

What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?

STUDY GUIDE

KEVIN DEYOUNG

Study Guide for

What Does the Bible Really Teach about
Homosexuality?

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Prepared by Pat Quinn

Study Guide for: *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*

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Introduction

What Does the Bible Teach about Everything?

Overview

The Bible is not, first of all, a book about homosexuality or any other moral issue. It is the story of God saving sinners through Jesus Christ for his glory. Therefore, before we consider the question of what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, we must see and appreciate the central plotline of the Bible: “A holy God making a way to dwell in the midst of an unholy people.” In the context of this redemptive story, DeYoung has written this “Christian book, with a narrow focus, defending a traditional view of marriage” (p. 15).¹

If Jesus thought the Scriptures were spoken by God himself (Matt. 19:4–5) and utterly unbreakable (John 10:35), it’s certainly appropriate in any confusing, complicated, or controversial matter to ask at the very outset, “What does the Bible really teach?” Whether you are prepared to agree or disagree with this book, I encourage you to keep three things open: your head, your heart, and your Bible. (p. 22)

Discussion Questions

1) The focus of the book centers on this question, “Is homosexuality a sin that must be repented of, forsaken, and forgiven, or, given the right context and commitment, can we consider same-sex sexual intimacy a blessing worth celebrating and solemnizing?” (p. 15). As you begin reading the book, what are your thoughts on this question? How have you arrived at your conclusions?

2) How does understanding what God says about homosexuality connect with the redemptive storyline of the Bible? Do you believe homosexuality is a gospel issue? Why or why not?

¹All page numbers in parentheses are to Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

3) What arguments have you read or heard legitimizing homosexual behavior and/or same-sex marriage? What do you think about these arguments?

4) Which of the three types of readers do you identify with? What do you hope to learn from this book?

Prayer

Lord, thank you that in the Bible you give us both a central saving story and clear instructions on how to live within this story. Help us open our minds and hearts to your Word and be eager to believe and live accordingly. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Part 1

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

One Man, One Woman, One Flesh

GENESIS 1-2

Overview

Until relatively recently the church has universally taught that marriage is one man and one woman in a one-flesh relationship for life. DeYoung gives five reasons that God's design for marriage requires the complementarity of one man and one woman and that homosexuality does not fit with the created order found in Genesis 1 and 2.

The meaning of marriage is more than mutual sacrifice and covenantal commitment. Marriage, by its very nature, requires complementarity. The mystical union of Christ and the church—each “part” belonging to the other but neither interchangeable—cannot be pictured in marital union without the differentiation of male and female. (p. 32)

Discussion Questions

1) Some revisionists today argue that Eve “was not a complement to Adam as much as a basic companion. The problem she remedied was aloneness not incompleteness” (p. 26). How would you respond to this idea?

2) Briefly summarize DeYoung's five “one man and one woman” arguments on pages 27–32. Which argument is weightiest to you? Why?

3) Explain how sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife is a reunion. How does this support the traditional view of marriage?

4) DeYoung writes, “It would also be wrong to think marriage can be properly defined without any reference to the offspring that should (and normally does) result from the one-flesh union of a husband and wife” (p. 30). What attitudes and beliefs about the connection between marriage and procreation have you encountered? How does Malachi 2:15 influence your thinking?

5) Using only Genesis 2:24–25, how would you respond to a professing Christian who passionately believes in the legitimacy of same-sex marriage? (If you are doing this study as a group, you could do a role-play with two people.)

Prayer

Father, give us eyes to see and hearts to appreciate the beauty of marriage as you have created it. Forgive us for forgetting that you have designed the marital union of a man and a woman to portray the relationship between Christ and the church. Help us uphold the sanctity and beauty of marriage. In Jesus’s name. Amen.

3) DeYoung believes that Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. So why does he quote from extrabiblical texts (pp. 36–37) to support his argument in this chapter? Which quote was most helpful to you?

4) Do you think homosexual sin is worse than other sins? Why or why not?

5) You may have seen pictures of Christians protesting homosexuality while holding signs that say things like “God hates fags.” How would you respond to someone who says that Genesis 19:1–14; Ezekiel 16:47–50; and Jude 7 support hostile attitudes and behaviors toward those who self-identify as gay or lesbian?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, cleanse our hearts of everything inconsistent with your holy love. Help us to see ourselves as the chief of sinners and then to speak your truth out of a humble desire for your glory and the salvation of sinners. Amen.

Taking a Strange Book Seriously

LEVITICUS 18; 20

Overview

Leviticus is a book that many people would gladly skip over, due to the preponderance of moral and ritual laws. However, this book is often appealed to by New Testament writers in their teaching about the holiness of God and the requirement of holiness in his people. The Leviticus commands about sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular are still relevant and important.

Israel was to be holy as Yahweh is holy. As a holy nation, God's people were to be different from the surrounding peoples and cultures—which entailed a radically different sexual ethic. And that meant an absolute prohibition against homosexual behavior of every kind. God's plan for sexual intimacy in the garden was one man with one woman—not close relatives, not the wife of another man, not a man and an animal, and not two men or two women. (p. 42)

Discussion Questions

1) Leviticus 19:2 says, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." How would you define *holy* or *holiness*? Why do you think God is so concerned about *sexual* holiness?

2) How is Jesus's *fulfilling* the Old Testament law different from *setting it aside*? In what ways does Jesus fulfill the Old Testament sexual laws?

3) Some would say that the prohibition against sex during a woman's menstrual period (Lev. 18:19) invalidates the whole Levitical sexual ethic, including the prohibition against homosexual activity. What would you say to this?

4) How does the sexual ethic in Leviticus relate back to what we saw about marriage in Genesis 1–2? Why is this connection important?

5) Briefly summarize in your own words DeYoung's six arguments in this chapter. How will you remember the main points?

Prayer

Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you have inspired all Scripture, including Leviticus, to teach, correct, and train us in righteousness. Help us to correctly interpret, steadfastly believe, and winsomely instruct others in living a holy life. Grant that we might live lives of sexual holiness for the glory of Christ and the building up of the church. Amen.

The Romans Road in the Wrong Direction

ROMANS 1

Overview

Romans 1 gives the most penetrating description in the Bible of the dynamics of sin and salvation. It is built around two crucial revelations: the wrath of God revealed against suppressing the truth and committing idolatry, and the righteousness of God revealed for the salvation of those who embrace the saving power of the gospel. By uncovering three dark exchanges unbelievers make, Paul brings to light the deep structure of homosexuality and witnesses to God's condemnation of it.

There is no way to “rescue” Paul from his strong condemnation of homosexual behavior. . . . The allusions to Genesis and the emphasis on the “exchange” present in same-sex sexual intimacy will not allow for any other conclusion but the traditional one: God's people ought not engage in homosexual behavior nor give approval to those who do. (p. 57)

Discussion Questions

1) Read Romans 1:18–27 and 2:1–5. Briefly explain how God's wrath operates in the present and in the future. What are some evidences of God's present wrath in our culture?

2) What are the three exchanges and resulting consequences of human depravity in Romans 1? Why do you think Paul went beyond condemning sexual sin in general (vv. 24–25) to condemning homosexual sin in particular (vv. 26–27)?

- Other

What changes would you like to see in your church's response? In your own response?

6) Why is it essential to keep Romans 1:16–17 central in our discussion of any and every sin? Who do you know that needs to experience “the power of God for salvation”?

Prayer

How we praise you, Lord, that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Each one of us needs gospel grace, no matter which sins we are prone to. Give us clear-headed theology, broken-hearted compassion, and Spirit-led wisdom as we bring the gospel to a sexually broken world. In Jesus's name. Amen.

A New Word from an Old Place

1 CORINTHIANS 6; 1 TIMOTHY 1

Overview

This chapter provides a challenging but helpful explanation of two Greek words related to homosexuality: *malakoi* (1 Cor. 6:9–10) and *arsenokoitai* (1 Cor. 6:9–10; 1 Tim. 1:8–11). Revisionists maintain that these words refer to something more narrow than consensual, adult homosexual activity, such as pederasty or prostitution. DeYoung uses principles of translation and interpretation, lexical and biblical theology, and common-sense reasoning to come to a different conclusion.

This understanding of *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* . . . fits with the consensus of modern English translations, fits with the ethics of the Old Testament, fits with the training Paul would have received as a Jewish scholar, and, most importantly, fits within the context of Paul's argument. . . . Both terms refer to men who have sex with other men, the passive and the active partners. (p. 67)

Discussion Questions

1) This chapter was more technical and, therefore, challenging. What was your experience reading this chapter? What became more clear? What questions do you still have?

2) What are your conclusions about the meanings of *malakoi* and *arsenokoikoi* from comparing the nine major English translations? Which of these influenced your reasoning?

- Whatever the revisionists say must be wrong

- Whatever DeYoung says must be right

- Other

3) What does “context is king” mean? How does DeYoung use this principle to explain the meaning of the two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoikoi*?

4) Briefly explain how Paul’s prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 and 1 Timothy 1:8–11 against homosexual behavior are based on the Levitical Holiness Code. Why is this important?

5) Why is “active homosexual partner” a better translation of *arsenokoitai* than “homosexual”? Why is “passive homosexual partner” a better translation of *malakoi* than “effeminate”?

6) Reflect on the first five chapters and write down or discuss the most compelling arguments for a traditional understanding of marriage and sexuality.

Prayer

Use Psalm 19:7–11 to pray prayers of rejoicing, repenting, and requesting.

Part 2

ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

“The Bible Hardly Ever Mentions Homosexuality”

Overview

It can be tempting to tally up numbers of verses or passages in the Bible that deal with a particular issue in order to determine the relative importance of that issue. In this kind of reckoning it is concluded that homosexuality is a relatively unimportant issue. DeYoung dismantles this reasoning and argues passionately against those advocating “agree to disagree” compromises in churches or denominations.

We cannot count same-sex behavior as an indifferent matter. Of course, homosexuality isn't the only sin in the world, nor is it the most critical one to address in many church contexts. But if 1 Corinthians 6 is right, it's not an overstatement to say that solemnizing same-sex sexual behavior runs the risk of leading people to hell. (p. 77)

Discussion Questions

1) Give a two- to three-sentence response to the following statements:

- “You Christians are obsessed with sex, especially homosexuality. Aren't you concerned about any other sins?”

- “The Bible talks about homosexuality only in a few hard-to-interpret passages.”

- “For followers of Jesus, you sure talk a lot about something he never even mentioned.”

2) Why is counting verses not the best way to determine how biblically important an issue is? Give specific examples.

3) What “third way” does DeYoung argue against? Why do you think he is so passionate about this?

4) What is “death by dialogue”? Why do you think people employ this strategy? What makes it deadly?

5) When (if ever) do you think it becomes necessary for a person to leave a church or for a church to leave a denomination over the issue of homosexuality? What is at stake in these situations?

Prayer

Our Father, thank you that your Word gives us an accurate gaze on everything in life, including our sexuality. You have said much about who we are as image bearers and how we are to live this out in righteous relationships. Grant that we might grow more and more into the image of your Son, that we might evaluate things as you do, and that we might live joyfully obedient lives with like-minded brothers and sisters. Amen.

“Not That Kind of Homosexuality”

Overview

The most common and foundational argument for same-sex behavior today is the “cultural distance” argument. This argument says that although the biblical writers were unanimous in their condemnation of homosexual behavior, they were condemning something very different from modern, committed, consensual, lifelong partnerships—i.e., predatory, exploitative, or promiscuous homosexual relationships. DeYoung gives two reasons why this view simply does not fit either the biblical or historical evidence.

Scholars of all different stripes have said the same thing: the cultural distance argument will not work. . . . There is no good reason to think from the hundreds of homosexuality-related texts found in the Greco-Roman period that the blanket rejection of homosexual behavior found in the Bible can be redeemed by postulating an impassable cultural distance between our world and the ancient world. (pp. 86–87)

Discussion Questions

1) List the different forms that the “cultural distance” argument can take. Which of these have you read or heard before? Which form sounds most convincing to you?

2) How would you use Romans 1:24–27 to argue against the idea that Paul is merely condemning insatiable sexual passion (that is, discontentment with heterosexual sexual relations) and not all homosexual behavior?

3) On page 81 DeYoung sets out a typical three-point revisionist argument. What is deficient about this argument logically and biblically? How do DeYoung’s questions in the second paragraph dismantle the faulty conclusion?

4) What is the cumulative impact of the four block quotes on pages 83–86 on the revisionist argument that the ancient world knew nothing of committed same-sex relationships or homosexual orientation? How is this significant?

5) Colossians 4:2–6 gives us a spiritual strategy for doing evangelism and apologetics. Think through or discuss the implications of this passage for dialoguing with those who would support homosexual behavior and/or marriage.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you knew exactly how to respond to each person you encountered with grace and truth. We confess we are often clumsy—either strident in proclaiming the truth or compromising in our tolerance of sin. Would you teach and empower us to “not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting . . . opponents with gentleness” (2 Tim. 2:24–25)? Give us the joy of pointing and leading sexually broken people to the same saving grace you have given us. We pray this for your glory. Amen.

“What about Gluttony and Divorce?”

Overview

The charge of hypocrisy is sometimes made against conservative Christians who teach that homosexual behavior is sinful: “Why don’t you speak out as passionately against sins like gluttony and divorce, which are much more common and accepted in your churches?” In this chapter DeYoung deals with both of these “respectable sins,” explaining in what ways the charge of hypocrisy is valid and in what ways the charge is misleading.

So, yes, there are plank-eyed Christians among us. . . . But the remedy to this negligence is not more negligence. The slow, painful cure is more biblical exposition, more active pastoral care, more consistent discipline, more Word-saturated counseling, and more prayer—for illegitimate divorce, for same-sex behavior, and for all the other sins that are more easily condoned than confronted. (p. 95)

Discussion Questions

1) What is DeYoung’s initial response to the charge of inconsistency and hypocrisy (pp. 89–90)? What would be the consequences of completely denying this charge?

2) What “respectable sins” do you think are tolerated in your church? In your life? What Scriptures speak to these sins?

3) How does DeYoung use C. S. Lewis and Scripture to deal with the charge that gluttony is a bigger problem in our churches than homosexuality? What is DeYoung’s conclusion about gluttony? What do you think about his conclusion?

4) A similar, more serious charge is made on pages 93–95 about inadequately confronting divorce in our churches. What differences between divorce and homosexuality does DeYoung point out? How does he use his experience as a pastor to answer the charge?

5) List the ways that evangelicals have been negligent in dealing with divorce and remarriage (p. 95). How would you evaluate your church on how it deals with these issues?

Prayer

Pray through the five-part “slow, painful cure” in the last paragraph of the book chapter for your local church and for other gospel-centered churches.

“The Church Is Supposed to Be a Place for Broken People”

Overview

“The church is supposed to be a place for broken people” is a wonderfully true statement, but it is not the whole truth. This idea is sometimes used to excuse what Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace”: grace without repentance, confession, or discipleship. This chapter powerfully proclaims that the church is supposed to be a place where broken people, including sexually broken people, become repentant disciples by the power of the gospel.

We cannot live like the Devil on earth and expect to meet God in heaven. This is not because God demands a certain number of holiness points in order to be saved. We are justified by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone. *And* this grace that grants us faith will invariably be a grace that causes us to change. (p. 101)

Discussion Questions

1) Describe the “new emphasis in theology” that the Christian leader on pages 97–98 espoused after shutting down his ministry to those with same-sex attraction. What are some possible reasons why he changed his theology?

2) How does 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 hold out both the *comfort* and the *call* of the gospel? What does the passage imply about repentance?

3) What is the difference between regret and repentance? What four aspects of *metanoia* does DeYoung set out on pages 98–100? Which aspect do you struggle with most in your own repentance?

4) Why is cheap grace the default mode in our lives and churches? Pick one sentence in Bonhoeffer’s quote about cheap grace (p. 100) and explain how it challenges you.

5) How do justification and sanctification work together for our glorification? What happens if we leave one out or misunderstand the relationship between the two?

6) What would you want to say to the Christian leader on pages 97–98?

Prayer

Oh, Lord, have mercy on us and save us from both legalism and license. Help us to rest in our justification, work out our sanctification, and teach others to do the same. Rescue us from cheap grace and enable us to bear fruits in keeping with repentance. We long to live out and proclaim the comfort and call of the gospel for the glory of Christ and the making of disciples. In Jesus’s name. Amen.

“You’re on the Wrong Side of History”

Overview

The accusation of being on the wrong side of history, which is meant to shame those who hold to traditional views of sexuality and marriage, is actually a nonargument based on historical fallacies and unsubstantiated claims. DeYoung uses historical and biblical arguments to free us from an unhelpful fear of progressive historians who would distract us from God’s Word.

As Christians we ought to fear being on the wrong side of the holy, apostolic, and universal church more than we fear being on the wrong side of discredited assumptions about progress and enlightenment.
(p. 108)

Discussion Questions

1) What is meant by the accusation, “You’re on the wrong side of history”? What examples of this are given in the first paragraph of page 103? What do you think motivates this accusation?

2) How does DeYoung use the concept of “Whig history” and Darwinism to argue against the accusation?

3) Briefly summarize how DeYoung corrects the following “half-truths and misinformation” about:

- Columbus

- Galileo

- Slavery

What is the cumulative effect of DeYoung’s historical survey on the accusation?

4) What evidence from Scripture and church history supports DeYoung’s statement, “To make it sound like the Word of God is plainly for slavery in the same way it is plainly against homosexual practice is biblically indefensible” (p. 107). Why is this important?

5) Paul says in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to speak the truth in love. What is the *truth* we need to speak to those who say we are on the wrong side of history? What do’s and don’ts might help us speak it in *love*?

Prayer

Thank you, Lord God, that you give us wisdom so that we might answer those who oppose us. Thank you that the weight of history and the greater weight of your Word are on our side, and we are secure. Thank you that the gospel of the glory of Christ is the final Word against all accusations and deceptions. We gladly embrace the truth that sets us free. Amen.

“It’s Not Fair”

Overview

This chapter goes deeper than rational arguments for or against homosexual behavior. It taps into gut-level questions like, “Why would God do this? Why would he give someone these desires and not allow them to be expressed?” These are fair questions, and DeYoung seeks to answer them with biblical wisdom and humble compassion.

No matter our position on this issue (or any issue), churches and pastors should not be indifferent to the cries of those who profess Christ and profess to be miserable at the same time. We should listen to our pain, but we should not think that God always says what we want him to say in the midst of our pain. The Bible has to have the last word on what is good for us and what brings glory to God. (pp. 116–17)

Discussion Questions

1) This chapter tackles the deeply personal issue of fairness. Have you ever felt that God was unfair? How did you respond? How do you typically respond to others when they accuse God of being unfair?

2) What is the street-level explanation of why so many people with same-sex attraction do not consciously choose their same-sex desires? What conclusions about causes are reached by the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association? What is the significance of their conclusions to the discussion?

3) On page 111 DeYoung says, "We cannot derive oughts from what is." What does he mean? How does he explain this affirmation?

4) How do the testimonies of Rosaria Butterfield, Ron Citlau, and Jackie Hill speak to the question of whether sexual orientation can change? What kind and degree of change can we reasonably expect?

5) The revisionist "I don't have the gift of celibacy" argument goes like this:

- Celibacy must be a *choice*.
- The church *mandates* that gays and lesbians never have sex.
- This is a *burden* too great to bear.

Summarize DeYoung's four answers to this logic. Which answer is most compelling to you?

6) How would you respond to someone whose testimony is, "I felt miserable and far from God as long as I tried to change my orientation or live a celibate life. Then I embraced my gay identity and experienced a new freedom, intimacy with God, and joy"? How might the quote from Jackie Hill's "Love Letter to a Lesbian" be helpful?

7) DeYoung says that in order to truly help those experiencing same-sex attraction find satisfying community in our churches, we must uproot "the idolatry of the nuclear family" (p. 119). Do you see evidences of this idolatry in your church? What steps could be taken to uproot it?

8) How does Revelation 19:6–8 give help and hope to us as believers, regardless of our sexual orientation or marital status? How will you pursue this ultimate joy and help others to do the same?

Prayer

Use Revelation 19:6–8 to pray prayers of rejoicing, repenting, and requesting.

4) What is your reaction to the raging debates about gender, sexuality, and marriage today? Why won't these debates go away anytime soon?

5) Summarize DeYoung's passionate plea to the contemporary evangelical church in this chapter. What parts do you especially resonate with? Why?

6) What verse or short passage best captures for you the full reality of God's holy love for sinners? How does this verse orient you toward a life of Christlike love? How will you pursue this vision of love in your church?

Prayer

Father, we acknowledge and affirm that you are a God of holy love. We praise you that the Bible was written for us so that we might not sin—but also to point us to the only advocate and sacrifice for sinners (1 John 2:1–2). Grant that we might hear and believe and rejoice in and live out and teach others the word Jesus spoke to the woman caught in adultery: “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

Conclusion

Walking with God and Walking with Each Other in Truth and Grace

Overview

In this powerful conclusion DeYoung appeals to head and heart with both grace and truth. He reminds us that the moral logic of monogamy, the integrity of sexual ethics, the authority of the Bible, and the grand narrative of Scripture are all at stake in this debate. Fittingly and compellingly he ends by pointing us to the supreme glory of Jesus Christ: the gift of radical grace and the call to radical discipleship.

Jesus was all grace and all truth all the time. . . . He gives everything to us and he demands everything from us. He died for our sakes, and then told us we had to die for his. (p. 135)

Discussion Questions

1) Briefly explain how each of these is at stake in the debate:

- The moral logic of monogamy

- The integrity of sexual ethics

- The authority of the Bible

- The grand narrative of Scripture

2) What is liberalism? What problems do you see with it? How does it contribute to the revisionist view of sexuality and marriage?

3) In the last section of this chapter DeYoung expounds on John 1:14 to exalt the glory of Jesus Christ. What is your honest response to Jesus after reading this?

4) Look over the table of contents. What big ideas from this book do you want to hold on to? What will you do with them? Who will you pray for or talk to?

Prayer

End with prayer about what you have learned from this book. How has God spoken to you? What will “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6) look like as you seek to respond to what you learned?