

Jesus didn't condemn homosexuality – rather the rich, hypocritical etc. Why are evangelicals so obsessed with same-sex sex?

It is sometimes suggested that evangelicals are obsessed with condemning various forms of sexual expression (including same-sex sex) and that this is in contrast to Jesus who did not talk so much about sex. He – the argument goes – was much more interested in condemning the rich and hypocritical, the religious and the unjust.

However, this is an unsubstantial criticism on two counts. Firstly, because it appears to suggest that evangelical ethics are only informed by the teaching of Jesus as against Scripture as a whole. The Canons of the Church of England confirm that the Pauline epistles and the Old Testament ethical writings are no more or less authoritative of Scripture than the gospels. Jesus certainly endorsed the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Church throughout history has endorsed the authority of all the New Testament writings and not just those of the gospels.

Secondly – and with specific reference to Jesus's teaching – it is clear that Jesus was opposed to same-sex sex. The first piece of evidence is the statement of Jesus in Mark 7:21–22 about what makes a human being unclean in the sight of God: 'For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.' The word translated 'fornication' in this passage is the Greek plural noun *porneiai* which was used in the 1st century to refer to the sexual offences forbidden by Leviticus 18-20, among which is same-sex intercourse (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13) . It follows that what Jesus is saying is that homosexual activity is one of the 'evil things' that come out of the fallen human heart.

The second piece of evidence is the fact that Jesus expressed his call to radical obedience to God in terms of a sexual ethic that was more rather than less strict in its interpretation of the Old Testament than that of his contemporaries, and was based on a reaffirmation of the teaching about lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual relationships in Genesis 1 and 2 (Matthew 5:27–32, 19:3–12). It is therefore impossible to conceive that Jesus would have endorsed homosexuality had this been an issue which had arisen during his ministry.

Finally, it needs to be noted that the Early Church was in a much better position than we will ever be to know what Jesus would have thought about homosexuality, and the evidence from the epistles suggests that it believed that he would not have affirmed homosexual activity. It is difficult to account for the Early Church's consistent rejection of such activity on any other basis.

For all these reasons it seems clear that in opposing same-sex sex, evangelicals are simply following Jesus's example.

RESOURCES:

['Was Jesus "inclusive"?'](#), Ian Paul

See also: Jesus's emphasis in relationships was love – surely marriage is a quality of relationship not a prescribed shape?