

From JESUS RODE A DONKEY by Linda Seger

Chapter Five

Homosexuals: Civil Rights? Civil Unions?

“The Lord said, “who hath made man’s mouth?
Or who maketh the dumb or deaf or the seeing or the blind?
Have not I the Lord?” ... Exodus 4:11

There are millions of homosexuals in the United States of America. Their presence is causing a lot of problems in our society, mainly because some Americans don’t want them here. They don’t want them near their children, or as their neighbors, or as their friends. They don’t want them falling in love, having sex, adopting children, or living together. They don’t want them discussing their dreams, desires, or relationships, asking for rights, or voting for legislators who will make their lives better. What are we to do about “those people”?

A Christian friend of mine told me a few years ago that children are hard-wired to need a mother and a father, so that traditional nuclear marriage is very important for raising children. I expect this is true in the United States, although many cultures raise their children through a community made up of mother, aunts, grandmothers, and sometimes the entire village.

If we had our wishes, many of us would agree that it would be a good idea for children to be raised with a loving mother and a loving father. But this is not realistic. Millions of children are raised in one-parent families, either because the mother isn’t married, or because of divorce or death of the spouse. Many are raised by relatives; others by homosexual couples. Research has shown that a nontraditional family is no guarantee of failure. Nor is a traditional family a guarantee of wonderful children. We all know children raised in dysfunctional families, with an unloving father and mother. It is a fairy-tale expectation to think that we can find some ideal, correct family dynamic throughout our society. It is impossible to legislate that every child has to have a mother and a father and live in a loving nuclear family.

The definition of family has changed throughout our history. Many people see a family as a bond between or among people. This might be two married people without children (such as my husband and I), or married with children, or unmarried with children, or unmarried but living together, or a group of people living communally.

Similarly, the definition of marriage has changed and expanded. It used to be taken for granted that marriage meant children, and there was tremendous pressure put upon a couple without children to fulfill their obligation and have babies. If they didn't have children, they were considered "selfish" or "different" and therefore "wrong." Some people believe that their own choices and the validity of their own marriages are called into question if individuals are all free to go their own way, to find their own love and bliss, whether through being a family with no children, or a same-sex family, or a commune. These people consider those choices dangerous, thinking that too much difference in our society could bring about chaos and a loss of stability. Although there already is plenty of chaos and instability in our society, most of it doesn't seem to come from people living their lives differently than the conventional model.

From various polls, it appears most Americans do not want a constitutional amendment describing what marriage is, although conservative Republicans are still trying to pass one. If they succeed, it would be the second time in our history that the Constitution was amended to legislate individual morality. The first time was the Eighteenth Amendment, which established Prohibition, and that was a failure.

Like abortion, same-sex marriage is a very divisive issue. Most Americans agree that long-term same-sex relationships should have rights that are equal, or near-equal, to those of any married couple. Without these laws, same-sex couples can't rightfully make medical decisions for each other. Even if they've been together for decades, they're not allowed to visit each other in the hospital if one of their parents forbids it. If one is dying, the other is not allowed to hold the hand of the dying partner, because the hospitals don't consider them "family." Instead of bringing a family together at a time of tragedy, the hospital has the right to keep people apart.

Without legal protection, same-sex couples can't inherit from each other. Even if their wills are set up to give everything to the partner, the wills can be broken by a parent.

These couples aren't eligible for each other's Social Security benefits, even if they've lived together for longer than most married couples.

Gay couples don't have the same rights to health care or shared pension plans that heterosexual couples have. Some school districts don't give the same opportunity to gay teachers that they give to straight teachers.

Many states and cities and corporations have recognized that the current laws are unfair and have incorporated same-sex benefits into their laws. Even religiously conservative Colorado Springs had same-sex benefits for people working for the city, until the new Republican mayor came in and immediately took them away. When one wealthy person volunteered to pay same-sex benefits to all long-term gay couples, the city refused. This has caused suffering for many people.

Homosexuality Is Legal

Sodomy, whether committed by a homosexual male or a heterosexual male, is legal in the United States. The last law against sodomy was overruled by the Supreme Court in 2003.¹ Whether a heterosexual or a homosexual, a man can legally have sex in a way that does not lead to the procreation of children. Since women cannot commit sodomy, whatever lesbians do has never been considered illegal in the United States.

Most sexual acts, whether between homosexuals or heterosexuals, are also legal in the United States, provided they're between consenting adults and usually provided they do not harm others. Democratic countries have generally not been in the habit of looking in the neighbors' bedroom windows to see what they're doing, and then reporting them. Most homosexuals are not promoting their lifestyle or their sexual practices—nor would it do much good. We don't "catch" homosexuality by being near them, and if we are hard-wired as heterosexuals, any sign they put up that says, "Become a homosexual!" won't be very effective.

Homosexuals don't spend all their time involved in homosexual activities. Their lives are about more than just sex. Besides their sexual practices, which they may, or may not, engage in more than heterosexuals, they also take care of children, work, do laundry, watch television, cook, and go to movies, art galleries, and the ballet. When heterosexual people think of homosexuals, they often think only about how much sex gay people are having and how they're doing it, rather than seeing the whole person.

Homosexuality as Identity

It is understandable that many people would have some trouble with the idea of homosexuality. There is deep-seated homophobia within many people. Particularly for heterosexual males, the thought of homosexual relationships is repellent. It seems unnatural to them, and, of course, it is unnatural for most of them. Some of this is based on fear—will a homosexual make a pass at them? Will they be raped by a gay man? There is also fear at the heart of racism and fear at the heart of sexism. Many fear people of another faith or another religion, which has led to anti-Semitic, anti-Islam, and anti-Christian (or anti-Conservative Christian or anti-Liberal Christian) feelings. This fear leads some people to want to forbid any activities they dislike, don't understand, or wouldn't do themselves.

I notice this fear far more in men than in women. I have talked to many heterosexual men who may be tolerant, and who may even be friends with homosexual men, but are emotionally repulsed by the thought of what gay men do. There is something deep-seated about this response, which goes far beyond any belief that Scripture says it's wrong. Some might say this is a natural revulsion to what is offensive to God, but I don't think so. It seems to simply be homophobia, and the reaction I hear from men is much the same as the reaction of some children who learn about sex for the first time. It's the "icky" factor, which contains both disgust and fear, and sometimes fascination.

I don't see this revulsion among women, even women who might believe that homosexuality is morally wrong. When I've talked to heterosexual women about lesbians, they often say, "Well, it's their business" or "I really don't care what women do in the bedroom" or "I guess they're just more attracted to women than men." Some women add, "Considering some of the men I've met, I can understand!" Even those who don't agree with the behavior seem to take it in stride. Some heterosexual men also are not at all repulsed by lesbian sex. In fact, they find it fascinating, and some find it even "chic" to think of women together.

Forbidding homosexuality is not a viable choice. It is estimated that between 3 percent and 10 percent of the population is homosexual.² That means millions of

Americans, living in this democracy, and hoping for equal rights, have a sexual orientation or a lifestyle that millions of other Americans don't understand.

Although some Christians, such as Focus on the Family, have programs that try to convert homosexuals to a heterosexual lifestyle, there is no proof this works for most people. Those who are bisexual may have a better chance of making choices, but others are not capable of changing. It's simply who they are. One of my lesbian friends said, "Since our society promotes heterosexuality and vilifies homosexuality, if someone could have made us straight, we would be straight. We didn't choose to be homosexuals in a society that doesn't accept us."

Some years ago, I asked a gay friend to explain whether he had ever been attracted to a woman. He told me he believed that our sexual responses are on a continuum. There are some people who are on one end, such as he was. He said he is a "totally gay man." He had never been attracted to women, although he could be friends with them. Other people seem to be totally heterosexual (think James Bond!), always attracted to someone from the opposite sex, and never attracted to someone of the same sex. For neither of these groups is there any choice.

Others fall somewhere in between. They might be people who had homosexual feelings at times, perhaps during puberty, but chose not to pursue them and were happy heterosexuals as adults. Others married, and realized they were deeply unhappy because they were gay, and had not been willing to admit it. They were tired of living a lie, and found that only by choosing who they truly were could they be authentic people. Others were bisexual and found they could choose. At different times in their lives, they pursued relationships with the opposite sex. At other times, they chose someone from the same sex. For some, their time pursuing homosexual relationships filled them with a deep sense of guilt and estrangement. For others, it brought a sense of freedom and even stability if they fell in love. For some bisexuals, the choice of partners depended on their attraction. They found the spirit and personality of the person more compelling than the gender.

For many homosexuals, denying their attraction means denying their integrity and authenticity as human beings. Pretending to be someone they are not seems to them to be a spiritual offense. Some of them have told me that after much struggle, they came to

believe that God made them that way. Just as some people are born blind or deaf, they were born as homosexuals.

We don't know why some people are homosexuals. The Lord says that we are not to question why we are made a certain way. In Exodus 4:11, the Lord said, "Who makes a person dumb or deaf, gives sight or makes blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?" In Isaiah, the Lord says, "Does the clay say to its potter, 'What are you doing? Your work has no hands! . . . It is I who made the earth and I created human beings on it.'" ³ Romans says, "Something that was made, can it say to its maker: why did you make me this shape? A potter surely has the right over his clay to make out of the same lump either a pot for special use or one for ordinary use."⁴

Why are some people created as gay, and others as straight? Why do some report they have no attraction to the opposite sex, and never have? Why do some say they knew, from an early age, that they were different, and wondered why God had created them that way? Is it possible God made them this way for a reason? Or are they the rejects? If they're rejects, why is God making junk?

There are heterosexuals who accept homosexuals provided they're not practicing homosexuals. In this view, as many as 10 percent of the population should never allow themselves to be intimate, never love and commit to one other person, never experience the joys of sexuality, never accept their true identity, and never find the fulfillment others find with another human, just because they were born "different."

The Scriptural Basis Against Homosexuality

Many Christians are unclear what to think about this difficult subject. Others say the Bible is very clear about homosexuality and therefore they feel they must do something about it. There are Scriptural verses that seem to be against homosexuality, and there are some that seem to take no stand. There are still others that seem to support loving bonds, even between two people of the same sex.

What does Jesus have to say about homosexuality? Nothing. What does Jesus have to say about same-sex marriages? Nothing. What does Paul have to say about same-sex marriages? Nothing. There is no mention of homosexuality in the Ten Commandments. No prophet discusses it. It's not found in the Gospels, although it certainly existed in Biblical times. There is no mention anywhere in the Bible of

committed homosexual relationships. There is no mention of lesbianism. There are, however, verses referring to homosexual acts between men that can be found in both the Old and New Testament.

The lack of verses leads both conservatives and liberals to interpret the Biblical stance about homosexual relationships in the light of other verses. More conservative Christians will interpret the stance of Jesus and Paul as being pro-marriage, since they mention the bonds between husband and wife, thereby implying they are for heterosexual marriage and against homosexual unions. To do this, these Christians have to overlook the fact that neither Jesus nor Paul was ever married.

Liberals look at other verses about love and marriage and see the Bible as affirming loving and committed relationships, even when unconventional.

During the course of writing this book, I have read innumerable interpretations of both sides of the issue. Personally, I am not convinced by either stance. The conservatives, such as Focus on the Family, have to interpret a number of verses out of context, or by reading into the Bible and saying that something is “Gospel Truth” when it isn’t. Their interpretations don’t look at the overall historical context of the time, not do they involve much deep study about the origins of certain words used in the Bible. More liberal interpreters are more apt to look at the specific words, and how they were used in Biblical times, and at the context of the times, but they still can find no proof that the Bible is in favor of homosexuals. They tend to make sweeping generalizations, although they are more apt to admit they are still struggling with the issues. What seems so clear to people of both sides always demands some interpretation.

Personally, I don’t believe there are clear Biblical answers about this. I do believe it is worth struggling with, however, and that there are some spiritual answers conservative and moderate and liberal Christians can agree on.

What does the Bible say about homosexuality? The texts most often cited (which I will quote in full later) are Genesis 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1, I Corinthians 6, and I Timothy 1:10. Out of the entire Bible, there are fewer than ten verses about this subject. Most of these are ambiguous, and some don’t even mention homosexuality specifically, but talk in general about degrading sexual practices. Compare these to the dozens, or hundreds, of verses about money, about oppression, about how a king should

rule, about incest, about hypocrisy, about quarreling. In fact, if you look up the word “homosexual” in a concordance, chances are you’ll only find one verse—I Corinthians 6:9. Because I was writing *Jesus Rode a Donkey*, I also checked to see how many references there are to donkeys—about 200. There has been an unbalanced amount of discussion about what people think is in the Bible, but isn’t.

The Hebrew Scriptures

When Christians try to understand the meaning of certain Biblical texts, they take various approaches. I once asked a fundamentalist what she thought about homosexuality and she answered, “I don’t know. I have to ask my minister.” Fundamentalists usually will turn to the authority of the Bible or the preacher to learn what a proper response should be. They will take the Bible literally, at face value. If there are contradictions, they try to square them up in some way, which sometimes works and sometimes doesn’t. They generally will not study the context or the derivation of the word or put it into an overall Biblical theology.

Others, however, will study the text. They will do this by looking at the original meaning of the word and then looking at the context of the times. Although many think liberals tend to be too contextual in their analysis and conservatives tend to be too literal, every Christian picks and chooses verses to create an interpretation, particularly when the interpretation is ambiguous. None of us is perfect in our interpretation.

Focus on the Family begins its analysis of homosexuality by looking at Genesis 1 and 2, which define us as male and female, created in the image of God. We are asked to be fruitful and multiply. The organization’s reasoning says that because we are made as male and female, we are asked to have sexual relations with each other and to have children to propagate the human race. Homosexuals don’t procreate; therefore, homosexuals are not fulfilling the natural order and the command of creation. Genesis 1 and 2 say nothing about other types of relationships that don’t procreate but are recognized in the Bible—married without children, friendships, being single, being celibate—but yet we don’t condemn these.

In a recent panel discussion about gay marriage between members of Focus on the Family and proponents of gay marriage, Focus on the Family spokesperson Glenn Stanton said marriage was the “biggest something” in God’s plan, and that we are called

to have sexual relationships between a man and a woman and called to be fruitful and multiply. He has five children. I can understand why he would be proud of following this command. However, I have no children, and neither do many of my friends. My ninety-year-old uncle, who married for the third time in 2004, is not expecting to have any with his beautiful eighty-something wife. If we all thought marriage was solely for procreation, it would deny the loving bonds many of us have with our spouses, whether we have children or not. If we take this argument to its logical conclusion, we can see that neither Jesus nor Paul were following God's commandment.

Most churches recognize that marriage is not just for procreation. The Catholic Church marries those who are infertile, and those who are past childbearing age. The Anglican Church, at the Ninth Lambeth Conference in 1958, passed a resolution that says "sexual intercourse is not by any means the only language of earthly love . . . it is a giving and receiving in the unity of two free spirits which is in itself good . . . Therefore it is utterly wrong to say that . . . such intercourse ought not be engaged in except with the willing intention of children."⁵ If we interpret sexuality as being purely for procreation, it leads to the overpopulation that we now have, and which most Christians are doing little to "fix," either environmentally or socially.

Stanton also said "Adam wasn't complete without Eve."⁶ Is this really how we experience our identity—only when we're in partnership are we complete? Of course, Adam and Eve needed each other to have children, but that doesn't say anything about our completion as human beings, in and of ourselves. Are we to believe that God did not make us complete in ourselves; that we cannot be complete human beings before God as widows and widowers, as nuns, priests, as single people? Although these Genesis verses are cited in discussions about homosexuality, they really say nothing about the issue. The first reference to homosexuality occurs in the story of Lot found in Genesis 19. When angels came to Lot's town of Sodom, Lot welcomed them to his home. The men of the town gathered outside his home and asked him to give them the angels so they could "know" them, which is usually interpreted as having sexual relations with them. Lot didn't want to be inhospitable by throwing out the angels, so he offered his two daughters as a consolation prize. The Bible says nothing about whether his behavior toward his daughters was right or wrong, but the angels intervened, telling Lot that God was going

to destroy Sodom and that he should take his family and escape. Lot and his daughters made it to a cave in the mountains, although the daughters' fiancés refused to leave. The daughters then made their father drunk, had sex with him, and got pregnant, presumably in order to preserve the family line. It is a strange justification for incest, but it's one more example of all the bad sex surrounding the story of Lot and his family.

If we look more closely at this passage, Lot doesn't mention their sexual behavior, but instead tells these men not to insult his guests. These men were seeking to violate the sanctuary of his roof.⁷ Gray Temple writes that "Traditional Jewish interpretations of that chapter grasped the principle better than we do: the Sodomites were first and foremost inhospitable; they thought it good sport to humiliate foreign guests."⁸

Ezekiel 16:49–50 says that God destroyed Sodom (and Gomorrah) for their sins of arrogance, decadence, and complacency. ("Behold, this was the iniquity of the sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.") The Book of Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom (both found in the Catholic Bible but not in the Protestant Bible) also mention pride as the sin of Sodom, because the Sodomites did not help the poor and the needy. Jesus implied that the sin of Sodom was inhospitality, which was why it was destroyed.⁹

The sins of Sodom were many. The story in Genesis 19 is not about any kind of normal sexual behavior; it is about gang rape. Whether performed by homosexuals or heterosexuals, this does not establish any kind of normative sexuality. Just as we wouldn't turn to these stories to tell us about heterosexual love, we have no reason to turn to them to understand homosexual love. Since other books of the Bible interpret this story and never mention homosexuality, the story seems to be about gang rape, incest, inhospitality, and degradation.

The strongest language about homosexuality comes from Leviticus 18 and 20, which are part of the section of Leviticus called the Holiness Code or Holiness Laws. The verses usually cited are from Lev. 18:22, which says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman: it is an abomination," and from Lev. 20, which says, "If a man lies with a

male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.”

This seems to be very clear—homosexuality is wrong! In fact, it seems to say this is so wrong that all homosexuals should be executed. If we look at other laws within this section of Leviticus, we can see that people who commit other abominations also are to be put to death: children who curse their parents,¹⁰ people who worship idols,¹¹ adulterers,¹² and those who practice bestiality.¹³

In addition to these laws, there are a number of other laws in Leviticus forbidding certain practices, such as the inbreeding of cattle, sowing fields with two kinds of seed, wearing garments made of two different materials, and harvesting fruit trees in under five years. Round haircuts and tattoos are forbidden. Having sexual relations during a woman’s menstrual cycle is forbidden.

One can take these verses at face value. Even then, we pick and choose which verses we’ll follow, because few of us believe that adulterers should be put to death, partly because a number of well-known Christians would now be dead. Few Christians would suggest we kill our children if they curse us (although some might want to!), and most of us wear garments made of different fabrics.

So if we don’t follow the letter of the law of most of these codes, how can we interpret them? Theologians look carefully at the historical context and the specific words to understand why these laws were written and why these practices were an abomination to God.

The Ancient Holiness Codes

The Holiness Codes were established when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, where Canaanites worshipped the god Molech. God was establishing a new nation within a country where other laws and practices prevailed. Peter Gomes, a minister at The Memorial Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard College, and a gay Republican, analyzes these passages.

He says these rules were designed for “nation building; their setting is the entry into a promised but very foreign land. These are fundamental laws for the formation of a frontier community.”¹⁴ These laws were used for “cultural identity, protection, and procreation.”¹⁵ Any behavior that did not lead to populating the country was outlawed.

Homosexual behavior did not lead to procreation. In a frontier community, it was imperative that there be many children born, to be raised up to create a new nation. The word “abomination” is a very strong word. In Leviticus, abomination, or *toyevah*, has more to do with disgust and revulsion than with morality. It is against what the Gentiles do, and therefore is ritually impure, much like eating pork.¹⁶

Dr. Gary Rendberg, who holds the Endowed Chair in Jewish History at Rutgers University, and is an expert in the Bible and ancient Semitic languages, says, “There is no doubt in my mind that homosexuality is totally forbidden in these passages. However, these passages reflect the mores of 3,000 years ago. I do keep some of these laws. I still observe the Sabbath, I still keep kosher, but I don’t stone my children if they curse me, and I don’t own slaves. What always strikes me as a Jew looking at Christian opposition to homosexuality, [is] if Christians were so interested in upholding the laws of the Torah, why aren’t Christians observing the dietary laws, and Sabbath on the seventh day? [There are] all sorts of ritual laws Christians won’t observe, so why are they so concerned about this one? I don’t think we should stone someone for collecting wood on the Sabbath. I don’t believe that men should inherit and not women, unless there are no women in the family.”¹⁷

We don’t follow most of the other Holiness Codes set forth in Leviticus that tell us how to act. Although these Codes include prohibitions that we still follow—against rape, incest, adultery, necrophilia, and bestiality—they also prohibit celibacy, nudity, and birth control. Yet, we don’t follow most of the Codes. Men trim their beards, even though Leviticus tells them not to. Women wear male clothing, such as jeans and slacks, even though they’re told not to.¹⁸ We ignore certain passages, deciding they no longer apply, and follow others. In ignoring certain passages, we don’t dig deeper into why there are certain prohibitions. What was the context of the day that relates to mixing fibers? What kind of sexuality was prohibited, and why?

There are many interpretations of these Codes. There are some scholars who say homosexuality is against the established hierarchy between men and women because sexual relations between men reduce one of the males to a passive position. In the context of the times, it was important to keep the hierarchy intact.

Sexuality as Power

To better understand these passages, some scholars look at how sexual relationships functioned in earlier societies. Until 1869, the idea of homosexuality and heterosexuality did not exist as we think of it today. Sexuality was defined as power relationships, and what was clearly “wrong” was for someone to be used or manipulated by a stronger person.

Many sources emphasized that sex was about power and the natural hierarchy. For men to engage in homosexual practices meant one of the two men had to be in the weak, passive position. This was not “manly” and was an affront to male identity. Sometimes the passive partner was a young boy, who was often abused by an older man for his own sexual pleasure. This was a fairly common practice in Greece, Rome, and Canaan. The Israelites had laws against it for several reasons. First of all, there was an imbalance of power and lack of mutuality in these relationships. Second, the Jews were new to the land of Canaan. They were forming a cultural identity that was different from, and even in opposition to, the identity of Canaanites. Since homosexuality was more a common practice in Canaan, the Jews differentiated themselves from the Canaanites’ sexual practices, as well as from their practices of idolatry, their dietary laws, and so on.

Other scholars look at how sexual identity is defined. “The human race used to divide itself into gender identities of ‘strong’ and ‘weak, ‘ not ‘queer’ and straight.”¹⁹ In the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Sumer, Babylon, and throughout the eastern Mediterranean, there were no words for homosexuality, homosexual, heterosexuality, or heterosexual.²⁰ They had specific words for specific acts, but not general words for general concepts.²¹ The crime was not homosexuality. It was always something else²²

Positive Verses About Same-Sex Orientation

Notice, in the Hebrew Scriptures, that nothing is said about lesbians. If one believes these verses are adamantly against homosexuals, it might be thought that lesbians are not mentioned because none existed during that time. But there clearly were lesbians at that time. They can be found in the erotic poetry of Sappho of the island of Lesbos as well as in various paintings. Some interpret these verses and believe lesbianism is implied by the prohibitions against male sexual behavior. But there is absolutely nothing in any of these verses suggesting this.

Those who believe that the Bible does not condemn same-sex relationships look to the story of David and Jonathan from I Samuel 18–20 and 2 Samuel 1. The Bible says Jonathan “loved him [David] like his very self.”²³ “They made a covenant with each other.”²⁴ “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”²⁵ David and Jonathan took great delight in each other and kissed each other.²⁶ David says to Jonathan, “Greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”²⁷

Any discussion and interpretation of these passage leads to huge debates and great fervor on either side. I was told by one scholar I consulted to leave this passage alone, because it will just bring about fire and brimstone. But if we are to struggle with other Hebrew Scriptures passages related to this subject, we definitely have to struggle with this one.

Focus on the Family sees this as a strong friendship, and says that revisionists try to interpret it as having a sexual component and that this is “morally wrong.” However, there is nothing to revise here. There is only interpretation. What are we to make of one man recognizing that his love for another man surpasses his love for women? We don’t know what this means in its Biblical context. We do know this is what a homosexual says to another homosexual. A Focus on the Family pamphlet says that these words can often be said between close friends, which may be true. But in the case of David and Jonathan, it’s impossible to know what is meant. None of us have peered into the tent to see what David and Jonathan were doing to express their love for each other. We haven’t followed them up to the hillside to see what they were doing. We can interpret, but it’s impossible to know which interpretation is accurate.

Focus on the Family says there is no sexual meaning in the original Hebrew words for “being fond of” or “joy of the heart.” Certainly the connotation of words needs to be taken into consideration when forming an interpretation. The organization sees the passage as being about deep friendship. Since the verses do not say David and Jonathan became one flesh, as in marriage, Focus on the Family comes to the conclusion that David and Jonathan didn’t have a sexual relationship. But you can’t create an interpretation through a negative. We can only interpret from what is here, and there is

nothing said, one way or another, about what exactly transpired between them. We do know they kissed each other. Kisses are exchanged in friendship, and they are exchanged in sexual relationships. Nothing is said about what kind of kiss this was. We do know that the Bible makes no condemnation of the covenant they made between them, the kisses they exchanged, or the fact that they loved each other more than they loved someone of the opposite sex.

We do know that both Jonathan and David were married to women, and David had other sexual relationships with women besides with his wife. But we also know that his love for Jonathan surpassed these other relationships.

However we interpret these passages—as being about same-sex homosexual love, or about same-sex friendship that is greater than heterosexual love—we know that the Bible does not condemn this same-sex relationship. The Bible recognizes the strength of this loving bond between two people of the same sex.

The New Testament

What about the New Testament passages? As Christians, some would say we need to take them even more seriously. As with the Hebrew Scriptures, there are only a few passages mentioning homosexual acts.

I Timothy has a list of sins: “Those who kill their father or mother, or murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious Gospel.”

Notice, nothing specifically here is said about homosexuals, and certainly nothing here is said about lesbians, although the word “sodomites” is thought to be referring to homosexuals (not recognizing that some heterosexuals also commit sodomy and lesbians are unable to commit sodomy). However, the Greek word for “sodomites” does not clearly refer to homosexuals. It’s a rare term, and is thought to refer to a man who uses male prostitutes or a man who has sex with boys.²⁸ The word in the original text for “male prostitutes” means “soft.” As Catherine Griffith writes in an article on the Bible and same-sex relationships: “Biblical scholars say that the word in ancient texts referred to luxurious clothing, rich and delicate food, a gentle breeze, or was used to condemn immorality and faults associated with effeminacy, such as being weak, lazy, lustful,

decadent, or cowardly. It had no relation to the sex of a man's preferred sexual partner, but more to a kind of soft decadence."²⁹

In I Corinthians 6, Paul has a similar list: fornicators, idolators, adulterers, male prostitutes (although nothing is said about female prostitutes), sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers, etc. In the King James version, the list includes "the effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind, and extortioners."³⁰

For male prostitutes, Paul uses the word *malakoi* (from the original Greek) or *arsenokoitai*, which is translated as "sodomites." *Malakoi* means "soft, overripe, or squishy." It may not even refer to male sexual behavior at all, but to one who was "soft" on self-control.³¹ The term *arsenokoitai* is only used twice in the New Testament and never in the Hebrew Scriptures, although the translation uses the same word as is used in Leviticus—sodomites. There is no clear translation of this word, although it was used later by Hippolytus to refer to a man who sleeps with boys. Author Robin Scroggs, in *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, suggests it might refer to "a young man who inveigles himself into the erotic affections of an elderly man in order to get included in his will and abscond with his estate."³²

In Romans 1:18–32, Paul talks about sexual degradations and unnatural acts, saying "Their women exchanged natural intercourse (*chresis*) for unnatural (*para physin*) . . . and in the same way also the men, giving up natural (*physiken*) intercourse (*chresis*) with women, were consumed (*exekauthesan*) with passion (*orexis*) for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error."³³

In this chapter, Paul uses the word *chresis*, which is sometimes translated as "intercourse," though it actually is a term meaning "usage" that "referred primarily to food and sex."³⁴ It was not a term that implied relationship or mutuality; it was about exploiting another for one's own purposes. Paul, and many of us, oppose one person using another. Notice, also, that there is nothing said about sexual behavior between two females.

Looking carefully at this passage, one can understand how it got misinterpreted, because we presume that women's "unnatural" acts means unnatural acts with each other. But a more careful reading of this passage shows that nothing is said about women with

women; it only mentions women exchanging natural relations for those that are unnatural.

The focus is on the word “unnatural.” According to Paul, “nature” has more to do with what is expected or accepted rather than that which is morally wrong. What were women’s unnatural acts? For a woman to be aggressive in sex was unnatural. For a woman to be flirtatious, or to mount the man, was unnatural.³⁵

Homosexuality was not as natural among Jews as it was among Greeks and Romans. What was wrong, according to the Jewish code, was the domination of one sexual partner by another, in many cases men exploiting boys, or men put in a weaker position. The Jews objected to pedophilia, but the objects were never girls; they were upper-class boys subjected to the humiliation of someone in power using them.³⁶

Sexuality was also unnatural if men were swept away by passion and lost their rationality. Their lust showed their weakness. Moderation was the best standard. The word for “unnatural” is used in this section to discuss other issues that are not “natural,” but not morally wrong. It’s the same word used by Paul in 11:24 to clarify God’s unnatural action when he “engrafted Gentiles onto the Jewish olive tree.” I Corinthians 11:2–16 says long hair for women and short hair for men are natural, so if a woman has short hair (like me), it is unnatural but (I hope) not morally wrong. Unnatural sex might be unequal sex, since the cultural norm of the Christian era meant one partner was active and one passive, so anything but the missionary position would be considered unnatural. (For many years, some Christians believed that was true. Perhaps some still do!)

The more important thing about this chapter from Corinthians is the way Paul phrases his argument. Paul focuses on many ways we dishonor God—through passions out of control, by “injustice, rottenness, greed and malice . . . envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite,” libeling, slandering, rudeness, arrogance, boastfulness; by being “enterprising in evil, rebellious to parents, without brains, honor, love, or pity.” According to Paul, people guilty of any of these things deserve to die. Considering how many different sins are given, that means us too!

Then, just as Paul makes sure we’re all included in his long list of sins, he adds one more—judgment. “It is yourself that you condemn when you judge others, since you

behave in the same way as those you are condemning. . . .do you think you will escape God's condemnation."³⁷

Paul makes two important points with this argument. First, he lets readers know they should not judge, because they do the same thing. He's not concerned about prohibiting lustful homosexuality, which is just a symptom of a larger problem. Instead, he prohibits judgment. This same idea is repeated in many Bible verses—"Judge not," "Do not judge that you be not judged," "There is only one Lawgiver and one judge."³⁸ The "same ways" refers not to homosexuality, but rather to ingratitude to God and intemperate passions such as greed and lust.

Paul then finishes the letter to the Romans by admonishing his readers not to pass judgment on others, "but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. I know and am persuaded through the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean." These verses from Romans are not a description of a healthy sexual relationship, but of sex that uses another person.

Paul saw the problem of homosexuality as being about lust, avarice, passions out of control. Most of us would agree. When we read about the bathhouses of San Francisco, which had a great deal to do with the AIDS epidemic, we can recognize that such behavior is wrong, and leads to great harm to individuals and society. When we read about, or take part in, any sexual behavior that uses another person, we know what sexual behavior that's degrading can do to the human spirit.

If we look carefully at all of these passages, we notice that out of ten references, most are not about homosexuality. Some that are used by various groups to show the anti-homosexuality of the Bible are actually about marriage, such as Genesis 1 and 2. Most of the other ones are in a list of degrading sexual behavior, such as gang rape, that would be condemned whether it's done by heterosexuals or homosexuals. Probably most of us can agree there are degrading and abusive sexual acts—rape, incest, pedophilia, and sex trafficking, where women are sold into prostitution. Yet we don't condemn heterosexuality because some of it is degrading.

Other passages, such as the one in Romans, are actually an argument that ends up condemning the act of being judgmental. It seems that Leviticus 18 and 20 are the only

two passages that seem fairly blatant in their condemnation, and even these need to be read in the context of the time. These passages do not clearly state whether all homosexual behavior is condemned, or only that which is degrading. To interpret these passages as condemning all homosexual behavior means we have to decide that these passages say something not clearly stated.

Notice also that none of these passages are about homosexual identity. The idea of homosexual identity was foreign to those in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Almost all of these verses refer to the “debauched pagan expression” of homosexuality.³⁹ If you know homosexuals in long-term loving relationships, you know from your experience that these lists of immoral behaviors are not referring to them. The Rt. Rev. Gray Temple says in *Gay Unions*, “Those who insist that our gay sisters and brothers in the church are . . . impure or debased, or that they are uniquely prone to the actual sins that Paul just described, have simply not bothered to get to know their fellow Christians.”⁴⁰

A Consistent Christian Response to Homosexuality

Regardless of the interpretation of these various passages, there is one consistent response that comes from the churches—to love and respect the Other. We see this in the way Jesus related to women, to prostitutes, to tax collectors, to those who were different and on the fringes of society. Focus on the Family calls it a response of “compassionate love, gentle truth and authentic humility.”⁴¹ “Loving someone means . . . caring for them and extending the love of Christ.”⁴² For Focus on the Family, this means loving them whether or not they change and become heterosexuals. They add, it also means speaking the truth. And the truth varies among Christians and particular denominations. With most churches, hate crimes are not acceptable Christian behavior. Humiliation and rejection are not acceptable responses to homosexuals.

Colorado Springs, the center of conservative Christianity, is also the number two city in Colorado for hate crimes. Many of these crimes are against homosexuals. Gays have often found this city to be inhospitable to them because there is so much anti-gay rhetoric from the churches. Regardless of Biblical interpretations, it would be good for Christians to make their love better known than their condemnation.

Other churches take various stances on homosexuality. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America receives into membership all who profess faith in Christ, regardless of sexual orientation.⁴³ The American Presbyterian Church welcomes gays and lesbians as members, although as in the Lutheran Church, they cannot be elected to church office as an elder, a deacon, or a minister.⁴⁴

Other churches, such as the United Church of Christ, the Metropolitan Church, and the Episcopal Church, do ordain gays. The Episcopal Church, amidst great controversy, now has an openly gay bishop who is in a long-term gay relationship. The Methodist Church had defrocked an openly gay lesbian minister, but changed its vote and restored her ministry credentials.⁴⁵]

Some churches perform gay marriages. The Metropolitan Community Churches have an explicit ministry to gays. The United Church of Christ and the Society of Friends decide, on an individual basis within each church, whether they will perform gay marriages.

Most, and perhaps all, Christian churches do ordain gay men and women, as long as the church does not know that they're gay. Notice the Catholic scandal about child abuse by priests. It almost always involves boys rather than girls. We are naive if we think churches do not have gay ministers and priests. From my own limited experience, I have known at least three women married to Protestant ministers who later learned their husbands were gay. The men hoped a marriage would, somehow, "cure" them, and then realized they were not living an authentic life and could no longer hide their sexual orientation. Divorce, and usually leaving the church, followed soon after.

From my years attending an interdenominational seminary, I knew several gay priests, some of them practicing homosexuals. My friends at the Catholic seminary down the road from my seminary told me this was not unusual. In fact, it is estimated that 10 to 50 percent of Catholic priests are gay. The Catholic Church is now trying to take the gays out of the priesthood, which means that gay priests have several alternatives—all of which raise ethical considerations. They can deny their homosexuality, thereby denying who they are; they can leave the priesthood, thereby denying their understanding of their calling to serve God through this ministry; or they can "out" each other, thereby betraying each other. The Catholic Church, which already lacks enough priests to serve

all their parishes, will have to decide what to do when 10 to 50 percent of its priests, many of them kind, compassionate, and loving people who minister well to others, suddenly are no longer there.

If we try to make social policy based on a few verses, which are interpreted differently depending on the view of the Christian reading them, the research, the knowledge of the original Hebrew, and the knowledge of the historical context, we may, in the process, be doing great harm to millions of Americans. Many Christians say they truly love the homosexual. I have not yet figured out how to love people while condemning their lifestyle, judging their relationships, and being able to accept them only if they become different, and in the process, compromise their authenticity. Although many Christians say they love the sinner but not the sin, gays often attest to the fact that they don't feel loved, only condemned, regardless of whether the judgment comes with a hug or not.

A Spiritual Approach to Homosexuality

Sometimes, when the Biblical verses are not clear, a Christian might turn to other forms of spirituality rather than to Bible verses to look for answers.

Many Christians believe in ongoing revelation. They believe that the Holy Spirit continues to lead us. Discerning the work of the Spirit is, of course, not a sure-fire thing, but then interpreting a Bible passage is not a sure-fire thing either.

If a Christian slave owner were trying to discern a Christian response to slavery, he might begin by looking at the Bible and noticing that it seems to condone slavery. Owning another person seems to be part of an accepted social structure in both the Old and New Testament. He might reflect on the meaning of that kind of control over another. He might pray about it. He might realize that it doesn't "feel" right. He might talk to slaves, or other slave owners. He might notice mistreatment of slaves by other slave owners and recognize this as immoral and uncaring. He might first decide that owning slaves is fine for him because he treats them well, but then decide his stance toward owning slaves is wrong. He frees them, and in retrospect, believes he made the right decision.

A spiritual approach to homosexuality might take the same course. One might begin by studying the Bible verses. The person might talk to a variety of homosexuals,

asking questions, visiting a church where there are openly gay men and women, talking to ministers and priests. They might observe gay relationships. Or they might follow the example of Jesus, who dined with prostitutes and tax collectors and people considered “sinners” and let the Holy Spirit lead them to discern what they are to think and believe and feel about this situation. Of course, the dinner party won’t be a success if one half of the table is judging the other half.

Christians might reflect on what it means to be an authentic human being, without denying flaws, but also without denying how one has been created. They might try to figure out how to treat someone who is “born that way.”

They might then think about how they, who are in loving, intimate relationships, can ever deny intimacy to others. They might think about how they wouldn’t deny loving partnerships to those who are blind, deaf, or disabled. Can they, in all good conscience, legislate that others are not allowed to ever have the joys of closeness and partnership? They might meditate on the injustices the gay person encounters, sometimes daily, and on how they would feel if those same injustices happened to them.

They might, purposefully, seek out homosexuals and begin asking questions, to better understand their situation, and to better understand that these people are neighbors who cannot be ignored.

I have a number of gay friends, most of them in long-term relationships, some of them married, either through a church, or through a ceremony of commitment. I never sought them out. I didn’t have to, since my normal course of living brought me in contact with a number of gays and lesbians. Our paths crossed, and in a number of cases friendships developed, perhaps because there was no judgment either way. I attended the marriage of one such friend, and talked to another both before, and after, he got married. The profound joy and love that I witness makes it impossible for me to condemn them, because my judgment would go against everything I’ve learned about spirituality. There is simply too much care and beauty around their relationships. I find the authenticity, wisdom, compassion, and kindness of several of these friends so profound that my spiritual life has been immeasurably enriched by knowing them.

A Democratic Party Approach to Homosexuality

The Bible is silent about homosexuality as identity and about committed homosexual relationships. We can't form national policy based on our own religious interpretations of the Bible. If a democracy is to protect its citizens, what rights do homosexuals have, and what does the Constitution say about equal rights?

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution specifically state that we will not form national policy or behavior based on our own religion's interpretations of the Bible. There is a consistent movement, through two centuries of amendments to the Constitution, toward equality for all of our citizens. First the Constitution granted equality to propertied males; then to black men; then to women.

Gay marriage is not mentioned in either the Democratic or Republican platform. Democrats do, however, see this issue as a civil rights and states' rights issue. This doesn't mean they support gay marriages, although some of them do, just as some Republicans do. But Democrats are more apt to support civil unions in order to grant equal rights to homosexuals. John Kerry supported civil unions, and believes that people in long-term relationships should have the same rights as married people in a relationship. This means they should have the right to inherit from each other; the right to be at the partner's bedside in the hospital; the right to the same financial benefits that exist in committed heterosexual partnerships.

According to two different polling firms, the Democratic Peter D. Hart Research Associates and the Republican firm American Viewpoint, about 63 percent of Americans support the same rights and protections for homosexuals as for other Americans. According to another poll from the *Wall Street Journal* and NBC News, 53 percent of Americans would allow gay and lesbian couples to enter into legal agreements with each other that are not marriages but would give them the same legal and financial rights that married couples have. And about 50 percent of registered voters would support granting civil marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples.⁴⁶

Other polls come up with other numbers, ranging from about 45 percent against a marriage amendment to about 60 percent in favor of some sort of legal recognition for same-sex couples. One poll, from the Pew Forum, says that support for giving homosexuals the same rights as other Americans has grown even among evangelical Protestants, from 35 percent to 45 percent since 1992.⁴⁷

Many Democrats favor civil rights for homosexuals because they recognize that the sexual identity of a homosexual is not something chosen, but rather an authentic part of the person's life.

The question of authentic identity is a complex one. During the debates, both John Kerry and George W. Bush were asked about same-sex marriage and whether they thought homosexuality was an intrinsic part of one's identity or a choice. Mr. Kerry spoke candidly, accurately, and with compassion about homosexuality. He said he believed that homosexuals, for the most part, are simply being true to their identity. Mr. Bush said he didn't know whether it was a choice or not, but then affirmed his support for a constitutional marriage amendment. I found his answer very puzzling, because his vice president's daughter is a lesbian. If Mr. Bush were going to support a constitutional amendment adversely affecting millions of people's lives, why wouldn't he first talk to a few gay people, particularly Mary Cheney? George W. Bush is not known for his listening skills, but I was amazed that there was no desire or effort on his part to find out anything about homosexual choices. He seemed to have no curiosity about the millions of people asking for equal rights under his government.

What About Marriage?

Republicans want a new constitutional amendment, one that defines what marriage is, to ensure that gays can't marry or enjoy the same rights that heterosexual couples have. Of course, a marriage amendment won't keep gays from marrying. Marriage is a sacred ritual that any church can perform, with or without the consent of the state. However, the marriage amendment would have negative consequences for homosexual relationships. Since limiting love and increasing distress does not seem to serve society, the amendment also could have negative consequences for society.

The Democrats emphasize that marriage is a states' rights issue. Each state has the right to define marriage, and it is the states that issue marriage licenses. Most of the decisions in states that allow gay marriage are driven by the courts. When a gay couple confronts the court, believing that their constitutional rights are taken away because they don't have equal rights under the law, the courts respond, sometimes by allowing gay marriages. Sometimes the people respond by passing an amendment to the state constitution that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. States have the

right to respond either way. By the end of 2005, nineteen states had passed amendments recognizing marriage as being between a man and a woman and forbidding gay marriage. Connecticut and Vermont allow civil unions and give same-sex couples the same rights as straight couples. Massachusetts allows gay couples to marry. California and Hawaii are still struggling with this issue.

Other countries around the world allow gay marriages, including Belgium, Canada, Spain, and the Netherlands, and others allow civil unions, including Britain, Denmark, Finland, France Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

What might be the long-term effect of an amendment against gay marriages? Dr. Sean Cahill, co-author of *Family Policy: Issues Affecting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Families*, describes some of these consequences. Among other things, the amendment would jeopardize the domestic partner health benefits that are offered in nearly a dozen states and in hundreds of cities, as well as by thousands of private employers. This would jeopardize the ability to get health care for thousands of citizens.⁴⁸

The amendment also would jeopardize the same-sex families that are raising children. These people are our neighbors. There are same-sex households in 99 percent of all counties in the United States, and this crosses every ethnic, racial, and income group. Among these households, 34 percent of all lesbian couples and 22 percent of all male couples have at least one child under the age of 18. These children could be taken away from them, even though they are in loving homes, if equal rights are denied to same-sex marriages.

Some wonder what will happen to their state, or to their nation, if same-sex marriages are allowed. An argument always used by those against gay marriage is that it will, somehow, hurt the sanctity of their own marriages. We can look to Massachusetts to understand the effect that same-sex marriages have had upon a state's citizens. Massachusetts began allowing same-sex couples to marry on May 17, 2004. During the following year, more than 6,000 gay couples married, most of them having already lived together for a number of years in long-term relationships that had outlasted many heterosexual marriages. During that same year, there were almost 31,000 heterosexual marriages in the state. When the state began allowing same-sex marriage, public support was at 35 percent. A year later, when the people of the State of Massachusetts were asked

whether they believed gay marriage had had a positive effect or no impact on their quality of life, 85 percent said that it was either better, or had no impact. Whether the same-sex couple living down the street were married, or not, had little impact on the respondents.⁴⁹

What Might Our Response Be?

Every objection I've heard to homosexuals having equal rights seems to come from fear, including a fear of inappropriate behavior that would also be considered inappropriate for heterosexuals. Because there is no evidence that anyone can "make" someone become a homosexual, and because what my neighbors do in their bedroom is of little concern to me, whether they're homosexual or heterosexual, the tremendous focus on this issue seems to be masking something else. The poet E. E. Cummings said in one of his poems, "When people stop being themselves, they start behaving others."

C. S. Lewis puts this further into perspective: "I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that [sexuality] is not the center of Christian morality. . . . The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual; the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoil sport and back-biting, the pleasures of power, of hatred."⁵⁰ In Dante's *Inferno*, these sexual sins are in a higher circle of hell. What's at the bottom of hell? Deceit.

Some ask, "Why do same-sex couples want to be married? Why can't we just give them equal benefits and be done with this argument?" Many homosexuals who form attachments, form long-term attachments. Many of these relationships last a lifetime, and are as loving and caring as any heterosexual relationship. Same-sex couples simply want the state to recognize their relationship and to give them all the rights of married people. Many Christians agree, believing that wherever love and commitment reside, the union should be blessed. Some churches recognize the spirituality of this commitment, and have marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples. Although tradition has defined marriage as being between a man and a woman, some Christians recognize another viewpoint on marriage. The Rt. Rev. Gray Temple, an Episcopalian priest and author of *Gay Unions: In the Light of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*, defines marriage as "a relationship between two persons consisting of human courage intersecting divine grace."⁵¹ C. S. Lewis, in his classic book *Mere Christianity*, says, "The Christian conception of marriage

is one: the other is the quite different question—how far Christians, if they are voters . . . ought to try to force their views of marriage on the rest of the community by embodying them in [their] laws. A great many people seem to think that if you are a Christian yourself you should try to make [it] difficult for everyone. I do not think that. At least I know I should be very angry if the Mohammedans tried to prevent the rest of us from drinking wine. My own view is that the Churches should frankly recognize that the majority of . . . people are not Christians and, therefore, cannot be expected to live Christian lives. There ought to be two distinct kinds of marriage: one governed by the State with rules enforced on all citizens, the other governed by the Church with rules enforced by her on her own members.”⁵²

His words raise important questions: Do democracy and equality demand that we recognize the rights of everyone? Or should our own personal morality influence decisions made for everyone else? With any new law, we should ask, whom does this law harm? And whom does this law benefit? Forbidding equal rights to anyone because of sexual orientation is as wrong and undemocratic as forbidding rights to anyone because of race or gender or age. Of course, these things are done, but they are not just. Any law that forbids equal rights harms those who want to be part of our democratic society. Some Christians say same-sex marriage harms society. I know, from my own experience, that the gay marriage of a neighbor or friend has no negative effect on my own marriage, nor do I see it as having any negative effect on others.

We need to put this issue into perspective. It deserves more research to learn what effect civil unions and gay marriages have on society. What are the consequences to society when we carry an attitude of hate that gives others permission to harm and kill? How do our political and religious decisions change when we ask homosexuals about their lives, about their concerns, about their spirituality? Where does the Holy Spirit lead us, on this issue of such concern to so many?

FOOTNOTES

1. According to information supplied by the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (external article) and American Civil Liberties Union (external article). From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodomy_laws-in-the-United-States, retrieved July 2005.

2. Focus on the Family says it's about 2 to 3 percent; the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center uses 10 percent, including gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender.
3. Isaiah 45:9-13.
4. Romans 9:20.
5. Peter J. Gomes, *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, p. 171 (originally published by William Morrow in hardcover, 1996).
6. Focus on the Family, "Responding to Pro-Gay Theology, What Does the Bible Really Say?" 11.
7. Genesis 19:6-8.
8. Gray Temple, *Gay Unions: In the Light of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004), p. 58.
9. Matthew 10:14-15, Luke 10:10-12.
10. Leviticus 20:9.
11. Leviticus 20:2.
12. Leviticus 20:10.
13. Leviticus 20:15.
14. Gomes, *The Good Book*, p. 153.
15. Ibid., p. 154.
16. Ibid.
17. From an interview with Dr. Gary Rendberg, May 2005.
18. Deuteronomy 22:50.
19. Gomes, *The Good Book*, p. 52.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

23. I Samuel 18:1.

24. I Samuel 18:3.

25. I Samuel 18:4.

26. I Samuel 20:3, 41.

27. 2 Samuel 1:26.

28. Catherine Griffith, "The Bible and Same-Sex Relationship," *Friends Journal at 50: Quaker Thought and Life Today*, January 2005. Catherine Griffith was a pastor at Valley Mills (Indiana) Meeting; she holds a PhD in religious Ethics from the University of Virginia. Also see Gomes, *The Good Book*, 159.

29., Griffith, "The Bible and Same-Sex Relationship," 14.

30. I Corinthians 6, 7.

31. Temple, *Gay Unions*, 77.

32. Ibid., 78.

33. Ibid., 64-65.

34. Ibid., 70.

35. Ibid., 71-72.

36. Ibid., 72-73.

37. Romans 2:1-4.

38. James 4:12.

39. Gomes, *The Good Book*, 158.

40. Temple, *Gay Unions*, 74.

41. Focus on the Family, "Responding to Pro-Gay Theology: What Does the Bible Really Say?" 28.

42. Ibid.

43. Timothy J. Dailey, Focus on the Family, "The Bible, the Church and Homosexuality," p.34.
44. Ibid., 35.
45. Beth Stroud, "Methodist Panel Votes to Reinstate Lesbian Minister" *Colorado Springs Gazette*, April 30, 2005.
- 46.: "HRC Releases Poll Date Showing Plurality of Americans Support or Accept Marriage Rights for Gay and Lesbian Couples" Human Rights Campaign," August 1, 2003. From a poll by the Peter D. Hart Research Association, American Viewpoint, Civil Rights, Protections, Benefits. For another view, read "Jerry Falwell – Gay Rights' Activist?" by Terry Mattingly, found on his Religion column on Gospelcom.net, 9/28/05, at <http://matt.gospelcom.net/column/2005/09/28>.
47. "Religion and Gay Marriage, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life," 200-2005.
48. Sean Cahill, "Why We Need Same Sex Marriage," Testimony to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, 9/4/03. Also published in *The W Effect: Sexual Politics in the Bush Years and Beyond*, edited by Laura Flanders (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 2004).
49. William Lee Adams, "Stats: Gay to Wed," *Newsweek*, May 23, 2005.
50. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), pp. 102-103.
51. Temple, *Gay Unions*, 111.
52. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 102.