality affect your relationship with God?

Question: Does your sexuality bring you closer to God or does it make you stop believing in God?

6.0 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-11

To begin our understanding of the passages found in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy let's first take a minute to understand the author.

The Apostle Paul was blessed by God in two areas of his life, which gave him the special ability, along with Holy Spirit's inspiration, to write so much of the New Testament. If we understand these two specifics about Paul, we can then divide the word rightly.

First, Paul was a well-travelled missionary to the Gentile world. While Paul was in the city of Corinth, he wrote to the church in Rome. While he was in Ephesus, Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and to his spiritual son Timothy. Each of these Gentile cities were known for their fertility cults, and so the pagan religious practices of the people in these cities would have been widely known and observed by Paul.

Secondly Paul was a trained scholar in the Old Testament Law and Prophets. Paul was trained by the very best teacher, Gamaliel (Acts 5:34, Acts 22:3). Because of this training, Paul would have been very familiar with the law and especially the Holiness Code found in the book of Leviticus. What we will discover is that Paul referred to Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in both 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10.

Key Words and phrases

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-11

Pornos

Arsenokoites

Catamite

Malakos

Andrapodistes

6.1 Traditional interpretation

Modern translations have taken license in these passages translating two different words carelessly into one word, homosexual and thus condemning loving relationships between LGBTIQ persons. The assumptions about the texts are made because there is no full knowledge of what the meaning is of these two words in the original Greek.

6.2 Historical background

1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

To whom written: The church in Corinth

Purpose: To identify problems in the Corinthian church, to offer solutions, and to teach the believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt society. Many new believers were just blending in with the culture and its practices of worship. Paul explains that those who follow this sort of worship of pagan gods will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Date written: About A.D. 55, near the end of Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus, during his third missionary journey

Setting: Corinth was a major cosmopolitan city, a seaport and major trade centre - the most important city in Achaia. It was also filled with idolatry and immorality. The church was largely made up of Gentiles. Paul established this church on his second missionary journey. This letter was in response to the problems, pressures and struggle faced by the church in a pagan society.

Scripture: "9 Don't you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral (*pornos*) nor idolaters nor adulterers nor **male prostitutes (*malakos*)** nor **homosexual offenders (*arsenokoites*)**¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 (NIV)

1 Timothy:

Author: Paul

To whom written: Timothy

Purpose: To give encouragement and instruction to Timothy, a young leader.

Date written: About A.D. 64, from Rome, probably just prior to Paul's final imprisonment in Rome

Setting: Timothy was one of Paul's closest companions. Paul had sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus to counter the false teaching that had arisen there (1 Timothy 1:3,4). Timothy served for a time as Pastor of the church at Ephesus. Paul hoped to visit Timothy (3:14, 15; 4:13), but in the meantime, he wrote this letter to give Timothy practical advice about the ministry. Paul guides and advises Timothy on the challenges he faces so that the church can conduct itself in a rightful manner. Paul also talks pointedly about the conduct of a minister and how Timothy has to be careful so that his youthfulness doesn't become a liability.

Scripture: ⁹We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for adulterers and **perverts (*arsenokoites*)**, for slave traders (*andrapodistes*) and liars and perjurers-and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine ¹¹that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me."

1 Timothy 1:9-11 (NIV)

6.3 The language

The table below will assist with understanding the key terms in the original language and will give us a clearer understanding of what Paul is trying to convey.

English word	Greek word	Meaning in Greek
Male Prostitutes/ Effeminate	Malakos (G3120)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Soft, soft to the touch 2. Is used of clothing twice 3. Metaphor in a bad sense of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) effeminate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of a catamite - a male who has sex with a male - male prostitute - male who submits his body to unnatural lewdness
English word	Greek word	Meaning in Greek
Homosexual offenders/perverts/ Sodomites	Arsenokoites (G733) Root Word: Arsen (G730) Koite (G2845)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Male 1. A place for laying down, resting, sleeping in a bed, couch 2. Marriage bed of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) adultery 3. Cohabitation, whether lawful or unlawful <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) sexual intercourse
Sexually immoral/sexual sin /fornicators	Pornos (G4205)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A man who prostitutes his body to another's lust for hire 2. A male prostitute A man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse
Slave Traders	Andrapodistes (G405)	A person who enslaves others

There are two Greek words in these scriptures which biblical scholars have had great difficulty in understanding. The first Greek word is malakos, which is only used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9. This

word is translated in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as “male prostitute” in the NIV Bible while the same word is translated as “fine” or “soft” elsewhere in the New Testament.

The second Greek word is *Arsenokoites*, which is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. This word is translated in the NIV Bible as *homosexual offender* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and in 1 Timothy 1:10 is translated as *pervert*.

6.3.1 Malakos

The NIV Bible has translated *malakos* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as “male prostitute” while the KJV Bible used “effeminate”. It has been thought then that the term “*malakos*” is a reference to an effeminate male prostitute or to one who serves as the male receptive partner.

Malakos can simply mean effeminate. Martti Nissinen in *Homoeroticism in The Biblical World* states as well that malakos stresses femineity while adding that “*a homosexual connotation may come from effeminacy, because the man who submits to the passive sexual role takes the position of a woman and represents moral values associated with woman-mostly in a negative sense.*”

This understanding agrees with Boswell, in *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* who is adamant that *malakos* is not related to homosexual orientation since heterosexual males were also called this term by ancient writers. So it seems clear that malakos was at times used to refer to males who were effeminate, whether they were heterosexual or homosexual. And, the term apparently was also used at times to mean males who took the passive role, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

If we look at the other definitions of the word malakos we see the word “*Catamites*”

Catamites were boys or young men who were kept for the purposes of prostitution, a practice not uncommon in the Greco-Roman world. In Greek mythology this was the function of Ganymede, the “cupbearer of the gods,” whose Latin name was Catamus.

It was a common practice in Paul’s time that men would have these slave “pet” boys whom they would sexually exploited. These desired boys were normally prepubescent.

The word *malakos* is found elsewhere in the New Testament and it is also used quite frequently in extra-biblical writings of the New Testament era with a basic meaning of soft or fine and in a moral sense it indicates a moral weakness as in one who lacks self-control.

Jesus himself mentioned *malakos* in his description of what John the Baptist was not like. In Matthew 11:7-9 (and Luke 7:25) we see that Jesus used the word *malakos* twice in reference to clothing.

⁷ As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet."

It could be that Jesus was simply describing the clothing of those in King's palaces as fine and soft. It is also possible that Jesus simply had in mind that men in King's palaces are effeminate.

But I think it's more likely that Jesus was using a double play on words when he specifically used the word *malakos* to describe the opposite characteristics of John the Baptist as a prophet and worshipper of God.

We see in the verses that in Jesus asking three rhetorical questions, the answer is always negative until the third time when he declares John the Baptist a Prophet. The message that Jesus is communicating here is that John the Baptist is a prophet of God. In contrast, Jesus provides two descriptions of those who are not prophets and not worshipers of Yahweh God.

The first rhetorical question speaks of a "*reed swayed by the wind*" which may be a metaphorical representation of pagan priests and pagan prostitutes. Historically, the pagan fertility cults that came out of the Near East were located in the desert. It is interesting that 1 Kings 14:15 makes mention of God striking Israel "*like a reed swaying in the water*" because of her idolatrous behaviour.

¹⁵ And the LORD will strike Israel, so that it will be like a reed swaying in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land that he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they aroused the LORD's anger by making Asherah poles."

Remember that the worship of the goddess Asherah by the Canaanites is linked to the cult of Ishtar. The priests were male transvestite eunuch priests, who took on the powers of the goddess. It is

possible that in alluding to a “reed swaying by the wind”, Jesus is juxtaposing these cultic priests as opposites to God’s anointed prophet.

In the second rhetorical question Jesus speaks about those who wore malakos clothing in King’s palaces. This could be a reference to the eunuchs who served in King’s palaces. There were three known eunuchs who served in King Herod’s palace during Jesus’ early life. It is certain that Jesus would have heard about Herod’s high-ranking eunuchs.

Therefore, it seems to me that the malakos people that Jesus is alluding to in the desert and in King’s palaces are man-made eunuchs. The two known roles common to man-made eunuchs was serving in the cultic religions and serving pagan kings. Jesus was familiar with natural born eunuchs and man-made eunuchs according to Matthew 19:12.

“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.”

It seems then that his discussion of the authenticity of John the Baptist as a prophet of God is set against these man-made eunuchs, which implies that they would not have been worshiping or serving Yahweh God.

6.3.2 Arsenokoites

Paul is the one who coined this Greek word. It is not used elsewhere in the Bible and it is also not found in literature prior to being used in Paul’s writings. It is two Greek words put together in *arsen* which means man or male and *koite* which means bed.

Many scholars today believe that Paul coined the term Arsenokoites as a derivative of the Septuagint’s Greek translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Paul would have preached in Greek during his missionary journeys using the Greek translation of the OT, known as the *Septuagint*.

Comparisons of the Septuagint’s translation of the phrase “male who lies with a male as with a woman” from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

Leviticus 18:22 – “kai meta *arsenos* ou koimethese *koiten* gynaikos”

Leviticus 20:13 – “kai hos an koimethe meta *arsenos* *koiten* gynaikos”

As you can see, the two Greek words *arsen* and *koite* are closely placed together in these verses and this is especially true of Leviticus 20:13. It seems clear that the etymology of the word *Arsenokoites* is rooted in the pagan idolatrous practices referred to in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

In using *Arsenokoites*, Paul would have meant the same thing in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 that the Leviticus verses condemn, namely that male worshipers who lay with cultic priests as part of the fertility cult worship practices are condemned.

Paul was teaching the churches in Corinth and in Ephesus that these people would not inherit the kingdom of God. Why? Because they were involved in pagan worship practices, which have no part in a life with Christ.

Basically the Apostle Paul saw idolatry taking place in the New Testament times so he reached back and took Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 and put two words together in these verses. Paul coined the word *arsenokoites* in order to tell the Greek-speaking Gentiles that they were not living according to sound doctrine and they would not inherit the kingdom of God if they were involved in these idolatrous practices.

Paul encountered the same fertility cult religions during his travels that are addressed in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 and as a result he wrote this word in a letter to the church in Corinth. The city of Corinth was a major city in Greece about 50 miles from Athens. There were two main gods worshiped in Corinth: Poseidon and Aphrodite. The goddess Aphrodite was a goddess of love and was also referred to as Cybele, Astarte and Ishtar. The temple of Aphrodite featured 1,000 female slaves who served as prostitutes.

Aphrodite was another name for the Syrian goddess named Cybele. This deity was both male and female and was depicted with bearded face and full breasts. The cult taught that worshipers must hide their sex. It appeased the goddess if worshipers physically effaced their sex. It didn't matter if the goddess was known as Aphrodite, Cybele, Astarte or Ishtar because all of the worshipers of this deity engaged in erotic beatings, sadomasochism, same sex orgies and for the males, in castration.

The priests who served these goddesses such as Aphrodite, Cybele, Hecate, Artemis, Astarte and Ishtar were castrated and/or transvestites. In the cult of Cybele, the initiates mourned Cybele's androgynous lover Attis. They would re-enact his death every March, according to mythology, where in the midst of exstatic music, they would strike themselves with sharp stones and after

castrating themselves, put on woman's clothing. This had nothing to do with gender or sexual orientation, this was done as a form of pagan worship.

What about Ephesus?

Paul wrote to Timothy his son who was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. The main goddess worshipped in Ephesus according to Acts 19:27 is *Diane of the Ephesians*". Another name for Diane was Artemis as mentioned before, a priest of the pagan goddesses. Although the goddess was worshipped in 33 places in the known world at that time, her chief location was in Ephesus.

In 1 Timothy we are introduced to two additional words

⁹We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for [lawbreakers and rebels]¹, [the ungodly and sinful]², [the unholy and irreligious]³; [for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers]⁴, ¹⁰for **adulterers (pornos)** and perverts (arsenokoites), for **slave traders (andrapodistes)** and [liars and perjurers]⁵—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.

"pornoï" → male prostitute.

"slave traders" → Greek word "andrapodistes"(G405) refers to a person who enslaves others.

Thus, suggests a translation: "*It is as if Paul were saying, 'male prostitutes, men who sleep with them, and slave dealers who procure them'.*"

The word Arsenokoites later took on other meanings. Although the Apostle Paul coined the word it's usage evolved over the next two to three hundred years into a description of people who exploited others for sexual purposes

Although Arsenokoites originally described male worshipers who paid for sex with priests or prostitutes in the temple, it later came to describe those who paid for sex with prostitutes, whether male or female, outside of the cultic worship experience.

6.4 Conclusion on Arsenokoites and Malakos in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10

It seems that both of these words used by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth and to his spiritual son Timothy are related to cultic worship for the most part and most certainly related to prostitution and the exploitation of people.

So, are these two Greek words God's condemnation of homosexuality or of anal sex? No, it is not. Once again, these two Greek words cannot be understood outside of the pagan cultic religious practices that Paul was addressing. Also if the assessment is correct of Jesus' comments on malakos persons, then they are a condemnation of man-made eunuchs or castration per se as a form of worship. So, these Greek words and these two clobber passages in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 are not refereeing to homosexuals or homosexual orientation.