

Are Christians Anti-Gay?

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[0 : 00] Well, this photo that's behind me was taken not long ago in the city of Reykjavik in Iceland by my wife, in fact. And really, the reason I wanted to show you this picture is that this picture is a picture that paints a thousand words.

You know what they say, pictures paint a thousand words. This one certainly does. Because what you'll notice is in the background of this picture is an old church. You see that? This is an old cathedral in Reykjavik that's been standing there, overlooking the town for a long time.

But in the foreground, you'll notice the street is decorated in a celebration of gay pride. The rainbow colors on the street, those display boards on the right, they're all there for a citywide gay pride campaign that was going on when we visited that city.

And that picture really represents what's going on in our world today, doesn't it? You've got the old outdated church in the background giving way to the progress of sexual freedom.

And this so-called gay pride movement. Now, we've all been affected, we've all been exposed to the increase, haven't we, in this talk and celebrations around sexual liberation and gay pride.

[1 : 18] And it's really, this movement has really, well, come out of the closet, if you'll excuse the pun, in recent years. All over the world, not least of all in our own city, Cape Town, we see gay pride campaigns and gay pride marches popping up.

People taking to the streets to celebrate homosexuality and the end of homosexual discrimination. What's interesting about these campaigns is, well, you've got people who aren't even homosexuals joining in and waving the flags and marching and having a great time and they've got floats and they've got all sorts of dodgy clothes on.

And I'm sure you've seen gay pride campaigns like this before. But what's also interesting is that along with this rise in gay pride around the world, there's come with it a whole new wave of criticism of anybody who speaks against it.

Have you noticed that? Those who call for tolerance of homosexuality are, in fact, aggressively intolerant to anyone who opposes it, which is quite ironic. Those who are calling for tolerance are the most intolerant.

Christians who hold to traditional biblical views are called bigots, they're called homophobes, and they're accused of discrimination on the same level as racism in the years of apartheid.

[2 : 33] I myself, while expressing the Bible's teaching, have been told to catch up with the rest of the world, to stop being a bigot, and to not force my niche of morality onto others.

It's a very heated debate in our world, and we've all been affected by it, especially if we have loved ones who are homosexuals. And so the question I want us to consider this morning, a really important question, is do these critics have a point?

Should we catch up? Do we need to catch up with the modern world? Are we unfairly discriminating against homosexuals? Are Christians anti-gay? That's our question this morning.

And as I said earlier, this is not an easy issue. So I do hope you've had a strong cup of coffee this morning. I certainly have. Because we need to think clearly about this, and it's not easy to think through, but it's a very important issue for us to know and for us to be able to communicate to others.

So where do we begin? Well, if we want to even begin talking about this homosexual issue, or any moral or ethical issue for that matter, any discussion about what is right or what is wrong, to begin, we need to first establish where we get this idea of right and wrong in the first place, don't we?

[3 : 50] Because if it's all up to us, think about this, if it's all up to humans to decide what's right and wrong, then it's really my opinion versus yours. And we'll just carry on debating for ages, and it'll just be my opinion versus yours.

You've got no right to tell me what to do. I've got no right to tell you what to do. And it's pointless having any discussions about right and wrong or ethics or morality. You know, just as you can't call homosexuality wrong, so you can't call homophobia or discrimination wrong.

I mean, who says those things are wrong? If there's no higher authority to appeal to, it's just my opinion versus yours. It's just what makes me happy versus what makes you happy.

And if going out and stealing children makes you happy, who am I to say that it's wrong? You see, if there's no God, there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong. But if God exists, then there is a higher authority, because right and wrong isn't decided by us, but it's decided by the one who made us, because he made us with a purpose, and a purpose implies there is a right and wrong way to live.

And you'd expect that the God who created us and the God who created marriage and sex has an opinion about it.

[5 : 07] You'd expect that, that he's got an opinion about the right and wrong way to use the life that he's given us, especially in those areas. And so the only starting point for any useful discussion on homosexuality is God and what he thinks.

That's the only important thing you can talk about when you're talking about this issue to someone else. Otherwise, it'll just be your opinion versus mine. It'll get into a heated debate, and you won't talk to each other ever again.

You need to start at a higher authority, and that higher authority is God's Word in the Bible. And the reason we know, by the way, that the Bible is the Word of God is exactly what we looked at last week.

If you haven't, if you weren't here, please do download the talk from our website. There's also an article on our website on this topic, how we know the Bible is God's Word. Have a look at that. But really, to start, we need to look at this issue.

We need to turn to the Bible. Let's do that now, and let's see what it says on the issue of homosexuality. Now, when we turn to the Bible, if you look up homosexuality in a concordance or something, and there's various words that are used for it, but if you looked up what the Bible said about it, you'd find six major passages that mention homosexuality in the Bible, three in the Old Testament, three in the New.

[6 : 19] And all of them speak negatively about homosexuality. It's quite clear that it is something against the will of God. And up until recently, for the past few thousand years, these six texts have served as sufficient evidence that God considers homosexuality to be wrong.

However, more recently, with the rise of all this homosexual consciousness and gay pride and the homosexual agenda, these texts have begun to be re-evaluated and re-interpreted, as you can expect.

And much stretching has been done by some people to re-interpret them as only really actually talking about certain types of homosexual activity, like sexual exploitation in the Roman world, or gang rape in Sodom, or orgies in Romans.

But they're not seen to condemn the kind of homosexual relationship we're seeing today, long-term committed homosexual relationships. And so, people would say, these texts really aren't talking about that kind of relationship.

Now, as I say, that is quite a stretch of interpretation, and these texts still have a lot of useful things to say about homosexuality today. Paul, in Romans, for example, the passage that John read for us is talking quite generally of homosexual activity in general.

[7 : 42] And we could go into each of them and see what God says, which is a good thing to do, but we only have a certain amount of time. And I think a much better approach on this topic is not to start with these texts at all that speak negatively of homosexuality, because the truth is, whatever prohibitions God has given regarding sex and marriage in the Bible only really makes sense when we first understand why God invented sex and marriage in the first place.

See what I'm saying? It's only then that we can really evaluate any question on sexuality when we evaluate it in light of God's original intention for it.

And so, that's what we're going to do this morning. And we find that out, we find out God's original intention right back in the book of Genesis, the passage that Penny read for us earlier. So, please turn there in your Bibles, Genesis chapter 2.

And we read earlier from verse 18 where God says, it is not good for man to be alone. And so, God used, with the same stuff that He used to create Adam, the first man from Adam, He creates Eve, a woman, to be Adam's perfect complement.

Now, you can imagine Adam surprised to wake up and see for the first time in his life a naked woman standing in front of him. It must have been quite something. In fact, he immediately burst out into poetry.

[9 : 12] And this is the world's first recorded love poem in verse 23. The man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.

Okay, so he was, as you can imagine, he was bowled over when he saw Eve for the first time. This other person that God had made, who was very much like him, but also very different to him.

And he tries to express that in this little reaction of his. This other human, which is designed as a perfect complement to him. She's like man, but she's not man, so she shall be called woman.

You see? The relationship between the two words. And so, because Adam realizes this perfect complementarity between him and Eve, that she's very much like him, but very much not.

The Bible goes on to say, listen carefully to this, verse 24, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

[10 : 17] Why? Why did God invent this thing called marriage? Well, precisely because Adam and Eve were different. Do you see that? God invented marriage and sex to unite the two different types of humans that he had made, men and women, so that they will work together to carry out the task that he gave humanity, which is to subdue the earth and fill it.

God devised this amazing, heterosexual relationship to be the foundation of building families and societies on earth. With each partner bringing to the table their own unique and different strengths and weaknesses.

And isn't it true, you know, men and women aren't only different biologically and physically, but mentally and emotionally we function different, and God made us that way to act as perfect complements for each other, and we know, whether we like it or not, that families function best when there's both a mother and a father each fulfilling their own unique gender roles.

We know that. And that is why God invented marriage, you see, as a way for those two complementary genders to become one. And this idea that God invented marriage to combine the two genders, to partner together for his will, this idea is repeated over and over again in Scripture by Jesus himself and by Paul and the other apostles.

This is the reason that God gave us marriage. But, that's not all. God had something else in mind when he invented marriage which we discover only after Jesus came, and we see that in the New Testament in Ephesians 5.

[11 : 56] And I want to read to you what Ephesians tells us when it's talking about marriage and how men and women should relate together and why they should. Listen carefully to Ephesians 5 from verse 22.

Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by their washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one has ever hated his own body, but they feed and care for their own body just as Christ does the church, for we are members of his body.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

[13 : 17] More literally, I am saying this refers to Christ and the church. This is a very profound verse because what it's saying is that when God invented marriage right back in Genesis, he had something else in mind other than just the advancement of society and the human race.

He also invented marriage to point Adam and Eve and all of their children after them to the real marriage that he had in mind which the gospel was going to bring about, which is the marriage between Christ and the church in the new creation.

See, and temporary marriage on earth, and it is temporary. Jesus says there will not be marriage in heaven. Marriage on earth is a temporary measure to be a foretaste of that eternal marriage in heaven.

Any pleasure that we get from marriage is only a foretaste of the amazing bliss we will have being in a perfect relationship with God. The self-sacrificial nature and the submission in a marriage is meant to point us to the submission and the sacrificial nature of Jesus and his church in the new creation.

See, marriage on earth is only meant to be a little trailer, a teaser trailer into what the new creation is going to consist of. And the differences between men and women's gender roles in a human marriage reflect the different roles of Christ and his church both now and in eternity.

[14 : 36] That is the second reason that God invented marriage. So we see here from the Bible, just from these two passages, the two main reasons God invented marriage.

And this is a very good thing to remember when, if you are married, why did God invent this? Because we didn't come up with the idea of marriage, by the way.

It's not like Adam looked at Eve and going, you know what, I would love to commit myself to a lifelong relationship where I serve my wife to reflect God's glory and to advance society throughout the world.

He didn't come up with that idea. God came up with the idea of marriage. He invented it. He gave it to us as a gift. And if we, any of us here are married, which some of us are because it's God's will for certain people to be married, then we must remember why God invented marriage.

Because that will be the foundation for how we go about living in our marriages. And these are the two reasons. First, to combine the complementary genders in body and mind to carry out God's will on earth.

[15 : 40] And second, to serve as a picture for Christ and the church in the world to come. To anticipate what's coming. That's why God gave us marriage. Now, I want you to notice something about these two purposes.

Both of these two purposes that God invented marriage rely on the complementary nature of men and women. Do you notice that? For these purposes to actually work, you need both a man and a woman to make them work.

And so, when the world tries to redefine marriage to include homosexual partnerships, to suit what people want out of marriage rather than what God wants, then marriage actually ceases to be marriage in God's eyes.

It may be a legal partnership. It may be a public declaration of love. It may be even committed and loving. And I'm not saying that homosexual partnerships aren't sacrificial and loving and committed, but it's not marriage according to God.

Because that's not the reason He made it. And so now, when we see why God made marriage and sexuality in the first place, it's now that we begin to understand these texts in the Bible that prohibit homosexual sex as sin, don't we?

[16 : 59] You know, God's not out to spoil our fun. God gives us His law for our good and for the good of the world and for the good of our souls.

And the reason that God prohibits homosexual sex is that any sex outside of marriage is sin. The Bible makes that quite clear. Sex was designed to take place only within the boundaries of marriage.

That is the safe incubator for that wonderful gift that God has given us. But not everyone is meant to have sex like the world says. Let me say that again because I need to declare that not everyone is meant to have sex.

only those who have a committed heterosexual union that God has given us when they've committed themselves through the process of marriage to that covenant to that heterosexual union that God has invented for His purposes.

It's only then that sex is to be that's where sex is to take place. And any sexual activity outside of that is a misuse of sexuality.

[18 : 04] sexuality. It's against the will of God. Whether that be homosexual sex or whether that be heterosexual sex before marriage or even solo sexual activity alone just for one's gratification that's not what God designed sex for and it's a rebellion against His plan and thus it is a sin.

Now, somebody might object to this idea by saying this and you've heard this before I'm sure but wait a minute wait a minute lots of homosexual people were just born that way.

Right? So if it's a sin then why would God have made them that way in the first place? Have you heard that before? That's a good question. It's a very good question but it's a question that really only comes about when we think of homosexuality as something different from any other sexual activity outside of marriage.

God-ordained marriage. You see, we tend to do that don't we? We kind of put homosexuality in its own box and we see homosexuals as different to heterosexuals who are still not using sexuality the way God intended.

Christians are so quick to label homosexual people as sexually deviant and point the finger but I wonder if you've ever considered that we're all sexually deviant in God's eyes.

[19 : 28] we've all had sexual thoughts and tendencies outside of marriage haven't we? Let's be honest and the reason for that is that we were all born with sin in our hearts.

We've all born with this tendency to rebel against God's laws and so we're all sexually deviant. The Bible says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Every part of us has been tainted by sin including our sexuality. None of us sitting in this room this morning have always had pure thoughts when it comes to sexuality.

We've all sinned. And so you might have a problem with same-sex attraction. Well I've got a problem with opposite-sex attraction outside of marriage and we've all got issues that we've got to deal with.

We're all tainted by sin. Another person might struggle particularly with gluttony another person with greed. Everybody has a particular area that they struggle in and God didn't make us that way.

[20 : 29] Sin made us that way. Whether it's homosexual temptations or heterosexual temptations whatever it is sin made us that way because we're all sexually deviant at the end of the day.

And now because we're all sexually deviant let me say this clearly a Christian has no right to look down or discriminate against a homosexual any more than he has to discriminate against a heterosexual having sex outside of marriage because there is no difference.

Jesus in fact himself put this very well when the teachers of the law brought him a sexually deviant woman to see what he would do and I want you to listen to what he did and what he said in John 8.

Listen to this. Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives but early the next morning he was back again at the temple. A crowd soon gathered and he sat down and taught them.

As he was speaking the teachers of the religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. Teacher, they said to Jesus, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

[21 : 35] The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say? They were trying to trap him into saying something that they could use against him but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger.

They kept demanding an answer so he stood up again and said alright but let he who is without sin throw the first stone. Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust and when the accusers heard this they slipped away one by one beginning with the oldest until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman.

Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you? No Lord she said and Jesus said neither do I but go and sin no more.

You see Jesus here gives us a prime example of what a Christian's attitude should be when it comes to homosexuality. When we're quick to judge or look down on homosexuals we should remember his words let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

And this is a rebuke to all of us. It's a rebuke to all of us who judge others for sin without judging ourselves first. Elsewhere Jesus says these words do not judge or you too will be judged for in the same way you judge others you will be judged and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

[23 : 02] It's not a Christian's place to judge homosexuals. But I want you to notice something else that Jesus said after the accusers left him alone with the woman he turned to her and he said neither do I condemn you but go and sin no more.

You see he doesn't turn to her and just say well I'm not going to judge you so go and do what you want. No. He says I'm not going to judge you but I am going to tell you what you need to do which is to go and sin no more.

And the reason Jesus didn't judge her even though he had every right to as the son of God the reason he didn't is because he came to the earth in his first coming to save and not to judge.

He came to die for sins not to condemn people for sins. He came to take people's sins and their deviancy and their wrongdoing on himself and to pay the price for people to come back to God and to start living his way.

And so he doesn't judge this woman but what he does do is that he loves her enough to warn her to stop doing what he knows is keeping her from living God's way. You see there's a difference between judging and warning.

[24 : 17] You know often the world will say you Christians you're judging homosexuals when we're actually not judging we're warning. You know if someone was standing in the middle of crossing the road and you saw a truck bearing down on them and they didn't see it and you shouted to them get out the way are they going to turn around to you and say stop judging me?

No. No. Because you're warning them of a danger to come and anyone who is living in opposition to God anyone who is rebelling against God judgment is coming.

Jesus warned of that over and over again and he came to earth to teach us what is wrong with us and how we can get right with God before it's too late. He came to warn us and Jesus warns this woman because one day she will have to stand in judgment and answer for her life whether she's listened to God or not and you know what every one of us will one day.

And so that is the attitude that Christians are to have with homosexuals not to judge them but to love them enough not to keep quiet about what God warns all of us in his word.

And this is what he says to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 Do you not know that those who continue to do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God?

[25 : 37] Do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor those practicing homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

You see sin is sin and we must call it out for what it is and we must warn people of its dangerous consequences as we ourselves must be warned of the sins that tempt each one of us and that each one of us battle with because we all do we're all tempted but we must also recognize that Jesus has given all of us a way out of sin a way to escape the consequences and the power of sin and that's exactly what this passage goes on to say have a look from verse 11 talking to the followers of Christ talking to those who trusted and submitted to Christ and this is what some of you were but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God you see this passage saying to Christians some of you were homosexual some of you were thieves some of you were greedy some of you were drunkards but when Jesus came you were washed you were sanctified from the inside out and you turned away you repented of living your own way and you started living for God and that is what God calls each of us to do to repent of what we know is wrong deep down inside even without the Bible telling us quite clearly that it's wrong to come back to him and he sent his son

Jesus into the world not just to take away our sins when we put our faith in him but to give us the power to start living the life that pleases God which is an amazing thing the life that he's designed you for the life in which you will find your ultimate fulfillment and joy now I'm not saying it's easy for a homosexual to abstain from their desires any more than it is for a heterosexual to abstain from theirs if they're not married but if you're a homosexual here this morning or listening to this talk that is God's call for you as it is for many single heterosexuals not to act on those desires no matter how much the world encourages you to we all live with desires that we're called to resist for the glory of God and you know what with Christ's spirit in us it is completely possible to resist them and you will if you make God's desires for you more important than your own desires and so in closing are Christians anti-gay no

Christians are pro-marriage marriage the way God intended it to be marriage that's about glorifying God not about satisfying ourselves and that is something that every one of us if we are married must remember your marriage is not for your own satisfaction or even the satisfaction of your partner it's for the glory of God and a marriage that is that is conducted without reference to God and what he wants is no marriage at all and it'll just end in disaster are Christians anti-gay no Christians are pro-marriage real marriage God's marriage are Christians anti-gay no in a way Christians are very pro-gay in that we love gay people and we accept them just the same as everyone else and we love them enough to want them to be in a relationship with God and to warn them against everything that will prevent that including homosexual activity and so we won't beat around the bush and try to be politically correct but we'll continue to warn people of what

God's word says no matter heavenly father we don't often want to hear what is right and what is wrong because we are sinners we admit that we are rebels by nature we admit that we naturally want to live our own way and not your way and so we repent of that now and we ask Lord that you would help us help us to not deny what is true in your word help us to know the life that you call us to live and Lord help us in the power of Christ's spirit to repent to turn away from all those patterns of life that do not please you that do not glorify you and I pray for anyone here or anyone listening to this talk who does not have a personal relationship with you as their heavenly father who is still living in resistance to your will and your laws and they know it

[30 : 16] Lord I pray that you would break into their heart cause them to turn cause them to repent cause them to forsake their own independence and to submit to you and your law and cause them to accept Christ who takes away the sins of the world who washes us clean to bring us to you and I pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen