This is a very emotional issue.

With any of life’s challenges and decisions emotions can make it difficult for us to discern properly and can lead us to actions, decisions and conclusions that actually violate common sense and logic.

How often have people continued to pay for repairs on a car because they are sentimentally attached to it?

Do you have a favorite shirt that is thread bare or now the wrong size but you still hang on to it because it was once your favorite?

Emotions can lead us toward irrational actions and conclusions.

**Simultaneously, we affirm that emotions are integral to our being and are part of being made in the image of God**

- God delights in his creation – saw it and said it was Good etc.
- We are commanded to rejoice in the lord

Emotions are not inherently bad –

Emotions are a gift from God - but we must make sure we are not ruled by emotion.

There is a big difference between being emotional about a subject and being ruled by emotions on a subject.
Today’s goals are to review the biblical admonishments against sexual immorality, specifically homosexuality, and then explore the Christian response to sexual immorality.

I believe some churches/Christians are failing by accepting sexual immorality as a God honoring activity because of emotionally directed thinking.

Others, who affirm a Biblical ethic concerning sex and marriage, fail in how they respond to people struggling with, or are trapped by, these sexual sins by failing to give the same grace that Jesus does.

We must not only believe what Jesus taught and said but we must act like him as well!

So . . .

What does the bible say about homosexuality

22 ‘You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. (Lev 18:22 NAU)

13 ‘If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. (Lev 20:13 NAU)

What sin is being addressed?

Even A casual reading makes it obvious that homosexual activity is a sin – a particularly grievous sin as God calls it an abomination.

Look at Leviticus chapter 18  —> Open your Bible!
This is part of what is called the holiness code – tells us how we ought to live to be holy.

Chapter 18 is about holiness and how it relates to the family and sexual activity.

Quick outline – let your eyes run down this chapter.

V 6-17 ——— Incest is bad.
V 18 ———Taking a rival wife is bad.
V 19 ——— Contact with a women during menstruation is bad.
V 20———Adultery is bad.
V 21 ———Child sacrifice is bad
V 22 ————Homosexuality is bad.
V 23 ————Bestiality is bad.
V 24-30 ——If God’s people become unclean with these things it will be bad.

Notice the progression of severity of sin, both here in chapter 18, and chapter 20.

I go through this because liberal theologians and Christians who do not want to be labeled intolerant make the argument that Leviticus prohibits only a narrow type of homosexuality:

- Oppressive or abusive homosexual activity or
- Older men with young boys

The problem here is— if that is so, then all the sexual sins listed could be qualified by some measure and one could find a circumstance to justify incest, adultery or bestiality
There is nothing in this text to hint that homosexual activity is acceptable if occurring between consenting adults.

If you want to believe that it does then you have to also say that:

- Adultery is ok if adults consent.
- Incest is acceptable as long as all involved are consenting adults.
- Bestiality is ok as long as men and women did not throw off their gender identity.

Whether the participants were willing or of age does not come into consideration. God created sex (see Genesis 2) and He alone sets the parameters for sex.

If you allow homosexuality in committed relationships, you must allow for sex with a neighbors wife or, as in Lev. 20, your daughter-in-law.

Romans 1:26-28
26 For this reason [that people have ignored and rejected God] God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,
27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.
28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

People try to qualify this as well:

- It addresses only homosexual prostitution
• This refers to non-consensual homosexuality
• This is about an older man and young boy

You simply cannot get that from this passage!

You would have to read into the passage things that simply are not there.

Any honest person must admit that the Bible does not say one positive thing about homosexuality.

If you are able to convince yourself that every time homosexuality is mentioned it is these oppressive and violent references, all you are left with is silence.

The Bible never even hints affirmatively at homosexual behavior in any situation.

People present a myriad of objections to the simple, straightforward teaching of the Bible against homosexuality.

• The church is supposed to be a place for broken people.
• You are on the wrong side of history.
• It’s not fair!
• I was born this way.
• God wants me to be happy.

The list goes on . . .

Know that we can effectively and compassionately address all of these with complete academic and scriptural honesty.
So, the Bible does not allow for homosexuality.

The bible also speaks strongly against all sexual immorality.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, (1Th 4:1-4 NAU)

God’s will for us is our sanctification –

sanctification presupposes our atonement- forgiveness – sins paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ

Because this is true, because we are righteous in the sight of God – God’s will for us is sanctification!

**Sanctification** – the moral development of our physical and spiritual self

The will of God consist of purity of our physical bodies – this is a big part of sanctification!!!
3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

There is much more to sanctification than abstaining from sexual immorality but the bible tells us that sexual purity is key to everything else!!

Christian – your sexual purity, self-control and biblical approach to sex is a massive part of what it means to be growing towards Christ – Likeness

Sanctification is the moral development of the vision of Christ we are to present to the world as we grow in, and display, the atonement we have in Christ.

Speaking on the same theme that Christ’s sacrifice moves Christians toward physical purity and obedience:

Ephesians 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (Eph 5:1-3 NIV)

Restating the biblical position of sexual immorality and homosexuality:
- All sexual immorality – including all homosexual activity-- is a sin that must be repented of, forsaken and needs forgiveness
• There is no right context in which sexual immorality or homosexual activity is God-honoring or worthy of blessing.

**But -- How do we respond**

Knowing what is good and holy is not the end of the journey!!

Christians are not called to be enforcers of holiness, we are called to be salt and light. *We are not the sin police!*

Light shows the error and Salt prevents decay, it preserves life
• To mix metaphors – the light is the Doctor diagnosing what ails you
• The salt is the medicine that targets the problem

**YES** we must faithfully proclaim holiness and not shade the lines when it comes to sin – in this context sexual immorality

But how do we perfect being that preserving agent like salt and prevent decay and death?

Here is where I find it very helpful to observe our savior and see how he confronts sexual immorality?

• There is no one more righteous and holier than Jesus
• He is the model of absolute law keeping
• Jesus is also the giver of unconditional grace and mercy

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It is the tension between the command to be holy and the command to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute you that causes so many of us to err one way or the other

- Too little love & grace or . . .
- Too little holiness

Let’s learn from Jesus as he is confronted with a women caught in adultery

**John 8:2-11**
2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.

3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,

4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

5 "Now in the Law -- Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"
11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." (Joh 8:2-11 NAU)

Many people do not like this passage because they see Jesus being soft on sin – this is not that case however

**What we learn here about how we can confront sin is vital**

**The players in our drama are:**
- Religious leaders,
- the sexually immoral woman and
- Jesus

**The religious leaders**, those who very carefully follow the law want to trap Jesus
- Their motive is not great concern about sin or the family that might be damaged because of infidelity.
- They are seeking to justify themselves because Jesus is gaining followers

To make a legal claim of adultery there had to be two eye-witnesses
- This high standard was established to protect false or frivolous claims in such an important matter

The law also required that if a person sees another about to commit a sin, they were to speak up.

Most likely, this group framed the women, violating not only the law against adultery but the law that we are to help others avoid sinning.
This is a powerful story because it paints a strong picture of harsh judges who have neglected their responsibility to care for the soul of the women.

She is disposable.

Their aim is to corner Jesus, and her life is a tool in their theological gambit to make him either
  • condemn her
    o (thus sacrificing his commitment to grace) or
  • forgive her
    o (thus sacrificing his commitment to God’s law).

The portrait of the women is equally powerful—

Caught in the act of adultery—encircled by hostile men willing to sacrifice her through their unyielding commitment to the law

Certainly she thought this man Jesus -- known as teacher and Rabbi -- would know the law and uphold it.

The most powerful part of the story, in my opinion, is the unexpected freedom we see

Jesus’ implied judgement of her accuser and his mercy, mixed with exhortation to stop sinning, sets her free in a manner she never expected.

The portrait of Jesus is the one that effects this whole story.

Jesus is God!!
God will not let sin go unpunished – to let sin go unpunished would violate his holiness.

How Can God be perfect and allow people to sin or do evil.

Does a perfect person let people hurt others?
Does a perfect person allow people to steal and rob without punishment?

Remember – Jesus came to earth for the purpose of dying for sin, he is a designated sacrifice for the purpose of receiving God’s wrath against sin.

Does it make sense that Jesus would permit or allow more sin as he is the one who has to pay the penalty for all of it!!

Doesn’t it make sense for him to make it all stop- even if just to reduce the penalty he has to pay?

Of course that is selfish, worldly reasoning.

Jesus does not engage the religious leaders.
- He ignores them for awhile
- They persist in their quest for condemnation/punishment
- He finally stands and address them
  - One without sin cast first stone

This does not mean that only perfect people can call out sin in other’s lives. What Jesus is addressing here is the
  - hard heart,
• selfishness and
• the abuse of the law, meant for good, being used to cause harm!

Matthew 7:3-5
3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?
5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye

The people slowly leave and the women is standing by herself.

• Jesus asks where the accusers are?
• No one there to condemn her ( did no one punish you?)

Jesus says "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

Understand – she is guilty

Jesus exercised his sovereign right to not punish/condemn – he gave mercy

Just like he does for us in our sin

The crowd was judged guilty, the women judged guilty but Jesus did not punish either

He clearly judged actions and motives as wrong and then lovingly forgave

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And then charged the women to stop her life of sin.

From right now – stop it.

Repent and be a different person

Jesus just save this woman’s life!!!!

Jesus saw her life as valuable even though she is a sinner!

He did not contribute to the mayhem and overflow of emotion as the men encircled her with every intent to kill her.

The woman had to have had an impression of Jesus that was very different from her impression of the religious leaders:
  • He did not despise her
  • He treated her with grace
  • She understood that Jesus disagreed with her lifestyle and he told her it had to stop

Do you think this early morning episode in the temple impacted her?

Do you think she reflected on the command of Jesus to stop her sin?
  • Or did she laugh at the impulse and ignore his caution

I suspect that she was shook to her core and she never stopped thinking about this Jesus and what he commanded her to do – Stop sinning!
I suspect she never got over not being stoned to death either!

Are we more excited to be proven right and joyously seek to condemn sinners than we are to help usher sinners into a relationship with Jesus?

Show you care!!!
Be concerned for peoples’ lives
Be kind
Be a friend

We can be all these things and not condone sin!

Don’t we have lost friends now?

The same caution exists:
  • Be a friend
  • Show you care
  • But don’t condone sin
  • Be light and salt

I’ve never heard of a person being debated into heaven

Here is the tension I feel so acutely:
  • A Jesus directed commitment to the Law  ------  juxtaposed with
  • A Jesus directed commitment to Grace
There is no good, nor even half way decent, scriptural argument permitting Bible believing Christians to affirm homosexual activity as a God honoring endeavor.

But as we affirm the truth of scripture, we must strive to live the Bible like Jesus did and not be like the harsh, judgmental, and hypocritical people we see in this story.

Go love people like Jesus

Bring them goodness and live a life of holiness in their presence

When the spirit directs the timing you can say “I love you, God Loves you ... but go and sin no more”