

**An Understanding of the Biblical View on  
Homosexual Practice and Pastoral Care**  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Position Paper

Marriage was divinely instituted in the Garden of Eden at Creation, and it is a special gift to humanity from a loving God from before the Fall. The design of our Creator for marriage was to satisfy the deepest human needs and longings for love, intimacy, joy, care, and appreciation. “The Bible opens and closes with marriage. Genesis presents marriage as the first institution ... while the last chapters of Revelation use marriage as a metaphor to portray the relationship between Christ and His people. Significantly, marriage is uniquely positioned at the end of the creation week to underscore God’s ideal for the human race.”<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the sacredness, beauty and relevancy of marriage is diminished as never before in contemporary culture, society, and law, because the growing influence of a secular sexual ideology and practice have undermined biblical standards of sexual morality and family relations. Premarital sex, marital unfaithfulness, spousal abuse, promiscuity, pornography, cohabitation, and the “liberated” lifestyle of many married people have brought the institution of marriage into a deep crisis. Thus, God’s ideal for humanity has been perverted.

In addition, various alternate sexualities, including homosexuality, bisexuality, and the variety of transgender identities

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“Creation order,” for humanity from the beginning. This paradigm means that marriage cannot consist of the sexual union between a man and another man or a woman and another woman. This Creation pattern of marriage between a man and a woman remains the norm throughout Scripture. Any deviation from this heterosexual norm is portrayed by the biblical writers as a distortion of the Creation norm (Rom 1:24–27). The importance of male/female relationship in



Judges, portrays men of Gibeah, “base fellows,” making homosexual advances against a Levite

status of the passive partner (alien, slave, foreigner), and/or cultic association.”<sup>14</sup> “The language is devastatingly untechnical, leaving no room for ambiguity.”<sup>15</sup>

The Hebrew clause *l o ’ t* “*you shall not*” is a negative particle followed by the *qal* imperfect, expressing a permanent negative command. The phrase *mishkebeh ’ i s* “*the lying of a woman*” is clearly a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. the male equivalent of this passage in Judg 21:11–12). Thus this passage is a permanent prohibition of all sexual intercourse of a man with another male (*zakar*







“abomination” (*t o ‘ e singular*) is the exact term used to describe homosexual practice in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

Those who regard the sin of Sodom as non-sexual argue that the word “abomination” (*t o ‘ e* in v. 50) simply refers to the social injustice described in v. 49. However, a careful look at this passage<sup>23</sup> reveals that the term *t o ‘ e* “abomination” (singular) in v. 50 speaks of an

## Homosexual Practice and the New Testament

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Jesus affirms the creation ideal of marriage between a man and a woman by quoting from Genesis 1:27 and 2:23: “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them *male* and *female*. For this reason a *man* shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his *wife*, and the two [man and woman] shall become one flesh” (Mark 10:6–8; cf. Matt 19:5, emphasis supplied). Jesus’ emphasis on the fact that “God made” this arrangement “from the beginning of creation,” shows His acceptance of the prescriptive nature of the Creation texts, and affirms that heterosexual relations as divinely ordained in Genesis 1 and 2 remain normative in NT times.

Jesus’ pronouncements against *porneia* (Matt 5:32; 15:19; 19:9; Mark 7:21), when viewed against the OT background, include same-sex intercourse as well as other heterosexual practices (Matt 10:15; 11:23–24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; 17:29). The nature of *porneia* (without qualifiers) as used by Jesus and the various NT writers has been the subject of considerable debate, but the OT provides the key to its identification. Especially significant is its usage (again without qualifiers) in Acts 15:28–29, where, as we saw, intertextual allusions to Leviticus 17 and 18 are unmistakable.

Acts 15 lists four prohibitions for Gentile Christians given by the Jerusalem Council: “That you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality [*porneia*]” (v. 29). Particularly striking is that this is the same list, *in the same order*, as the four major legal prohibitions explicitly stated to be applicable to the stranger/alien as well as to native Israelites in Leviticus 17 and 18. These OT chapters forbid: (1) sacrificing to demons/idols (Lev 17:7–9); (2) eating blood (Lev 17:10–12); (3) eating anything that has not been immediately drained of its blood (Lev 17:13–16); and (4) various immoral sexual practices (Lev 18). In this clear case of intertextuality, the Jerusalem Council undoubtedly concluded that what should be prohibited to Gentile Christians were those very practices forbidden to the uncircumcised alien in Leviticus 17 and 18.

The parallel of the fourth prohibition in each passage is unambiguous: what Acts 15

## **Homosexual Practice and the Pauline Epistles**

The apostle Paul specifically denounces homosexual lust and practice in three

Paul's concern in this passage is with the image of God according to Genesis Creation order, which humans have corrupted with idolatry and ensuing heterosexual and homosexual immoralities. Paul is distressed, because these departures from original design cannot reflect God's glory.

Romans includes language declaring that the relationships at issue are characterized by mutuality, rather than exploitation. The phrase "men . . . burned in their desire toward one another [*a l l*]" uses the Greek term *a l l*, which indicates a mutuality, a shared experience of desire. Moreover, the reference to "women exchange[ing] the natural function for that which is unnatural," also reveals a concern with elements beyond exploitation or dominance. Lesbian relationships were especially known in ancient times for their lack of hierarchy, domination, or prostitution.<sup>32</sup>



promiscuous activity; nor is it restricted to pederasty. All homosexual activity is against the Creation order and against divine law and is, therefore, a sin that needs to be repented of, forgiven, and given up."<sup>37</sup>

After surveying the evidence of both OT and NT, NT scholar Richard Hays summarizes well the biblical witness concerning homosexual practice:

Though only a few biblical texts speak of homoerotic activity, all that do mention it express unqualified disapproval. . . . The biblical witness against homosexual practices is univocal. . . . Scripture offers no loopholes or exception clauses that might allow for the acceptance of homosexual practices under some circumstances. Despite the efforts of some recent interpreters to explain away the evidence, the Bible remains unambiguous and univocal in its condemnation of homosexual conduct.<sup>38</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that the biblical materials condemn homosexual *practice*, but there is no castigation of innate homosexual *orientation* per se.

Second, Scripture condemns all forms of sexual immorality, whether homosexual or heterosexual. The anthropology set forth in







We stand against any antipathy toward homosexuals as well as any cultural biases that fuel a lack of Christ-like love toward them. These kinds of attitudes need to be repented of and the Church needs to provide more intentional ministries directed toward gay and lesbian persons (Matt 9:13; John 3:17). We should be aware of how easily we might fa299.93 6676(tt)-3( 9:13;)-3( J)-10(ohn (n



What distinguishes Christians is the quality of love they extend, without partiality, to everyone

who are unjust won't inherit God's kingdom? Don't be deceived. Those who are sexually immoral, those who worship false gods, adulterers, both participants in same-sex intercourse, thieves, the greedy, drunks, abusive people, and swindlers won't inherit God's kingdom. That is what some of you used to be! But you were washed clean, you were made holy to God, and you were made right with God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9–11, Common English Bible).

When the Church denounces sin both within the Church and in secular society, it must do so with caution and humility. “Christ sometimes reproveth with severity, and in some cases it may be necessary for us to do so; but we should consider that while Christ knew the exact condition of the ones he rebuked, and just the amount of reproof they could bear, and what was necessary to correct their course of wrong, he also knew just how to pity the erring, comfort the unfortunate, and encourage the weak. He knew just how to keep souls from despondency and to

Holy Spirit and that we are not our own but bought with a price. Therefore we must glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:19–20; 10:31). Because our bodies belong to God, we may not do with them as we please. Rather, we must be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom 8:29). This call to holiness is extended to all of Christ’s followers. It is the contention of this document that such holiness is possible only when we use our bodies in conformity with God’s creation ideal for which we were created as male and female. We prayerfully release this document in the hope that through its service many who struggle with their sexuality will come to embrace the divine ideal of holiness and sexual purity as their Christian calling. May our gracious God give us His Spirit (Ezek 36:25–27; Rom 8:4, 14), who provides victory over sin and power to live in harmony with His will through our Lord Jesus Christ.