

About Homosexuality

Website content summary

(To print this in Adobe Acrobat use the "fit to paper" option under page scaling.)

This is a ready-to-print version of "AboutHomosexuality.com." It is a simplified version; the full version includes numerous links to other websites. To access the links simply go online to AboutHomosexuality.com.

The sexual orientations of the people depicted on this site are unknown. Images were obtained from FreeFoto.com and other free stock image sites.



Homosexuality: A Choice?

Our country is making a huge moral decision...
with no proof of its suppositions.

Welcome! This website contains a wealth of information and well-reasoned thought for people who are trying to understand homosexuality--something that's not easy to do! If you're here for the first time, congratulations. You're taking an important step.

Thinking about sexuality, however, can be an uncomfortable task for anyone, and it's not unusual to have strong feelings. So go easy on yourself and don't try to absorb all of this material at once. Bookmark this site and come back after doing some reflection. Talk about what you read with other thoughtful people, and surf the net to check the accuracy of what is reported here.

A few of the most useful links are listed at the top of each page and are the same on each page. The "Further Reading" links to the left vary with each page according to the material presented. Links are also sprinkled throughout the text to show at least one example of a source for a piece of information.

Is homosexuality a choice?

At the present time the United States is trying to make its mind up about homosexual marriage...and about homosexuals in general, for that matter. Central to the argument offered against homosexuality is that it is a choice-- a choice to live a destructive, unstable lifestyle that can potentially damage our society.

However, this claim is being made without proof. To use a rather awkward example, if its proponents were magically able to make this message into a pill and ask Americans to swallow it, the FDA wouldn't approve it for use. They would say there's not enough evidence proving that it's both safe and effective (accurate). They'd insist on more research. But research isn't something we seem interested in doing.

We're not doing our homework

It should concern us that our country is not rushing to study homosexuality, given the message that is being put forth about the character and intentions of gay people. Unfortunately, many people who are outspoken about homosexuality know little about it. They speak with sensationalism, stirring up fear and hostility at the price of our families and national unity.

Where are the scientific studies showing that homosexuality is the result of choice? Which studies show that gay lives are intrinsically unstable and that a change to heterosexuality is possible? It may be true that no definitive, widely accepted technical proof has been found that homosexuality is primarily the product of genetics. *But no proof has been found for the opposite either, and yet we march on as if there were!* And if one considers the Bible to hold that proof, then keep reading for at least the next two pages.

"Ignorance is preferable to error, and he is less remote from the truth who believes nothing than he who believes what is wrong."

Thomas Jefferson
Notes on Virginia, 1782

The goal of this website

The purpose of this website is to raise questions about the headlong pursuit of many in our country to encourage a negative view of homosexuality. Part of the reason that those on the progressive side of racism, women's suffrage, and many other similar causes made the progress they did was because their causes were just, and the suppositions underlying arguments against them were not true. Eventually, the same progressive outcome is likely to happen with homosexuality. However, how much damage will be done in the process?

The current decision to condemn homosexuality is primarily an emotional decision rather than one that is well thought out. Yet, the happiness and well-being of our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and friends is at stake. We must learn how to live reasonably and knowledgeably with homosexuality. As you continue to read here you'll learn why many people's feelings are so strong on this subject, and how we can make some sense of homosexuality for ourselves.

What are the consequences of our country's outlook that homosexuality is a sick, immoral lifestyle choice? Click below.



Consequences of this Outlook

We don't hurt gay people only when we condemn without understanding. We hurt all of us.

Let's look before we leap

The negative message that is being communicated about gay people is having an effect...but it's not a good one. During the 1980's and 1990's research was done that indicated that America's gay teens were killing themselves two to three times more frequently than heterosexual youth. In recent times it appears that these studies may have produced exaggerated results, and that the discrepancy was not as large as some of the data suggested. However, it is clear that despite the increased acceptance of homosexuality by society since that time, gay youth are still more at risk for self-destructive behaviors than heterosexual teens.

Why? In part, because they are being told by a large segment of society that they are abnormal, and that their feelings are shameful. They are told that they are supposed to change themselves, and they can't. So, sometimes they use drugs and sometimes they pull the trigger. How's that for a choice?

It's a tragedy. But it's only one example of the consequences of our view of homosexuality. When we eventually realize that our current view about homosexuality is inadequate, it won't erase drug-riddled pasts or bring back to life those dead teens. Nor will it lessen the pain of countless Americans who have lived with feelings of shame, loneliness, and rejection because of their sexual orientation.

Extreme thinking is costing us a lot

We actually know relatively little about the origins of sexuality in people. However, if we march forward to relentlessly condemn gay people in our society we will pay a price. It always happens that way. Extremist thoughts and behaviors exact a high toll...whether Christian, Muslim, gay, white, or black. And let's be sure about it, Christians can think in extreme terms also. It's what all of us do when we get afraid.

However, we not only think in extremes; we act that way also. For example, web sites like this one can generate a lot of hate mail. Why? Because people feel threatened, and fear leads to condemnation. The result can be nasty, and it can make the sender look foolish. Everyone loses. So, if you find yourself wanting to write hate mail after reading this site, take a moment to ask yourself, "What is my 'hate' about, and what does it say about my own inclinations to be extreme?"

Do the accusations make sense?

Before concluding that homosexuality is simply a sick choice ask yourself this: "When was the last time I chose a lifestyle (just for the fun of it) that would cause public humiliation and family discord?" In most places being gay means not being able to marry. It means not being able to plan a partner's funeral when the family steps in and takes over. It means not being included in medical decisions about a partner after having lived together for 50 years. These things do happen. They are the privileges of being gay in our society.

Choosing such a radically different characteristic as sexual orientation is not something that people do just for fun. And when was it that heterosexuals chose their orientation? In fact, given the obesity statistics in the US it's apparent that many Americans can't successfully choose to change their body weight, despite large amounts of money spent on diet books and plans. In light of this, it seems a bit much to ask gay people to change their sexual orientation!

Also, it's an unfortunate characteristic of human nature that we blame others when they are in a difficult situation, especially when we don't know how to help them. This can happen in any circumstance, including emotional difficulties and physical illnesses. We say they have the problem because they are not trying hard enough to change it, and we add to their pain. In the treatment of trauma victims there's something called secondary wounding. It occurs with when the person is blamed for not getting over the trauma sooner. It doesn't help. It can be difficult to be gay, especially in today's society, and we don't know what to do about it, so we blame the gay person for their situation.

The issue of a *cure* for homosexuality

This promise of a cure for homosexuality is boldly offered by opponents of homosexuality. After all, if homosexuality is a choice, it must be possible to "un-choose" it. However, if there is a cure for homosexuality (a term that is offensive to many gay people,) it certainly hasn't been documented very well. If one reads about the long term results of those who have "changed" their sexual orientation to heterosexuality, one won't find much genuine emotional change. Frequently one hears that these same folks later "caved in" and returned to homosexuality.

Both the [American Psychological Association](#) and the [American Psychiatric Association](#) have suggested that changing from homosexuality to heterosexuality is impossible for most people. After all, if you ask most heterosexual people if they could change to homosexuality, they can't imagine it. This is not to say that all people who claim to have changed their orientation are mistaken, because only they can know for sure. But the vast number of people who have tried with desperation during the process of accepting their orientation have failed.

Even if it could happen...

Theoretically speaking, even if some day a method were found to change sexual orientation, such a process would not be universally available to gay people any more than large homes with swimming pools are available to all who want them. People suffer every day because they do not receive medical treatments that already exist, either because they cannot afford them or because they simply aren't available for some reason. No, even if a reliable way to change sexual orientation were discovered, it would still leave many "unfortunates" out in society's cold. If our culture stays as it is now, these people will simply have to live with social rejection and condemnation.

What's the implication? The implication is that sexual orientation of the vast majority of gay people is, for all practical purposes, unchangeable--no matter what might be discovered in the future. We cannot escape the fact that we need a humane and intelligent way to live with homosexuality in our society.

What if the tables were turned?

If things were different, and heterosexuals were considered "abnormal" and discriminated against, change might appear more welcome to many who are upset today. Most people have never thought about what it would be like to go to work and feel uncomfortable about putting a picture of their life's mate on their desk, or to go to church and have the pastor say that their lifelong relationship is "a sin." Most heterosexual people have never been refused medical information about their spouse. If the tables were turned,

heterosexuals could be jailed in some countries just for being heterosexual! What would that feel like to you?



What about the Bible?

It's important to reconcile our feelings about homosexuality--so we can reconcile our families and our nation.

From a Christian viewpoint, homosexuality is confusing

Of great concern for many Christians are the passages in both the Old and New Testaments that are commonly thought of as addressing homosexuality. These passages, along with many other biblical passages, can be difficult to understand.

It's interesting to note that [the term homosexuality didn't exist until the 1860's](#). As homosexuality began to be thought of as a sexual/emotional orientation, rather than simply same-gender sexual behavior, a need arose for a word to describe it. Prior to the 1800's the modern concept of sexual orientation was not widely held. It is commonly believed by biblical scholars that biblical writers had no idea at all of homosexuality as we think of it. It is likely that same-gender sexual behavior between people in the Bible was assumed to be occurring between heterosexual people.

Biblical passages about homosexuality are dealt with extensively on the web, and links to some of those discussions are listed at the left. Read for yourself and take away what seems reasonable to you.

It is also of interest that some rather famous Christian leaders have felt that looking at biblical passages only can be confusing when attempting to sort out controversial subjects, since the Bible itself can be confusing about them. The attitude, "I look to the Bible alone for my direction!" has led many people to adopt attitudes that they later changed. John Wesley, famous for founding Methodism, looked to [scripture, tradition, reason, and experience](#) as important sources of information when deciding about important beliefs. Not a bad idea!

Reality changes perception

A delightful essay by Rev. Charles Morrow, Jr. points out in a lively way that that the church always ends up going beyond the Bible to include reason and experience as it matures in its understanding of difficult human situations. [Click here to read it in its full text](#). Many of his arguments are included below.

Paraphrased and quoted ideas from ["Reality Changes Things," by Rev. Charles Morrow, Jr.](#) (Italicized and indented passages are quotes from Rev. Morrow.)

Over the centuries the church has tended to label people with broad paint strokes...including "drunkards," addicts, "possessed," and those divorced or remarried.

These people have been considered unworthy of compassion or support because they made the simple, willful choice to live an ungodly life. After all, the Bible clearly says so!

However, as the nature of these conditions became better understood the church changed its response to these people, changing also its interpretation of the scriptures that had been the basis for condemnation. The average person now understands that alcoholism is a difficult condition, and that children of alcoholic or drug addicted parents have a far greater chance of becoming that way themselves.

It has also become clear to the church that physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and abandonment can also be appropriate grounds for divorce. Divorced people are no longer considered to be *"all but banned from heaven simply because they failed 'to honor their marriage vows' and keep themselves pure in marital fidelity."*

According to Rev. Morrow, *"The church has even gone so far as to nearly rewrite the Bible so as to allow for just about every divorced individual to suddenly find heavenly permission to remarry after divorce, in spite of numerous Scriptural admonishments clearly to the contrary. (See Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12, Deut. 24:1-4, 1 Cor. 7:27)"*

He goes on to make the vital point that *"reality changes perception."* As the worldview of Christians has changed, the Church has always updated its understanding of the Bible to reflect its new understandings. (Also, see [Lewis Smedes](#).)

In terms of the Church's view of homosexuality, Rev. Morrow writes that the Church...

"...still chooses to define the complex issues of an individual's sexuality, it's expressions and attractions, as being nothing more than a conscious choice to chose evil over good, right instead of wrong, Satan in place of God. No other explanation is acceptable. None other is needed. After all, did not the apostle Paul clearly define homosexuality as being nothing short of unbridled lust and fierce, wanton, godless sexual appetite? (Romans 1:24-27)"

"I, for one, hold no grudge against Paul for his position. That 'brand' or manifestation of homosexual conduct which he was privy to witness and hear of emanating from the filthy palaces of pagan Rome would nauseate even the most liberal of Gay or Lesbian Biblical scholars. But to label all people of one race or ethnicity 'savages' because you grew up in a place where only the most backward, secluded, and uncivilized of their bloodlines' tribes lived is to do a great injustice to an otherwise proud, constructive, productive, and commendable people."

"Why are so many Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender people fighting their way into the churches? Because they are indeed these godless sorts of whom Paul writes? I think not!"

He continues by suggesting that the use of the term "gay lifestlye" is used to stereotype gay people in an way that wouldn't happen if they were taken seriously by the church. We also understand that any attempt to discuss a "straight lifestyle" would be silly...there isn't one.

He closes by saying,

"Sadly, reality is often overlooked by those who must live within it's confines. When finally realized, reality has in times past changed the churches' perception on such complex issues as alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, divorce, and divorce-and-remarriage. With God's help, one day the reality of homosexuality as a natural, innate, biological state of existence for some people will emerge in sufficient evidence to speak to the hearts and minds of even the harshest of homophobic, Bible thumping critics. In that day the Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender soul will no longer have to silently sit week after week in the pews of most churches while the preacher unburdens himself of that same heavy load of misguided and abusive condemnation that their alcoholic, recovering drug addict, mentally ill, divorced, and divorced-and-remarried neighbor once too had to endure. Only then will the wonderful truth of God's grace, manifest in the person and provision of the man Jesus Christ be fully understood and much more fully realized and celebrated."

These comments are powerful. It is clear in the full text of Rev. Morrow's essay that he is not suggesting that homosexuality is an addiction or mental illness. The parallel he draws is that none of the common human conditions discussed above are the result of an immoral choice.

Another example from hundreds of years ago underscores the concept that "reality changes perception." A huge amount of social upset was caused when Gallileo made the scientific suggestion that the earth revolved around the sun, rather than vice versa. The Church rose in fury, and he almost lost his life. After all, didn't the Bible talk about the rising sun? Because of his claims he lived in house arrest for the last part of his life. [He was finally allowed a "Christian" burial 100 years after his death, and wasn't removed from the roles of heretics by the Catholic Church until 1992.](#)

The problem with an "overly conservative" faith is not its commitment to a strong belief in God. That's a good thing. The problem is its refusal to deal with the complexities of life.

Though people say that they are opposed to homosexuality because of what is said in the Bible, that is not the real reason. The Bible's verses may cause concern, but the real reason is *fear*. Over and over again in these pages it is plain that people are afraid of homosexuality because it is different from what is familiar to them. They feel their way of life is threatened, and they act harshly as a result.

Our understanding of the Bible will eventually change, but that will happen only when we are pushed beyond our fears and become willing for it to change. Eventually we will run out of plausible reasons to maintain our harsh stance, and we will change our views--it will happen.

In fact, it's happened many times in our country. Let's look at just one example.

A critical understanding: How the Bible was used in the past

It's very easy to consider a passage of scripture when everyone agrees on its meaning. However, this is not always the case. There was a time when our country was even more intensely divided over a public issue than it is about homosexuality today. It happened during the Civil War.

The biblical view about slavery was argued from both sides by people who claimed to be speaking God's opinion as revealed in the Bible. [It may surprise many people to learn that those who supported slavery, a practice we now consider to be barbaric, argued by quoting chapter and verse from the Bible much in the same manner that chapter and verse are quoted by those who condemn homosexuality today.](#)

Some passages in the Bible about slavery are very harsh. Consider Exodus 21:20-21 (NASB) - *"If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished. If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property."* This verse is not part of a ceremonial code that was abandoned after Old Testament times. It was an instruction that was based on common knowledge...a slave was his master's property, and if his master harmed him without killing him, it was too bad for the slave. There were other limits placed on what a master could do to a slave, but try preaching this passage from the pulpit today and see how biblical you are considered to be!

Those who took the opposing view to slavery during the Civil War claimed that the *themes* of scripture contradicted the "plain meaning" of the verses that pro-slavery ministers quoted. They said that it is rather difficult to love your brother as yourself when you *own* him.

It was a long and difficult public argument, and [not just a few churches took the pro-slavery stance, as some have claimed.](#) However, it is clear who won the argument, because you won't find a church teaching a biblical basis for slavery these days. [The Church eventually accepted that the specific verses in scripture about slavery were specific to the culture at the time, and not God's ultimate thoughts about the matter.](#)

In the same way, not only do verses about homosexuality in the Bible not address homosexuality as we think of it today, but at best their relevance was specific to the culture at that time, and were not God's final thoughts about the matter. However, they do appear to represent many Christians' final thoughts about the matter!

In fact, if we were to apply broadly the principles of interpretation used by some Christians about homosexuality we would have to move back to a position where men own their wives, polygamy is common, and daughters can be sold into slavery. This sounds preposterous to many, but if you will take the time to read an extra article or two above, it may not seem so silly.

Perhaps the reason we stick with old, very harsh interpretations about homosexuality is because homosexuality is a reality that we find scary and don't know how to approach. We live in fear, and make others suffer as a result. **Resistance to ending slavery had to do with fears about race and allowing racial equality. But, as you'll see soon, homophobia has to do with fears about gender.**



More about the Bible

Despite what's being said by many Christian writers, biblical faithfulness and an acceptance of homosexuality are compatible.

An overly rigid, inflexible faith

The early New Testament times were full of confusion for people of faith. Much of what the Jews had been taught was being changed, and many people didn't know what to think. Certain foods which had been unclean for over a thousand years were suddenly "clean." A whole different attitude toward Gentiles was put forth. Circumcision was no longer required. These changes were so fundamental to the faith that they were extremely controversial and threatened to split up the new, predominantly Jewish Christian church.

Consequently, the Jewish members of the church had to undergo changes in the way they thought and felt. Numerous passages in the New Testament deal with these changes. Christian Jews couldn't be rigid and still adapt to the changes taking place in their religion. It just wasn't possible. It was a painful time for the church. Accepting change was difficult in the early church, and it will always be something that the church has to face. The Jews must have had visceral reactions to the changes happening around them every as bit as strong as some Christians are having about homosexuality.

In the New Testament, faith was not comfortable. It involved changing beliefs that one's family had held ("in faith") for hundreds of years. It was a huge emotional upheaval for those involved. There was lots of discomfort in departing from the "old ways."

Rigidity is a form of over-controlled thinking and feeling, and it can be a problem in other arenas also. In psychological circles it is sometimes said that "over-control leads to out-of-control." In fact, any form of all-or-nothing thinking, feeling, and behaving can be a problem. For example, it can be uncomfortable to study the children of rigid and judgmental parents, because [there are some pretty unpleasant results of that type of parenting](#). And most extremist political groups, whether conservative or liberal, became extreme by being strongly rigid and judgmental in their views, including about what it means to be moral. Inevitably, rigid and judgmental churches also become unhealthy.

On common sense

Jesus challenged popular Jewish thought about keeping Old Testament practices--including practices he did not teach as needing to be set aside for something new. One such practice was the prohibition of activity on the Sabbath. Over and over in the Old Testament it was said that the Sabbath was holy--"the Lord's day." God commanded that the Sabbath be a special day in which no work was to be done. For example, it was very clear that no cooking was to be done on the Sabbath. In fact, the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was the same as for same-gender sex...death (Exodus 31:14-15.)

Even the old hymns warn us about being too rigid. [You can view the entire text of this hymn here.](#)

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

Frederick Faber, 1854

Yet, when Jesus healed on the Sabbath and was accused of breaking it, he reminded the people that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. When a sheep fell in the ditch on a Sabbath, the owner would sensibly rescue it (Matthew 12:11.) In the same way Jesus healed on the Sabbath because it was humane. In another example, he reminded people that when there was no other food King David took the showbread from the temple for his men to eat (Matthew 12:3-7.)

Jesus taught what was considered novel to many who heard him--that the Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath. Though there was a general principle that no work was to be done on the Sabbath, there were going to be exceptions to that rule. That was quite a different way of looking at things; and his tone suggested that the people of his time should have known this! However, religious leaders of the day were very offended by his teaching.

On common sense regarding sexuality

What about sexuality? Is it some mold that we must cram ourselves into at the price of our mental health? Was not sexuality made for man, rather than man for sexuality? This is not to say that any imaginable sexual behavior is "ok"--that sex with children is appropriate, etc. That would be a huge distortion. But if a loving relationship with a same sex adult person is what a person is able to have, perhaps their emotional health and happiness is more important to God than a "typical" idea of what sexuality "should" look like, even though since the beginning of time it has not actually looked like that.

There is always a need for judgment in these matters. Jesus didn't teach that doing work for trivial reasons on the Sabbath was acceptable. But he did teach that when genuine human well-being (or animal well-being, for that matter) was at stake, then exceptions to the "rule" could, and should, be made. And if homosexuality is an "exception" to the rule, so be it. Whether it's a creative variety in the plan of sexuality or a genetic "eccentricity" is to some degree an academic, unanswerable question. One has no more control over it than being left- or right-handed...and therefore no reason to feel shame or be deprived of social acceptance. Gay people offer a great deal to society, often *because of* their make-up as gay people. We have reason to affirm gay contributions to society and gay sexuality. And, using the figure of Jesus' story, to fail do so would be to "leave the sheep in the ditch;" in other words, to ignore the legitimate needs of a wonderful group of people.

Picking and choosing

One observation that indicates how our thoughts have changed from "Old Testament times" is our response to the penalties there. In the verses condemning same-gender sexual

behavior in Leviticus 20 the penalty for the offending behaviors is death. The same is true a few verses earlier for children who curse their parents. If we are rigid about the modern day application of the verses about homosexuality, then we don't have a lot of choice about the associated penalties, either. However, most people who quote these verses don't really believe that capital punishment is an appropriate outcome for either cursing parents or homosexuality. That leaves us in the awkward position of teaching half of a verse while ignoring the other half. That does not make for a consistent belief.

In fact, there are numerous Old Testament passages containing radical penalties and practices that are upsetting to modern Christians. And frankly, it's difficult to know what to say about them. Though the Bible is generally accepted as the basis of the Christian faith, it's a very controversial and, at times, confusing book. Christians often do not agree on the interpretation of many of the "difficult" biblical passages. We end up ignoring them because we simply don't know what else to do.



Isn't Homosexuality Unhealthy?

We promote shame and hopelessness and then condemn people for acting those feelings out.

Homosexuality is "different" and unnatural

One aspect of society's emotional reaction to homosexuality is that it is "different" and unnatural. For many people this is a profoundly visceral experience. It is probably the biggest single reason people condemn homosexuality. A simple example of our fear of those who are different is how we used to try to force left-handed people to write with their right hands because being left-handed was "wrong."

In fact, in many ways we *gravitate* towards noticing our differences and generating fear around them. If our society woke up one morning and found that all the differences that have traditionally caused bias and prejudice were gone, we would find new differences between us by noon, and begin to align ourselves into groups based on those new distinctions by nightfall.

For years it was said that homosexuality was unnatural because it is not found in nature. Current animal studies have indicated the opposite, that homosexuality is found in many species of animals throughout the animal kingdom. It's not uncommon.

Much of the profound discomfort with homosexuality vanishes when people actually get to know gay people and couples. It is when the situation becomes personal that it becomes more human. However, for some people, this is not enough. Fear continues. Then one must ask, "Why am I so afraid?"

"We all know what it means to be a man, and being gay isn't it. The same is true about a woman being a lesbian."

Another very major issue about our reaction to homosexuality is that it has to do with gender. Even thinking about gender is scary. Talk about fighting words!

What makes a man a man and a woman a woman is one of our most fundamental understandings of life. Feelings about gender run deep and cause strong emotional reactions. Just ask the girl who likes to work on cars or the straight fellow who likes ballet. They'll tell you about the comments they receive because their interests don't conform to stereotypical male/female interests.

Even today, if one does a web search on "women wearing pants" a host of web sites will be found proclaiming how immoral it is for women to wear pants. In fact, only as recently as the mid-1990s did California pass a law guaranteeing the right of women to wear pants to work because of the amount of controversy surrounding it. Feelings about gender run deep.

It's a stunning fact that when it comes to concrete, physical gender—something measured by "hard science" —[some 1.7 percent of humans are born with bodies that are not exclusively male or female](#). Often these differences are at a genetic or chromosomal level, and the physical body may or may not show it. This is a shocking statistic to many people, but it is true, and recent surveys of research literature have made this increasingly obvious (e.g., [Melanie Blackless et al., "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?" *American Journal of Human Biology* 12 \(2000\): 151-166](#)). Evidently, [even physical gender is not so unshakable a concept as we would like to think](#). Why would we expect more of sexual orientation?

It's understandable that facing our feelings about gender is difficult. However, like many things that seem difficult, when we actually make it through the hard part it doesn't seem to be as bad as we thought. In fact, it turns out to be fine.

"Homosexuals lead unstable lives"

Many people think of the lives of homosexual people as emotionally unstable. Being gay requires a lot of adjustment for most folks. It can be difficult to establish a healthy self-esteem in the midst of being told that you're sick! And, it can be difficult to find a stable relationship in today's society, for both gays and straights alike. How many straight couples are together because of the children?

Nevertheless, many gay people do live stable lives and always have. Research has been very clear that, by and large, gay people lead lives every bit as stable as straight people. Many are strong individuals who make their way through life with a sense of grace no matter what their circumstances are. For others, it can be more difficult. [Read here what John Gottman, one of America's foremost marriage researchers and thereapists, has to say about gay/lesbian relationships.](#)

Fortunately, many states have discovered that gay people are capable of adopting and caring for children. Unfortunately, some of these same states don't think that these adoptive parents should be married. That's quite a change from the "old" days when when we thought all parents should be married!

Also, in terms of stability, it can be an interesting exercise to surf the web and read the

pages of those who are so opposed to homosexuality. As you take note of the tone of each website and consider the claims of the writers, you may find yourself wondering how stable some of these people are.

What about promiscuity and "the gay lifestyle?"

"We all know that gays are so promiscuous!" This is an interesting observation. There's no doubt that there's a lot of emphasis on sex in the gay community. Why? At least two factors contribute significantly to this.

First, as has been mentioned here repeatedly, homosexual people are told by many straight people that they are wrong to be sexual within their gender--period. And they're told that even if they want a monogamous relationship, they're still wrong. So, it's a rather hopeless situation. The unspoken feeling for some people is, "Why bother exercising any self control? I might as well go ahead and be as sexual as I wish, since I'm a 'bad person' either way."

Society complains about gay promiscuity. But when gay people say that they want to be monogamous and married or that they want to be church pastors and elders, society says, "You're intruding on our institutions." It leaves the gay person is a rather difficult place.

Research has made it clear that hopelessness is strongly correlated with self-destructive behavior.

In fact, mental health workers know that even severe depression does not particularly predict suicide unless it is combined with hopelessness. So, when people argue that homosexuality is spiritually decadent, we need to ask ourselves whether society's attitude towards homosexuality actually contributes to the behaviors it criticizes. We promote shame and hopelessness about sexual orientation and then complain when people act out those feelings.

Second, the gay community's emphasis on sexual behavior is mostly attributed to gay men, rather than to lesbians. To some extent, if straight men could have sex with women whenever they chose without the moderating influence of women on sexual behavior, we might not see such a difference between the sexual behavior of straight and gay people.

In fact, [a prominent web site promoting internet filters as a way to fight porn reports findings](#) indicating that 53% of Promise Keepers (a conservative Christian men's group) in their study had viewed porn in the previous week. And this is a group of men known for their sincere anti-porn stance. Perhaps a sexual focus is more of a "guy" thing than a "gay" thing.

This issue of a "gay lifestyle" comes up often in arguments about homosexuality. Rev. Morrow, in his article quoted earlier, says it well:

"While there are some (like the pagans of the Rome Paul was writing to) within both the straight and Gay-Lesbian communities who genuinely embrace a godless lifestyle, devoid of rules and knowing no boundaries, particularly sexually; it is foolish to lump all of any given group or segment of our society into the same mix. The most absurd phrase ever employed within the English vernacular is 'Gay lifestyle.' This fictitious phrase falsely suggests that all Gay,

Lesbian, and Transgender people walk beneath the same banner, march to the same drummer, and live out their daily existence in the same identical manner one as the other. To even suggest that all homosexual people behave identically is to ignore the vast array of talent, skill, accomplishment, diversity, and versatility found within it's ranks. No one would be so foolish as to use the phrase 'straight lifestyle.' Everybody knows that such a term is far too broad to even be usable, yet the similar phrase, 'Gay lifestyle' is tossed about by opponents of homosexuality as though it were valid simply because it's being applied to someone other than themselves. A people, I might add, whom they obviously know precious little about in truth. Again, they've read the definitions supplied in Scripture and applied it across the board, without ever trying to look honestly and openly at the human condition of homosexuality as it realistically appears in our world today. Why are so many Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender people fighting their way into the churches? Because they are indeed these godless sorts of whom Paul writes? I think not!" ([From "Reality Changes Things," by Rev. Charles Morrow.](#))

On a lighter note

In the midst of all this negativity, it should be remembered that gay people have long offered society a rich heritage. Gay people have always contributed much of what is beautiful and talented in our culture. Many famous people have been gay, including those famous for athletic ability and military accomplishments, as well as the more artistic and intellectual endeavors. And despite difficulties, many gay people are happy with their lives.

In the "Further Reading" column on the left are several examples of gay contributions to our society. Some names will be familiar to you while others won't be. Take a look and see just a few of the varied gifts gay people have offered to all of us.



What about Marriage?

Gay marriage is a shocking idea to many. But it's to be expected from people who do care about relationships.

Why do gay people want marriage?

In some ways, the question about why gay people want to marry is pretty easy to answer. It's for the same reasons straight people want to marry. However, probably the best way to find out the answer is to find a gay person and ask him or her. Watch their facial expression and eyes as they give you their answer. You'll see a lot of emotion in many of them.

Probably you'll find out that gay people want the same things you do...a chance to build a life with someone else, to have respect for their relationship in the community, and to contribute to those around them. For a really interesting article on this [read this USA](#)

[Today article](#). (If the link has removed it is available [here](#) as a PDF file.)

But why marriage now...so fast?

Actually some gay people have voiced concern that the Massachusetts Supreme Court mandate about gay marriage followed too closely on the heels of the Texas Supreme Court's ruling against laws prohibiting same-gender sodomy.

The concern expressed by some people was that our country might not be ready for that much change all at once, that there could be a panic response. To some degree, this has happened. However, on the other hand, gay people have waited a long time for the right to have socially sanctioned relationships. Perhaps we can work towards some compromise for the time being to give society a chance to absorb all the changes. There seems to be a lot of energy around the use of the word "marriage"...a clear indication of the emotional nature of the issue. However, it is also clear to many that gay people deserve the same legal rights as technically "married" people, and that they should be granted soon.

Who has a vested interest in the acceptance of gay people and gay marriage in our society?

Actually, more of us have a vested interest in this than is commonly acknowledged. For starters, one might think that all of the women who married gay men and the men who married lesbians have a reason to be interested in encouraging gay people to marry one another. Many gay men and women make a genuine attempt to marry the opposite gender, only to find out years later that they are hopelessly depressed by their marital situation and unable to be a passionate partner to their mate.

Another group of people are the parents gay children who watch their children suffer. For an excellent article on this [read the words of a Vermont mother](#).

"I think they (gays) ought to be treated equally. Period," Ford declared. Asked specifically whether gay couples should get the same Social Security, tax and other federal benefits as married couples, he replied, "I don't see why they shouldn't. I think that's a proper goal."

**[President Gerald Ford](#)
[Detroit News, Oct. 29, 2001](#)**

Actually, we all have plenty of reason to want better understanding and acceptance of gay people. When any of in our society are discriminated against, we all lose. And we all have a lot to offer.



A Threat to Society

Gay people are more threatened BY society than they are a threat TO society.

Wouldn't accepting homosexuality (and especially gay marriage) upset our

society?

Do you have a negative reaction to the picture above? Some people have a visceral reaction to any same-sex intimacy. It happens--but it goes away when the humanity of the emotions is experienced. We are all afraid of change, especially when it has to do with the "order of life " as we understand it. Also, as has been mentioned before, anything having to do with gender stirs up deep, visceral reactions.

In actuality, our understanding about the order of life constantly changes. Television and the internet were two big social changes that have affected most of us. Allowing women to vote was a big change also, as was allowing individuals of different races to marry. We have lived through all of them, and we are the better for it.

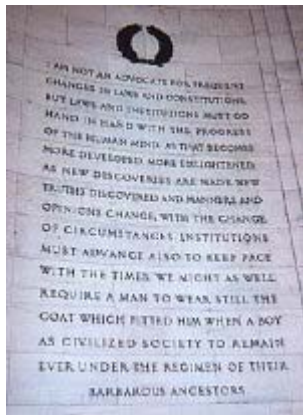
The sky is not falling!

When it comes to social change, it's easy to get a mentality that "the sky is falling." However, it isn't. The "threat" to society by homosexual people is not nearly so great, whatever it is, as is the threat toward homosexuals by straight society (and by homophobic, self-hating gay people.) It's gay people who are being bashed, shamed, and sometimes, as in the case of Matthew Shepard, killed.

Also, homosexuality isn't contagious. Sexual orientation is determined early in life, and the sexual orientation of a straight teenager isn't going to be changed by having gay friends. People do not need to be afraid that exposure to gay people is going to affect anyones orientation.

"It's time America realized that there was no gay exemption in the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence. Job discrimination against gays - or anybody else - is contrary to each of these founding principles."

Barry Goldwater, former Republican presidential candidate and senator from Arizona, 1994



Conclusion: We Can Do This If We're Willing, and We'll Be the Better for It

Thomas Jefferson recognized both the difficulty and necessity of social change. This may be scary for some of us, but it can be a sane, rewarding experience if we work together.

The above panel at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, reads: "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind, as that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and

opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

-- to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1810

Change is difficult, necessary, and possible

Yes, change is scary and hard. But it doesn't have to happen haphazardly or erratically. Gay people are going to gradually insist on their rights more and more as they understand more about themselves and feel less shame about their sexual orientation and lives. It is important to set aside your prejudices and let yourself know gay people. Repair family relationships with gay relatives if they're broken or estranged. Open your mind and heart to look at life in a bigger way. Affirm gay people and watch them live up to your affirmations.

As a country it would be helpful if we could calm our fears and decide how to proceed. If we are worried about the future of marriage, perhaps we should institute courses in our high schools and colleges to teach future generations about communication skills and how to develop self esteem. Offering help in conflict resolution and clarifying personal values wouldn't hurt, either. There's so much that can be done to improve the odds of a successful marriage that we don't do! It's also a shame that parenting skills aren't taught before people become parents. There's lots of good material out there. And, frankly, parenting skill are probably more important than math. A calculator is easier to find (and afford) than a child psychologist!

What you can do

- If you have a gay son or lesbian daughter, let them know explicitly of your love and acceptance of them. To see how one family did this, [read this account](#).
- Get to know your gay family members, acquaintances, and co-workers. Ask them to tell you about their lives, and tell them about what it's been like for you to come to grips with homosexuality. Extend yourself to the gay people in your church and your neighborhood. Get past any initial feelings of discomfort you may have.
- Continue to educate yourself about homosexuality, and speak up when you hear others make irresponsible statements.
- Promote understanding through sponsoring programs in civic clubs and churches and inviting a gay person to speak.
- Tell others about this website:
 - Send emails to friends and family telling them about this site.
 - Make some "business cards" for this web address by [clicking here](#) and printing the following PDF file. Put the cards in your wallet and give them to people who might be interested.
 - [Access this entire site as one PDF file](#) and print it to give to someone.
- If you have children talk to them about homosexuality. They know about it from school and the news. Answer their questions the best that you can. (Do some reading in advance if you need it.) Let your children know who is gay in your family. They will ask

them their own questions, and perhaps let you off the hook a bit!

- [Write your congressman/congresswoman](#) and indicate your concern about the negative direction our country is taking to prevent gay people from being allowed to have equal civil rights. Ask them not to confirm anti-gay judges in high courts.

Thanks!

Thanks for getting this far in your reading. You've done a good thing. Hopefully, the material here will make a difference in your life and in the lives of those you love. Perhaps, in a small way also, it can help all of us who are Americans. And if you're not from the US, you're certainly not excluded from these wishes. Hopefully, things in your country are improving for gay people and for those who love them, as well. [Feel free to write an email with your feedback about this site.](#) If you're a long ways away, an email would be uniquely interesting. But if your thoughts are negative, be gentle--we all have feelings!



Resources

There are plenty of good resources available. Enjoy!

Below are just a few very high quality resources available about homosexuality. Though this site is written primarily for the heterosexual person trying to understand homosexuality, resources are included that may be of help to gay people growing in their own understanding of themselves or wanting to improve their lives.

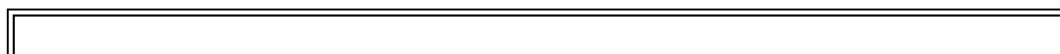
Books

ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHRISTIANITY

- [Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?](#) by Letha Dawson Scanzone and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. Published by Harper Collins, revised and updated 1994; a classic in the field of homosexuality and Christianity.
- [Homosexuality and the Christian Faith](#) by Walter Wink. Published by Fortress Press, 1999.

FOR A GAY AUDIENCE

- [10 Smart Things Gay Men Can Do to Improve Their Lives](#) by Joe Kort. Written by a gay psychotherapist to help gay men have a fuller, more rewarding life.



Gay-positive Organizations and Websites

GENERAL INTEREST

- [Human Rights Campaign Fund](#)
- [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#)
- [Service Members Legal Defense Network](#)
- [Safe Schools Coalition](#)

GAY MARIAGE

- [Freedom to Marry](#)
- [For Gay Marriage.org](#)

FOR GAY CHRISTIANS

- [Soulforce](#)
- [Evangelicals Concerned out of NYC](#)
- [Evangelicals Concerned Western Region](#)
- [Affirmation - United Methodist](#)
- [Integrity - Episcopal](#)
- [More Light Presbyterians](#)
- [Welcoming and Affirming Baptists](#)
- [Dignity USA - Catholics](#)



About the Author

It is important for us to speak out
about our values.

"Straight Americans need... an education of the heart and soul. They must understand - to begin with - how it can feel to spend years denying your own deepest truths, to sit silently through classes, meals, and church services while people you love toss off remarks that brutalize your soul."

Bruce Bawer, "The Advocate", 28 April 1998

This site is sponsored and authored by a gay man who feels that many Americans want to do the "right thing" about homosexuality, but need some help thinking things through. My hope is that gay children can send a link to this website to their parents and friends, and that families can find healing. I also hope that it will help our nation to move in a more constructive direction regarding homosexuality, and that churches can provide a welcome home for gay people in their midsts. In addition, I wouldn't mind if these pages help some gay people to have a better sense of themselves and their lives, so that they might enjoy it in all of its goodness.

Since this site is my first foray into the openly public arena about homosexuality, I have made a decision to be anonymous for the moment. I'm a bit of a novice about this type of activity, and I want to see what kind of response is generated before I make it possible for upset folks with strong feelings to contact me at inconvenient times. I also don't know how popular this web page may become. For these two reasons, the name associated with the public administrative information for this website is fictitious, as is the address and phone. But the first name below is mine.

Feel free to drop me a line with any comments. Like many things in life, this is a work in progress with room for improvement. Any helpful suggestions are appreciated. Feel free to include ideas for content, recommended links, or any other feedback. (Click here to initiate an [email](#).)

I have attempted to have a respectful tone here, and ask that you do the same if you write me. An abusive letter will not sell me on a point of view, and merely demonstrates the poor personal character a writer is attempting to condemn. Hatred rarely markets well.

Thanks for stopping by. I hope you have found something useful here! As a little bonus for reading all of this, I'll tell you something you may not have noticed about this site. Click the red map on any page and you'll be taken to an amazing amount of information about gay people from the 2000 US Census.

Best wishes,

David

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