

Our Cultural Context

Same sex Marriage Act – came into force 13 March 2014 with the first civil same sex marriages on 29 March 2014. Same sex marriages in the church – First same sex marriage in Church June 2015. Recent statement by the house of Bishops – likely provision of words for the blessing of same sex marriages.

In this context it is easy to feel fearful and to keep our heads down.

What will help us stand?

1. God’s unbreakable love – Romans 8:35-39

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

36As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37No, in all these things we are more

than conquerors through him who loved us.

38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. The privilege of suffering for Christ - 1 Peter 4:12-14

12Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

13But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that

you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

14If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Being convinced of the truth of every word of the Bible which is what we learn from Jesus’ example: Matthew 19:4 -6

4"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'

5and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be

united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ?

6So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

V5 “and said” Jesus quotes the author of Genesis as God speaking.

The Spirit speaks through the meaning of these human words which are God's words. The Spirit can bring illumination of our understanding but never a meaning that contradicts these words. This is important as the revisionists claim to be speaking by the Spirit and that Synods are making decisions by the Holy Spirit (changing doctrine by voting, rather than accepting what the Bible says.) This contradicts our Anglican formularies:

Article 6 - "Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church".

Article 21 - "General councils may not be gathered together without the command and will of rulers. And when they are gathered together (since they are an assembly of men, among whom not all are ruled by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God), they may err. Indeed they sometimes have erred, even in things relating to God. Therefore anything commanded by them as necessary to salvation has no power or authority unless it can be shown to be taught by Scripture".

If general synod decides that homosexual marriage can receive the blessing of God, then we stand with scripture not synod. This is true Anglicanism.

So what does the Bible say?

Genesis 1-2 (Argument taken from Kevin de Young "What does the Bible really teach about homosexuality?").

Genesis 1:28

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the

fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

1:11,12,21,24,25,28 – God made Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. God means for offspring to be the result of sexual union. This is his blessing. So his blessing cannot take place where children are not possible from the union. This is not possible in homosexual unions. Book of Common Prayer – marriage "ordained for the procreation of children".

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

2:21 - Eve is made as Adam's complement. "Suitable" is translating the Hebrew word **יְגִדָּה** which means literally "like his counterpart, or corresponding to him". The idea is that of a corresponding shape.

2:23 - Woman taken out of man. **אִשָּׁה** ishah, taken from **אִישׁ** ish This gives the idea of a reunion that God creates.

2:25 – "One flesh" refers to sexual intercourse (cf 1 Corinthians 6:15-16). In other words one flesh unity cannot be achieved other than between a man and a woman by God's design.

"The ish and ishah can become one flesh because it is not just a sexual union, but a reunion bringing together two differentiated beings with one made from, and both made for the other". (Kevin De Young – What does the Bible really say about Homosexuality?)

Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9 – Jesus uses the Genesis account as normative in defining marriage. In Ephesians 5:21-33 and Revelation 19:1-9, 21:9 – the marriage of Christ is the picture and pattern of marriage. If we declare marriage can take place between members of the same sex, we change the nature of the relationship between Christ and the church.

23 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.

24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and

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."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

blameless.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--

30 for we are members of his body.

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.

This understanding of marriage only works if this is a complementary pair in which Christ is different to his church, the husband is different to his wife.

Objection – But does marriage between one man and one woman for life mean that homosexual practice is wrong according to the OT?

Old Testament Perspective.

Context – Ancient Near Eastern pagan Society did not condemn consensual homosexual practice. We know from ANE texts that homosexual cult prostitution was a part of Mesopotamian society. (see Robert Gagnon). Hence Biblical prohibition was unique.

Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 19.

²"My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."³But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.⁴Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." ⁶Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything

to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."

⁹"Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

¹⁰But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door. ¹²The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."

The OT considers this event to be an example of extreme sinfulness. (Isa 1:9-10, 3:9, Jer 23:14, Ezek 16:44-58). The OT considers this to be an event of divine judgement. (Deut 29:23, Isa 13:19, Jer 49:18, 50:40, Lam 4:6, Amos 4:11, Zeph 2:9). Jesus uses Sodom (and Gomorrah) as examples of impending judgement (Matt 10:14-15, 11:23-24, Luke 10:10-12, 17:26-30).

Objection – Maybe the homosexual sin aspect of Genesis 19 was manufactured by Philo and Josephus in the 1st Century? Wasn't the sin rather one of a lack of hospitality because of Ezekiel 16:47- 50?

47You not only walked in their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they.

48As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done.

49"Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were

arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.

50They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.

51Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. You have done more detestable things than they, and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done.

The argument is that the sin of Sodom was only being arrogant, unconcerned with the poor and needy and inhospitable. Nothing to do with homosexual practice. But the word translated “detestable things” is the same word used in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 translated “abomination” תּוֹעֵבָה Given that this is singular, in both Leviticus and Ezekiel 16:50, many take this to be an explicit reference to the sin of homosexual practice, the only singular abomination in Leviticus 18 and 20.

18:22" Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable (abomination)

20:13" If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable (abomination). They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads."

Objection – But why do we take these prohibitions seriously and not laws about not eating shellfish? Because of Jesus! Mark 7:14-19:

14Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

15Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.' "

17After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked

him about this parable.

18"Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'?

19For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")

The apostolic commentary on Genesis 19 is revealing - Jude 4-8

4For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

5Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord

delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

6And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

7In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah

and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of

eternal fire.

8In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.

Conclusion – the universal witness of the OT is that homosexual acts are disobedient to God and deserving of his wrath, as are all the other acts described in Leviticus 18. This informs the backdrop to the NT teaching of Jesus and his apostles.

“Only in our own day, removed as we are from Ancient Near East conventions, are these kinds of specious connections made by people who are desperate to find the slightest shred of support for homosexual practice in the Bible” Robert Gagnon p154.

What about the New Testament?

The levitical code is summed up in the greek word “porneia = porneia” translated sexual immorality. Hence Jesus definition of marriage is between one man and one woman for life and the sin which breaks marriage as porneia. Jesus, in his definition of marriage, is not abolishing the law of Moses, if anything he heightens and fulfils it, as he claims:

17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

19Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches

others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So the onus lies on those who claim that Jesus has rejected the Levitical code on sexuality to prove it, given that he explicitly says that he has not come to abolish it, but to fulfil it.

Objection – But isn’t this just old fashioned? Why would we deny the opportunity for sexual love to homosexual couples? Surely the ancient world was just rather up tight about this?

No! 1st century pagan culture accepted homosexual practice, particularly between older men and younger men. Nevertheless, when the gospel reached into these cultures, the apostle Paul, with Christ's authority taught clearly on this topic that homosexual practice is a salvation issue:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders **10**nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers

will inherit the kingdom of God.
11And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul clearly teaches here that a particular category of people will not inherit the kingdom of God and that we are not to be deceived on this. People who continually act in a particular way, will not go to heaven. This was the lifestyle that pagans in Corinth had until they were converted and then they repented of their idolatry, greed, drunkenness and homosexual practice when they became Christians. This is what some of them were, says Paul.

Objection – doesn't this relate to homosexual prostitution rather than stable homosexual relationships?

The greek words are:

μαλακοὶ - lit soft ones – translated homosexual prostitute.

ἀρσενικοῖται – lit men sleepers – translated homosexual offenders.

Much research has taken place into these words and what they mean. This has meant that the idea of homosexual prostitution and extreme homosexual acts (which offenders has the connotation of) is misleading. The word prostitute from 1 Corinthians 6 is πόρνης . This also translates the Hebrew for shrine prostitute (which could apply to male and female prostitutes)

So rather than these words being for homosexual prostitution or promiscuity, they are general words for any homosexual sex between men in which there are active and passive partners.

Hence this has led them to be retranslated:

NIV 2011

Translates both with “nor men who have sex with men” with a footnote. “The words *men who have sex with men* translate two greek words that refer to passive and active participants in homosexual acts.

ESV

Translated both as “ nor men who practice homosexuality” with a footnote “The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts.”

Similarly in Romans Paul shows how same sex passions are a sign of God’s wrath (on mankind, not the individual), not his blessing. Romans 1:18-27

18The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19**since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. **21**For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22**Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25**They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. **26**Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. **27**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.

In summary:

Homosexual practice is a salvation issue and far from being something which God blesses, it is a sign of his wrath on mankind. This is not to be understood as homosexual lust being of a worse kind than heterosexual lust, but that it shows us all that we are all unacceptable to God as we are. Our sexual nature is fallen, needing forgiveness and new life. Only when we trust in him as Lord and God are we forgiven and transformed to live new lives in which porneia is incompatible with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and inheriting eternal life.

Revisionists argue that what we feel should determine our theology. Gagnon would disagree:

“Those who find in the gospels a Jesus who is a prophet of tolerance, who forgives all (except perhaps the intolerant) regardless of behavioural change, have distorted the historical reality” Gagnon p209. “Jesus did not confuse love with toleration of all behaviours and neither should the church”. Gagnon p211

Does this mean homophobia is OK for Christians? No.

We are to welcome all and all can call on the name of the Lord to be saved. We are all sexual sinners who need a saviour who will transform us into his likeness.

Is the church good at welcoming homosexuals? What about us at Fordham?

In general there is much we can do to repent of a lack of love for one another, and in lacking this love, tending towards love that is based on the nuclear family rather than the family of God. The book by Ed Shaw is particularly challenging and helpful in this “The Plausibility Problem” Ed Shaw. Jesus defined his family as “those who do the will of God” and we should have this as our ultimate definition, whilst obeying God in how to please him in our nuclear families.

How are we to pastor those who fall into sexual sin?

1. Teach and support those who struggle to remain celibate.
2. Warn those who refuse to remain celibate.
3. Discipline (by excommunication – Matthew 18).
4. Welcome upon repentance (1 Corinthians 5).
5. Affirm of Christ’s forgiveness for those who repent.
6. We do not judge at all those who are not Christians (1 Corinthians 5).

How are we to distinguish the political battle from our pastoral care?

1. We need to be careful of creating an “us” and “them” mentality in our preaching.

2. We need to be especially welcoming to those in gay partnerships or who have same sex attraction and be having single people very much part of the church family. Why don't those of us who are part of families particularly get to know a single person?

3. We should celebrate those who want to be like Jesus, single and celibate and speak of them to others.

See livingout.org

4. We need to equip ourselves to speak – watch those who have spoken in recent debates to be equipped.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfTyDHA4TY>

Worth visiting the website of Gavin Ashenden. Gavin Ashenden was part of the gay movement, but has come to believe that the teaching of Jesus in the Bible means that homosexuals like himself, should be celibate – Ashenden.org.

What about evangelistic opportunities?

Q – What do you think about gay marriage?

Answer

1 Take people to Jesus – “I seek to take my view on anything from Jesus Christ, because I believe he is God. He taught that marriage is between one man and one woman for life and that any sex outside this relationship is wrong and displeasing to God, homosexual or heterosexual. So even though society is basically saying any kind of sexual relationship that is loving is OK, I follow what Jesus says. This is because he promises forgiveness to those who follow him and I know that I need God's forgiveness through faith in him, just like we all do”.

2. Ask a question – “Have you ever thought about who Jesus is and how to be forgiven?”

3. Take people to the Cross – “ Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for us, including our sexual sins, on the cross and he rose again from the dead so we can be given a new eternal life that transforms us now.

I know of homosexuals who have trusted in Christ and now live celibate and fulfilled lives and define themselves by their relationship with Christ, not whether they can have sex. Life isn't mainly about sex is it?"

Q – What do you think about upholding gay marriage as the equality act suggests?

Answer

1. Take people to Jesus – “Jesus and his apostles taught that marriage is between one man and one woman for life and that any sex outside this, before or during, or with anyone of the same sex is to break God’s law. Christians want to follow God in their lives, so we cannot uphold things that are contrary to God’s law. It would like us having to swear an oath that murder was OK for some people. But we are also taught that those who are not Christians are not to be judged for what they do. If our society wants to promote gay marriage, I grieve about it, but I wouldn’t stop our society from doing this. But if I am forced to support it, because it goes against my faith, I cannot because I want to remain faithful to Jesus.”

2. Ask a question – do you think Christians should be forced by the law of the state to go against what they believe, even we are happy to tolerate those who want same sex marriage?

3. Take them to the cross- “It is actually unusual for Christians to be approved of by the state. Jesus himself was forced to confess before a court that he was the Son of God and because of that the state of the time – the Roman Empire, crucified him. But this was God’s plan all the time so that Jesus died in our place to forgive the sins of all who trust in him. If I am brought before a court, this will not be a defeat but an opportunity to confess my faith to others, like Jesus did and God will be at work to save people. I would count that a privilege to stand up for what I believe in.”

Where do we stand wrt the law?

1. Does this mean that we think that it is right to criminalise homosexuals? No.

Paul is clear here that we are to judge those inside the church, not those outside. God people are not now coterminous with the state. Hence the death

penalty in Leviticus, is because the church = the state. Now, the kingdom of God (the church) is to discipline spiritually, the state physically. If Christianity regained the ascendancy in the state, it should still not criminalise orientation or practice because that would suggest that the state is coterminous with the church. Paul is clear that they are separate though both ruled by God.

2. Sharing our personal views in a personal context is our right and needs to be done so that we do not lose this right.

30 November 2016 - Vicky Allen

Vicky Allen, a teaching assistant was asked by a pupil what she thought about gay marriage. She responded according to her biblical beliefs and that she did not like the rainbow being used for gay pride because it was from the Bible.

She was given a written warning. This was challenged by help from the Christian Legal Centre. She said: "I felt like a criminal and I didn't do anything wrong... If a child asks for my personal opinion, I feel I should give it".

The Christian legal centre said... "The principle for her [Miss Allen] is that she didn't do anything wrong by talking about her Christian faith when asked the question. As she said herself, this investigation and the disciplinary process made her feel like a criminal, she felt isolated, she lost her morale at work, she didn't know who she could talk to and about what, she really did face a lot of, shall we say, injury to feelings when she was going through this whole process. We are dealing with this every week — week in, week out — we are getting calls from Christians...

No details of any compensation were released, but afterwards the head teacher Andy Edmonds apologised to Vicky. In a statement he said he "recognised Victoria Allen's right to share her Christian beliefs with students and has apologised for any upset that Victoria Allen may have felt during the disciplinary process".

So in law, we should have protection and should not be cowed into not sharing personal beliefs in personal situations.

The battle is being fought right now – are we up for it?

3. We are not paid to promulgate our beliefs, but the equality act does protect the rights of religious people.

4. The government's plans regarding extremism could undermine free speech, as is being recognised in this month's "Evangelicals Now"

"I'm an extremist according to the government's definition" Justin Welby 9 Nov, 2016. "the police are going to feel they have to investigate all sorts of people who are miles away from being terrorists, but may just practise religion in a conservative way" David Anderson QC.

5. Legal cases currently setting precedent: Ashers Bakery – were actually supported by Stonewall and Peter Tatchell because what the equalities commission were enforcing was the right of a gay person to use a service to promote gay marriage against that person's beliefs. An equivalent would be forcing a muslim publisher to publish cartoons of mohammad. The Ashers' lost their case and have appealed to the UK supreme court.

Further Questions!

We must pray!

1. For those in authority (1 Timothy 2)
2. For courage and boldness for one another 1 Peter 3:14-16 "But even if you should suffer for doing what is right you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander".
3. For the conversion of many gay people and for those now living single and celibate lifestyles in response to Jesus' teaching – the true heroes and heroines.
4. For wisdom in distinguishing between the political battle and the pastoral care needed and not confusing the two.