

Position Paper on Homosexuality and Gay Marriage **By Michael R. Jones**

Homosexuality has indeed moved out of the closet and into the mainstream. This is demonstrated in the proliferation of homosexual characters on television, in movies, and the current debate about gay civil unions and marriages. This issue has even affected Christianity in that many homosexuals are seeking acceptance from Christian churches and even positions of leadership within Christian organizations. Not only that, many within those organizations are seeking to facilitate the acceptance of homosexuals by attempting to mitigate or remove the Scriptural barriers against its acceptance. This writer, however, believes firmly that homosexuality is a sin but that there is forgiveness and mercy for sinners who truly repent.

While it is true that homosexuality in various forms has been accepted in many cultures in the history of the world, even significant cultures such as ancient Greece, whose impact on modern western culture is unmistakable, even those cultures did not attempt to redefine marriage. (Incidentally, this means that the arguments of proponents that the teachings of Scripture are nothing more than the products of morally narrow cultures are not true.) Perhaps it took the entitlement culture of the 21st century United States or perhaps it was simply a new-found boldness resulting from homosexuality's acceptance during the last few decades; either way, these recent events mark the first time that so fundamental an institution as marriage has been redefined by a special interest group.

Contrary to what many activists repeat, the issue of gay marriage is not one of equal rights since unmarried partners have more options and freedom than do married partners. For example, unmarried partners, whether gay or straight, may divide their property however they choose and if the relationship dissolves, they are may split their property however they choose, without requiring the courts to get involved.¹ Many homosexuals have recognized this and do not seek marriage for this and other reasons, although it is difficult to know how many homosexuals want to marry even though the activists are pushing hard for them. In addition, the law also limits, for various reasons, other people who might wish to marry such as those who are related too closely by blood.²

The issue, however, is not one of rights so much as it is one of acceptance. Homosexuals think that if they have the right to marry, then they will feel accepted by society at large, even if they do not have all the same rights as others do. But this will not guarantee acceptance. Consider that there was a time when many states outlawed interracial marriage. While today every state guarantees the right of people to marry outside their racial group, in many areas of the country interracial marriages are still frowned upon and partners in such marriages not only have difficulty finding acceptance, many are ostracized, sometimes even by their own families. One can foresee the same thing happening to homosexuals. Rights do not guarantee acceptance.

It seems clear from this last election season that many Americans do not want gay marriage recognized. This is interesting considering the push for gay rights even among heterosexuals in this country in the last decade. Yet, in voting booths across the country where gay marriage issues were on the ballot, voters struck them down, often by overwhelming margins, as was their right to do. During the 2004 election race, many homosexuals thought they

¹ Thomas Sowell, "Gay Marriage Rights" (New York: Creators Syndicate, 2004), December 31, 2004, <<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/ts20041231.shtml>> (accessed March 7, 2005).

² Courttv.com, "Judge Refuses to Marry Two First Cousins," (New York: Court TV, 2005), <http://www.courtvt.com/people/2005/0318/cousins_ap.html> (accessed March 19, 2005).

would find a friend in John Kerry, but early on in the election race, he and his running mate John Edwards stopped short of affirming the right of homosexuals to marry.

These facts indicate what the American people think about the issue of gay marriage and yet the gay and lesbian community insists upon forcing the minority view upon the majority, even labeling those who oppose them as “hatemongers” and “homophobes.” The forcing of someone else to accept another’s views is itself a form of totalitarianism. The homosexual who demands to be accepted by heterosexuals is imposing a point of view upon another which removes from that person the freedom to choose. A homosexual who does this is guilty of the same thing he accuses his opponents of and strips the other of his freedom not to approve of this alternate lifestyle. In other words, if someone forces another to approve of them, then the other has no right to his own opinions or even his own values. But in their mad quest for acceptance and equal rights it has never occurred to the proponents of homosexuality and gay marriage that they are the ones trying to impose their morality upon others.

In this climate of sought-after acceptance much is said about morality. This concept of morality is important to evaluate since most people in the world today live without any moral authority higher than themselves. Reasoned discourse has gone the way of the dinosaur and debates often become little more than name-calling and repetition of phrases such as “That may be true for you, but it’s not for me.” Adding to this confusion and tension is spurious “scientific” research that purports to demonstrate the homosexuality is genetic or biological. Homosexual rights advocates refer to such studies in an attempt to prove that homosexual should have equal rights and not be condemned for their behavior because “they were born that way” or “that is the way God made them.” The blaming of genetics that would not be accepted in criminal courts as an excuse for misbehavior is, however, considered acceptable with regard to the homosexual lifestyle.

This spurious science does not settle the issue, however, since many of these studies are questionable at best and downright misleading at worst.³ These studies do not in any way demonstrate that homosexuals are born homosexual any more than a study could demonstrate that I was born to gorge myself on fried catfish. In addition, if I were told that such behavior, the eating of large amounts of fried catfish, was bad for me and would ultimately lead to sickness and death, I could stop eating it no matter what my genetic propensities were.

This demonstrates that one must not confuse the *is* and the *ought*. In other words, even if these studies were accurate and did accurately reflect the relation between the genetic makeup of an individual and his behavior, that still would not mean that their behavior was acceptable. Morally wrong behavior is still morally wrong regardless of how predisposed one may or may not be to that behavior. The solution is not to lower the standard so that one does not have to live up to it anymore; the solution, instead, is to assist the person in living up to the standards that are right.

The Christian standard of morality, is determined by the teachings of Holy Scripture. Behavior is judged moral or immoral based upon what the Scriptures have to say about the behavior. The Scriptures are consistent in their condemnation of homosexuality from Old Testament to New. While some commentators seek to remove the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality by making the famous Genesis 22 passage about Sodom refer only to God’s displeasure at Sodom’s poor hospitality, such an interpretation is clearly at odds with the simplest understanding of the passage. One must do injustice to the context and ignore the New

³ See for example the 1991 study by Simon LaVay discussed in J. Kerby Anderson, *Moral Dilemmas* (Nashville: Word, 1998), 170-174.

Testament commentary on this passage (Jude 7), both of which make clear that the problem was not one of poor hospitality but one of sexual immorality.

Under the Mosaic Law, crimes of homosexuality, along with other sexual sins, were condemned and carried the death penalty (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Any attempt to limit these condemnations merely to recommendations regarding ritual purity does injustice to the proper understanding of ritual purity in relation to moral purity, both of which were enjoined upon the priests and upon the people. The continuity of morality between Old Testament and New Testament and the similarities in the moral standards of both testaments should dispel the notion that these Old Testament prohibitions are irrelevant.

Indeed, the New Testament condemns homosexuality in terms as strong as the Old Testament Mosaic Law. Paul in Romans 1:26-27 speaks of homosexuality as the logical outgrowth of lust and rebellion against God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 condemns homosexuality, among other sins, in terms that leave no room for differences of interpretation regarding degree of sinfulness since all are outside the kingdom. Even a cursory reading of these passages reveals that Paul is condemning this sin outright; he is not condemning the mere abuse of a Christian's liberty nor is Paul counseling moderation, rather he condemns this sin in the strongest of terms.

A condemnation of homosexuality in act and as a lifestyle leads to only one logical conclusion regarding where the human writers of Scripture would stand on the gay marriage issue since a condemnation of the lifestyle and actions leaves no room for an approval of those in the lifestyle to marry one another. Not only that, the writers of Scripture leave no room for an understanding that marriage may be between any other than a man or woman. One must not mistake silence for approval in this matter since the biblical account speaks only of husbands in relation to wives and wives in relation to husbands, never husbands in relation to other husbands or wives in relation to wives. The model consistent with the Christian witness of both Scripture and history is the model of one man and one woman coming together in marriage as husband and wife.

What, then, is the church to do in response to those who seek to assert these standards upon society and even upon the church? First, the Christian must remember that while Christians are called upon to stand firmly against sin and to affirm Christian truth and morality, even in the public square, they are still bound to demonstrate love and compassion to all. Just as each believer was at one time under the wrath and condemnation of God, so, too, are sinners of every persuasion. Violence, name-calling, and hateful speech are forbidden by the Scriptures. One may firmly stand on the foundation of Scripture, affirming the truth of God and responding to challenges, and do so with compassion and graciousness as Christians are called to do.

Second, the church is to clearly express her views regarding moral issues such as these. Without a clear understanding of where an individual or group stands, there is greater potential for compromise and the slope becomes more and more slippery.

Third, the church must receive those who come out of the homosexual lifestyle, embrace them, and make disciples of them as the Scriptures direct. Forgiveness must be extended on the basis of one's having sought the forgiveness of God. One who comes professing faith in Christ must not be outcast because of what they used to be and the church and Christians in the church must learn to see people through the eyes of God's transforming grace, welcoming those whom God has welcomed.

WORKS CITED

Anderson, J. Kerby. *Moral Dilemmas*. Nashville: Word, 1998.

Courttv.com. "Judge Refuses to Marry Two First Cousins." <http://www.courttv.com/people/2005/0318/cousins_ap.html>. March 2005.

Sowell, Thomas. "Gay Marriage Rights." <<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/ts20041231.shtml>> December 31, 2004.

For Further Reading

Grenz, Stanley. *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Jones, Stanton L. and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight & Narrow?: Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995.