

## **Is the Traditional Position Built on a Small Number of Bible Verses?**

It is sometimes suggested that the orthodox Christian position with regard to homosexuality is based on a very small number of Bible verses (Genesis 19:1–14, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Deuteronomy 23:17–18, Romans 1:24–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 & 1 Timothy 1:10). It is also sometimes suggested that these ‘proof texts’ are negative in nature and (to some degree at least) are a product of their time.

Alongside these criticisms, it is suggested that much more (and positively) is written in Scripture about justice, hypocrisy etc., and that evangelicals would be better off concerning themselves with these latter issues rather than those of same-sex sexual activity. What do we say to these criticisms?

Firstly, it is important to recognise that the Church has not always taken seriously what Scripture has to say about issues including justice, hypocrisy etc. Where this has happened, it is fair to say that the Church has not been living a thoroughly biblical life. We need to repent of this and get it right.

Secondly, it is not acceptable to dismiss biblical texts simply because they are restrictive. There are plenty of biblical injunctions against lying, stealing and violence – all of which we would want to endorse and see as relevant to the 21st century.

Thirdly, that it is not good enough to dismiss the Bible passages referred to earlier simply because they are limited in number. Even though it is a relatively small number of passages we still need to take them as seriously as the equally small number of texts that refer to other issues, such as Holy Communion.

Finally, it is important to note that the biblical texts which prohibit same-sex sexual activity are not ‘isolated’ texts but – rather – that they are consonant with and part of a bigger biblical picture in which God has created human beings as male and female and created sex as something which is meant to unite one man and one woman together in marriage (and potentially to result in the procreation of children). Any and all other forms of sexual activity that fall outside this pattern represent a rejection of this bigger biblical picture.

And so, in the same way that it is impossible to reject Scripture’s condemnation of hypocrisy, it is not possible to reject Scripture’s condemnation of same-sex sexual relationships. And in the same way that Scripture implores us to commend and pursue justice and mercy, so it implores us to commend and pursue the God-given pattern for sexual activity as inside male–female marriage.

RESOURCES:

Ian Paul, 'Same-sex unions', Grove booklet B71 (See Books: Recommendations and Critiques)