

Inside this Issue

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The Moral Maze: Same-sex Relationships

Page 1

Made for Him and bought by Him

Page 6

Fools in Fellowship: The Know-it-alls

Page 8

YPS

(Young Precious Seed) is a supplement of *Precious Seed* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live.

YPS is published by Precious Seed, P.O. Box 573, Fareham, UK, PO14 9FB, and is also available separately from the magazine.

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Same-sex Relationships

'Friends stand shoulder to shoulder; lovers stand face to face'. Since a close, yet non-sexual, friendship with someone of the same sex, a friendship which is 'shoulder to shoulder', can be a blessing, what about a relationship with someone of the same sex which is 'face to face'? If a close non-sexual friendship between a man and a man, or a woman and a woman, is acceptable to God, is a sexual relationship between a man and a man, or a woman and a woman, equally acceptable? Moral standards in our modern world have changed; it is now acceptable to live a gay lifestyle and for a man to enter into a 'marriage' in all but name with another man, or a woman with another woman. It is also no longer acceptable to speak out against such relationships. If the majority view has changed its opinion, and if the Christian is now in a minority in his or her opposition to that view, should the Christian change his or her view?



The Bible certainly does have something to say about homosexual activity. Part of the Old Testament law given by God to Moses specifically condemns homosexual activity and examples of homosexual lifestyles in the time before God gave His law to Moses are detailed and condemned. Although the Lord Jesus did not explicitly condemn homosexual behaviour, elsewhere in the New Testament it is mentioned and forbidden. Both Old and New Testaments therefore have something to say about it. The pro-gay Christian lobby is aware of these passages, and re-interprets the classic position of most denominations on homosexuality. How can they do that, and are they right to do so?

BY IAN REES

Same-sex Relationships

'From the beginning'

When God created man in the very beginning of the history of this world, He saw immediately that 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him,' Gen. 2. 18 NKJV. This helper, comparable to him in stature, intellect and soul, was a woman, whom God also created in His own image, Gen. 2. 20. God intended this man and woman to have the closest possible relationship, and He brought the woman to the man. The result of this meeting was a marriage in which God, as Eve's guardian in place of her father (for she obviously had no father) actually gave the woman away. 'Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' signifying the sexual union between the two, is obviously, therefore approved of God between a man and a woman when it is accompanied by a public leaving of father and mother and a public commitment to life-long union, physical and emotional, with one another. This interpretation is the correct one, because the Lord Jesus Himself referred to this as God-

approved marriage in Matthew chapter 19 verses 3 to 5. Paul sees it in the same way, as a marriage, not just a business partnership, Eph. 5. 31. We should notice, therefore that marriage, right from the very beginning, was intended by God to be between a man and a woman, not a man and a man, or a woman and a woman.

God's ideal is marriage between Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!

Human nature being what it is, sinful and with a pre-programmed drive to disobey God in any way possible with which we are all born since the fall of Adam, people fall short of God's ideal. It wasn't long before men began to sin against God both ethically and morally. It was in the time of Noah that homosexual sin was first mentioned and it brought with it a curse, Gen. 9. 20-27. God punished the men of Sodom and Gomorrah for their homosexual lifestyle, Gen. 13. 13; Gen. 19. 28. Abimelech, a heathen king, was warned by God not to commit adultery with Abraham's wife, Gen. 20. 1-9. Prostitution is mentioned in Genesis 38. Joseph refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife, saying, 'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Gen. 39. 9. All these examples, and many more, show that God's purpose from the beginning for sex to be between husband and wife alone was known by the whole of mankind, even the heathen, and that man's failure to keep sex within marriage brought down God's judgement long before the law was given to the Israelites through Moses.

God's moral law

When God chose a nation to be His own people, He gave them laws by which they should live. These laws were to make them different to other nations. They included laws which regulated how they were to worship (the ceremonial law), how they were to function as a nation (the civil law) and how they were to treat one another and God (the moral law).



God's purpose from the beginning for sex to be between husband and wife alone was known by the whole of mankind

Morality, and the moral law, forbids stealing from others, murdering others, lying about others and having sex with anyone other than your partner in marriage. God's moral law, unlike the ceremonial law and the civil law for the Jews, has not been abolished and remains the same for both believer and unbeliever alike. The act of sexual union is an act which is acceptable to God within the bounds of marriage and *any* sexual activity outside marriage is always condemned by God, whether it is between people who are not yet married (fornication, 1 Cor. 6. 18; 1 Cor. 7. 2; Gal. 5. 19); between people who are already married (adultery, Lev. 20. 10; Ezek. 16. 32; Matt. 5. 27-28); between people of the same sex (homosexuality, Lev. 20. 13; Rom 1. 26-27; 1 Cor. 6. 9); or between people and animals (bestiality, Exod. 22. 19; Lev. 20. 15-16). Sex is a God-given drive and is good and acceptable, but only when it is between a husband and his wife, Heb. 13. 4; 1 Cor. 7. 4-5.

New Testament Teaching

A number of years ago a group of prominent evangelicals in Britain sent a letter to several newspapers in which they quoted, verbatim, the passage in Romans chapter 1 where Paul says that women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion, see Romans 1. 26-32. At the close of the extract, they signed their names but

did not say they were quoting the Bible. Some newspapers refused to publish the letter. Those that did received a torrent of objections, complaining about the unacceptable homophobia of such prominent preachers, and how un-Christian they were. Several days later, the same men sent in another letter in which they said the words of their first letter were taken directly from the Bible and that those who complained of them being un-Christian were actually being un-Christian themselves in refusing to accept Christian teaching!

Though the Lord Jesus did not mention homosexuality, He most clearly affirmed that marriage in the eyes of God is between a man and a woman, Matt. 19. 3-5. The marriage of male and female is presented to us as a picture of Christ and His church, Eph. 5. 22-33. Adultery, fornication and homosexuality are condemned in the New Testament, 1 Cor. 6. 9-11.

Revisionists

Modernizers try to re-interpret the biblical prohibition on homosexual behaviour. *'God was not judging the men of Sodom for their homosexuality'*, they say, *'He was judging them for their refusal to show hospitality to strangers'*. Yet Lot knew the men of Sodom wanted to have sexual relations with his male visitors, not show them hospitality, for he even offered them his own daughters for sex instead. He was hardly offering his daughters to be shown hospitality! *'The passages in Leviticus that condemn homosexuality only do*

Same-sex Relationships



so in cultic terms', we are told, 'God did not want the Israelites using male prostitutes in worship, as the other nations did. Otherwise, away from the context of worship, homosexual behaviour was alright'. But the same passage (Leviticus 20. 12-21) condemns bestiality and incest. Are they telling us that bestiality and incest are alright, provided they are not associated with the worship of God? What

nonsense! 'Paul's comment, (1 Cor. 6 9-10), that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God is merely in the context of promiscuous homosexual activity. Loving same-sex relationships are different', they argue. So idolatry, adultery, theft, drunkenness and swindling, which are all condemned in the same passage, are alright provided they are done in a loving context, are they? Of course not. The biblical teaching on same-sex sexual relationships, however loving they may be, is quite clear. They, and all sexual relationships outside a marriage between a husband and a wife, are unacceptable to God, are sinful, and must be avoided.

What should be our conclusions?

All extra-marital genital activity involving others is unacceptable to God

One important point to notice is that

homosexual activity is listed in the Levitical passage, Leviticus 20, as one of several acts God considers immoral, but it is no more immoral than the others. The sentence on each of these sins was death, as it was for disobedient and disrespectful children, Deut. 21. 19-21! It is true that homosexual behaviour is elsewhere referred to as an abomination, Lev. 18. 20. But so also is human (child) sacrifice, Deut. 12. 31, transvestism, Deut. 22. 5 and adultery, Ezek. 22. 11. We have no grounds, therefore, for treating a homosexual as being any more immoral than an adulterer or a transvestite. This does not, however, excuse a man, or a woman, from being homosexual. It merely reminds us that we must not have an arbitrary list of sins we think are worse than others. God's assessment is the right one, and it will be 'more tolerable' for the homosexual sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah to stand before God in a time of judgement to come than those, presumably, outwardly upright and moral citizens of Bethsaida and Chorazin, because the sin of wilful rejection of God's Son is worse than immoral behaviour, Matt. 11. 23-24.

All human natures are equally sinful before God

Every human being, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ, inherits a sinful nature at conception. We are all sinners by nature and sinners by behaviour. Human nature will manifest its sinfulness in different ways. Some people tell lies more easily than others, some have problems with anger and others do not; some are more deceitful, some more proud. Some find it easy to be

pure in thought, others have major problems with lust. Some struggle with sexual temptation, some are never bothered by it. Some are 'straight' and some are 'gay'. It is not right, however, to excuse a homosexual tendency by saying, 'I was born like this, therefore I cannot help it and I must do what is according to my nature. It is in my genes'. A man may be born with a disposition to rob and steal, but that does not mean he is allowed to do so. Yet being homosexual by nature is no more sinful than being an inveterate adulterer. All human natures are equally sinful before God. But though this may not excuse homosexual behaviour, it does not allow us arbitrarily to discriminate against and turn from those who are homosexual by nature.

Homosexual sin can be forgiven

The only unforgivable sin in scripture is sin against the Holy Spirit. Homosexual sin is forgivable. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, clearly states, that the 'effeminate' and 'abusers of themselves with mankind' ('men who practise homosexuality' ESV), will not inherit the kingdom of God. He goes on to say, however, 'And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God', 1 Cor. 6. 9-11. The mercy and grace of God and His forgiveness are clearly extended to active homosexuals, as well as they are to those who indulge in heterosexual extra-marital sex *provided* these things are confessed, repented of and avoided.

Celibate homosexuals should be supported

There is no doubt that someone who finds himself/herself sexually attracted to others of the same sex must never give in to that attraction and engage in sex with them. This will necessarily involve a life of celibacy, of self-control and perhaps of loneliness. But then someone who is heterosexual, and never marries, is also expected to live a life of celibacy, self-control, and endure the inevitable loneliness. A gay man or woman would rightly condemn a single, straight, girl or boy, man or woman, for sleeping around. Why should it be wrong for them, but right for a gay to do so?

Whilst we may urge all believers to show compassion upon those who are homosexual by nature, we cannot condone homosexual behaviour. Yet surely it is also right that those believers who are so inclined, yet keep themselves pure, live lonely celibate lives, repent of past failures and struggle to please God, should be honoured and respected amongst us. They should be loved, supported and prayed for. We all struggle to live as disciples of God in a fallen world. We must all support, love and forgive one another, whilst never excusing failure. So, let any that is without moral sin among us cast the first stone.

A gay man or woman would rightly condemn a single, straight, girl or boy, man or woman, for sleeping around. Why should it be wrong for them, but right for a gay to do so?

Made for Him and bought by Him

John had spent many Saturday afternoons in the garage building that boat. He had carved the hulk out of a solid block of wood, chiselling it out and sandpapering it. His mother had helped with the sails but he had a model and knew exactly what to do with the rigging. It was a beautiful model sailing ship and the best of it was that he had made it himself.

Now it was finished and it sat in state in the living room, admired by all. His father was particularly impressed. 'I am proud of you for working so well with your hands, John', he said. 'What are you going to make next?' But John had not thought about what to do next. His boat was enough for now.

It was a lovely spring day when he took the boat to the river to sail it and he headed for the best place – a little sandy beach hidden by the rushes where he had once found a moorhen's nest. It was perfect sailing weather, windy but sunny, and as he launched his boat the breeze caught its sails and bore it out into the amber water of the current. He squatted at the edge and gave play to the string. In a few minutes he would move on, but first he would take time to admire the beauty of the boat.

So absorbed was he, that he never heard the voices just behind him, and he jumped when three boys much older than he slid down the

rushes and squatted beside him. He clutched the string tightly, for these were not boys he knew. 'Here, give us a go', said the oldest. 'Well, only for a minute', said John. 'I'm about to pull her in'.

He felt nervous and alone, for these boys were much bigger than he. The biggest lad had already tugged the string from his hand and was hauling in the boat, pulling it over on its side and drenching its sails. As it approached the bank, John suddenly found himself tipped into a bed of nettles and rushes. His hands squelched in the soft mud and dirt flew into his eyes, blinding him momentarily. When at last he had struggled to his feet, there was neither boy nor boat to be seen – only the trampled weeds and the weeping willows. He scrambled up the bank but the boys had disappeared and he did not even know in which direction they had gone. There was nothing he could do. Besides, if he did catch them, he could not do much against the three of them, so he wiped his hands and turned for home. When his parents returned, his father set out at once to make enquiries, but no one in the locality had seen the three strange boys. John was very quiet at supper-time. His father offered to help him make another one, but John knew it would not be the same. He would never forget that first boat.

The weeks passed and John and his father made another boat and sailed it on the river but John did not forget the first one. Sometimes he would lie awake and remember the shine of



the paint and the billowing of the sails and wonder where it had got to. One afternoon he cycled into town to buy a birthday present for his mother and having found what he wanted, he took a shortcut home through the narrow back streets. He loved the pokey little second-hand junk shops, and dawdled along gazing in at the windows. Suddenly he stopped dead, for there in the centre of a shop window, along with an old guitar and a brass coal scuttle, stood his boat.

Propping his bicycle against the wall, he burst into the shop. 'That boat in the window', he gasped. 'It's mine! I made it'. The little old shopkeeper looked at him over his spectacles. 'On the contrary, young man, it's mine. I bought it off some boys a couple of weeks ago. It's not long been in the window'.

'But I made it', cried John. 'It's mine, it really is. Please give it to me'. 'Not unless you pay the proper price for it', said the shopkeeper. John realized he was going to have to get some money for his boat, and quickly too, as he was desperate to ensure no one else bought it in the meantime. He sped home, and there was his father, gardening. 'Dad', he shouted breathlessly. 'May I borrow some money off you? I will work for it. I'll clean the car, mow the lawn or do anything you want. But my boat is in the window of a second-hand shop in town, and I don't want anyone else to buy it'.

His father sighed, thinking of his roses, then said, 'Hop into the car. You can't bring the boat home on

your bike or you will mess up the rigging. Let's go'.

The old shopkeeper was about to put up his shutters when John rushed to the shop. 'I've got the money', John shouted. 'Please let me have my boat'. The old man chuckled. 'I'll sell you my boat', he replied, handing it over.

They drove home in silence, John examining his treasure. Only when they reached the gate did he speak. 'You know, Dad', he said, 'I was thinking, this boat belongs to me twice now. I made it and I bought it. Isn't that something?' 'Yes', said his father with a twinkle in his eye. 'All the more reason to take great care of it'.

In the same way, God created us for Himself, but we were snatched away by the devil, and began to live selfishly and disobediently, preferring to please ourselves and thus coming under the power and control of the devil. But God Himself sent His Son Jesus Christ into our world. He was crucified on the cross and there paid the penalty for sin with His own life. The ransom price to bring us back to the ownership of God was not silver and gold, but the blood of Jesus Christ God's son. God redeemed all who believe on Jesus Christ there at the cross, and can therefore claim as His own all those who accept and trust in His Son. He can claim them as *twice* His own – made by Him and bought by Him. Is that true of you? You are not your own, 'for you are bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's'. 1 Cor. 6. 20, NKJV.

Fools in Fellowship

Recognizing, but not being, fools.

The Know-it-alls



BY IAN REES

Meet **Master Know-it-all**. He and his wife always know best. They sail along through life supreme in the knowledge that they have it all sussed. No one else has their experience, their knowledge, their understanding, their foresight. If only people knew the depth of their wisdom! If only people would see things the way they see them!

The Know-it-alls are **supremely self-confident**. They are right in their own opinion and that is the only opinion worth having, Prov. 28. 26; Prov. 12. 15. Success in business, or inherited wealth and social standing, can bring pride, arrogance and that self-confidence which makes it difficult to listen to others who are not so successful or well-to-do, Prov. 28.11. Such people forget that success in one area of life does not lead to success in every area. It is one thing to be a successful businessman; it is quite another to be a good teacher, a wise spiritual counsellor, or a good shepherd. Sometimes the Know-it-alls are young men and women who have not yet made it. But they **see things differently** to others. They are pure in their own eyes. They don't bother to take advice from parents, or from an older generation. In fact, they despise them, Prov. 30. 12-13. 'What fuddy-duddies they are! How last-year!' The Know-it-alls are not just proud, they are **conceited**. Do you see a man 'wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him,' Prov. 28. 16. They are, therefore, **supremely un-teachable**. They will not listen to wise advice, Prov. 12. 15.

They probably don't even see the need to ask for it and in the unlikely event that they will ever get anything wrong, they'd rather make their own mistakes, thank you very much.

God flashes a warning across our paths. 'Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!' Isa. 5.21. He warns us not to keep company with such people. 'Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits,' Rom.12.16. The ESV puts it like this, 'Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself,' Gal. 6.3. After all, 'pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud,' Prov.16.18-19. And the best advice of all to Master, or Miss, Know-it-all? 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil,' Prov. 3. 5-7. How much heart-ache would be avoided if we would consider each other better than ourselves, Phil. 2. 3.



Do you know any Know-it-alls? Keep away from them. They won't help you. Are you one yourself? Don't be. Pride goes before a fall.