

Transcript 150

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. So you'll remember a while back when we first launched the podcast we went through like the top 20 questions of all time. But there were actually two of them that we kind of put off not because we wanted to avoid the issues because we wanted to make sure we covered it the right way. And so episode 19 in that series was a few episodes ago, and today we talked about the last question, the top 20. Not last because it's. So these comments, actually one of the most popular questions and today question is what does the Bible say about homosexuality? So the reason we put this off specifically is it's a very it's a sensitive issue. It's a controversial issue. It's an issue where a lot of the conversations produce far more heat than light. So what we want to do, we want to go through the various passages in the Bible to talk about homosexuality, explain what we believe to be the the correct biblical interpretation. But also focusing on homosexuality is not a greater sin than any other. Homosexuality is a sin that Christ died for just like every other sin that's out there.

Shea Houdmann

And also this is not a disclaimer any sense, but please do not interpret anything that we say today as any sort of hatred towards the LGBTQ+ community. You have nothing but love for the people in that community. We recognize that when this is a part of a person's identity and that's the biggest struggle that most who are in the LGBTQ+ community because this is who they are. And when they hear someone say, I believe this certain behavior is a sin, it sounds like we are attacking them or we are hating them. There's no hate coming from us or from anyone at Got Questions towards this is, but at the same time we are a ministry that seeks to answer questions biblically, and the question about what does the Bible say about homosexuality is extremely frequent. This is not an issue that we particularly want to deal with as much as we do. But when it's a question that we're asked about again and again and again and every single month, we look at the stats and the our articles on the topic are always among the most popular. So not saying we're reluctant to do this, but it's not something, oh, let's find a way to attack a certain people group. Or let's find, let's talk about a controversial issues so that we can offend people. None of that is in our intent or in our heart at all. Again, our goal today is go through the six or so passage in the Bible to talk about homosexuality and try to give a clear understanding of here's what the Bible is saying in these passages.

Jeff Laird

It's really important for us to remember that this is a question that gets asked. We have to give some sort of an answer because people are going to ask about it. And people have a tendency to put words in other people's mouths. I've sort of accepted the idea that no matter what we might say on a subject like this, somebody, somewhere, is going to be inclined to say, well, you're saying and then insert something that we're not actually saying or that we're not actually referencing and all we can do is just ask people to be fair. Look at what we're saying in context. Understand where we're coming from. Really and truly, we're just answering the question of what does the Bible say about that topic. As far as how people want to apply that, what they want to infer that to mean, that is not the even the purpose of the Ministry, and that sense is it's the question of what does the Bible actually say. And if a person decides that that's not something that they agree with, then that's more or less just the end of the the issue in

that sense. There's no sense in which we're implying something beyond other than if you want to know what the Bible actually says, this is what the Bible actually says. And it is important for us to deal with that subject in a loving way because we know it is a sensitive thing and it is a difficult thing for people to deal with.

Kevin Stone

Yes, people are welcome to believe what they want to believe. But as Bible teachers and as a is working for a ministry that is committed to teaching the Bible, we want to teach the Bible. And so what does the Bible say on this subject and all other subjects that we, that we deal with. And we all have a command in Scripture to speak the truth in love, and so that's that's always our goal. We want to speak the truth. We want to speak what the Bible actually says. We want to study and rightly divide the word of truth. We want to pull the intended meaning out of scripture and then we want to present it in a loving manner, knowing that truth is is very important. It's very important to God and it should be very important to us. But again, people are free to believe what they wanna believe, but we have the responsibility that we believe that God has given us the responsibility to be accurately teaching the word of God.

Jeff Laird

A lot of things that people would like Scripture to say, and it's I think good for us to clarify that this is a controversial issue, not simply for one side of interpretation or one side of culture. So our responsibility is to say what the Bible has to say. That means not saying anything more, not saying anything less, regardless of whether somebody would prefer it be stronger, weaker or different in any sense. So this is not about us saying we're we're we have to be very careful that we say only what one particular group wants to hear or doesn't want to hear, we just need to tell the truth.

Kevin Stone

And we are very careful about throwing around around the word sin. We want to define sin as the Bible defines it and go no further than that. I know there have been cases where throughout history people have labeled things as sin that the Bible does not address as sin. But where the Bible is clear then we also would like to be clear. And when the Bible says that something is sin, then we we have the responsibility to also call it a sin.

Shea Houdmann

Agree 100%. So let's start diving into the specific biblical passages. And what's interesting is just a couple of weeks ago, I was in an e-mail dialogue with someone who about the passage we're going to deal with first. In Genesis 19, the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. And with and we'll talk about this more later. It's so interesting that the trend today is to interpret this passage in a completely different way than it's been interpreted for the past 2500 years, or every interpreter, whether Jewish or Christian, it's interpreted this a certain way to have a certain meaning, a certain implication. And now it's suddenly a new meaning, or a new focus of the passage has been discovered.

Shea Houdmann

So just very briefly, Genesis 19, two angels sent down from God to investigate the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah discover that it is indeed thoroughly wicked cities. And the two angels come to stay with Lot who is Abraham's nephew. While the two angels, who are disguised as human men, were in Lot's home,

all the people from the town come to the door, pound on the door and say Lot send these two men out because we want to essentially homosexually rape them. Lot refuses to do so. Says you can even, this could be a whole other episode, here's my two daughters. Why don't you take them instead. But then the angels step in and stop them and strike them with blindness. Tell Lot and his family, get out of here. God is going to destroy these two cities. And that's what has happened. God brings down fire from heaven, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are completely destroyed. And so for again, the entire history of interpretation of this passage. Is being interpreted as homosexuality was a major reason for why God destroyed these two cities.

Shea Houdmann

Now there's a passage in Ezekiel. Ezekiel chapter 16, verses 49 to 50 that speaks a little bit more about this passage. And these verses again, Ezekiel 16:49 to 50 say, 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. So some people today like to stop right there. That the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was in hospitality, not being kind to strangers. Well, I will readily grant that wanting to homosexually gang rape visitors to your city is very inhospitable but that that's not where the verse ends. The verse next verse, verse 50 says they were haughty and did detestable things before me. And this word detestable, Kevin's going to cover these passages in Leviticus in a minute, is the exact same word used in Leviticus to refer to homosexual, homosexuality as detestable.

Shea Houdmann

And then also, Jude verse 1:7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah in the surrounding town gave them up to sexual immorality and perversion. Again, pointing to there was a sexual perversion taking place inside of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was a part a major factor in why God destroyed these two cities. Now no one is claiming that homosexuality was the only sin taking place in Sodom and Gomorrah. Clearly these were wicked cities. And many, many different things. But the one sin that is specific identified in the passage in Genesis 19 is the sin of homosexuality. Others will point to, well, this is talking about homosexual rape not just not the loving relationships that homosexuals claim to be involved in today. And I will grant that that's true, but that does not change the fact that God referred to homosexuality as a a perversion, something that is detestable. And two cities that were known for this particular act were destroyed in large part due to their participation in this one particular sin. So again this passage, this is very clear. Homosexuality was a major part of the reason why God destroyed these two cities. A lot more going. On many, many sins taking place there. But this passage is always nearly universally been understood as homosexuality was a sin was taking place there. Was a major factor for God, why God destroyed the two cities.

Jeff Laird

It is also not the only place in the Old Testament or in scripture where those ideas are brought up. There's a moment in Judges where a very similar situation happens, similar language, similar condemnation. It's important to remember that in Jude it says that they had unnatural desires and sexual immorality. Men of Sodom didn't know that these were angels, so it's not like Jude was talking about them being interested in something other than human beings. So as you said, this has been a pretty clear interpretation for pretty much all of Judeo-Christian history. It's very difficult to say that people interpreted that as anything different.

Kevin Stone

Guys I want to point out in that same passage in Genesis, we also see the grace of God at work. In the previous chapter in Genesis 18, as God is speaking with Abraham. And Abraham starts bargaining with God, as it were, he's actually interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah. And Abraham starts off saying, well, Lord, if what if there are some righteous people there in Sodom? What if there are 50 righteous people living in Sodom? Surely you would not destroy the whole city with the righteous there. Far be it from you to judge the righteous with the wicked. And God says no for the sake of 50 I would, I would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And then Abraham starts whittling down that number. He goes to 45, then 40, then 30, 20, and then finally to 10. And God still says, for the sake of 10 righteous persons in the city I will not destroy it.

Kevin Stone

So I think two things there. One is the grace of God is so evident. He is slow to wrath. He is slow to anger. And he is abundant in mercy. And also I think it's very evident there the fact that the the righteous person has quite an impact in society. If you are a a godly person, you're a believer, calling on the name of the Lord and you're surrounded by by wickedness, you're living in the midst of a sinful culture, you have an impact. You may not even know what that impact is, but be not weary and well doing because the Lord sees and you are having an impact in your society.

Kevin Stone

There are a couple of other places here in Leviticus that I wanted to point to. A couple of passages here, one in Leviticus 18, one in Leviticus 20, that deal with homosexuality. Although some people today are trying to reinterpret this and saying, well, it's really about pedophilia, it's really about idolatry. You know, these are these are sins that are attached to pagan rituals and idolatry. And here are the passages though. Here are these two verses, Leviticus 18, verse 22 says, do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman that is detestable. Now it is true that the previous verse mentions molech worship and the sacrifice of children to molech. And then we also have Leviticus 20 and verse 13, if a man has sexual relations with a man, as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. So that that were detestable, that's the same one that is used in Ezekiel. They did detestable things. And again in Leviticus 20, we do have molech worship mentioned in the same context up in the previous part of that chapter. So is it true that these these two prohibitions of sexual relations, man on man are actually prohibitions against idolatrous practices, stuff that's connected with molech worship? Well, no, not at all. The whole of Leviticus 18 is a list of different practices that were engaged in by the Canaanites, and God said, you know, for this reason you are not to have anything to do with any of these things. And yes, molech worship is mentioned as one of the things that they did that was committed as a sin against God. But then we have a whole lot of other things. He deals, God deals with incest, and bestiality, and homosexuality here on these two verses that that I've just read.

Kevin Stone

The Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures that was done some 200 years before the New Testament period. And so before the New Testament ever came about, before Paul ever gave any prohibitions against homosexuality, we had the Septuagint. Which was the Greek version of these passages. And in the Greek translation of Leviticus we have very clearly a reference to homosexuality. In

fact, it uses the same two Greek words that combined are combined in the New Testament to refer to a male only bed. That is a man in bed with another man, homosexual sex. It's very clear in the New Testament that that's what it's talking about. And the Septuagint translators use the same Greek term to refer to these particular practices in Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20. These passages were clearly understood by the Jews of the of the ancient world as being a prohibition of sexual, of homosexual acts. The rabbinical literature all points to the same thing that this was very clearly understood as being a prohibition on man on man sex.

Shea Houdmann

Kevin's great explanation it's it's similar to the Sodom and Gomorrah passage. To hear these two verses being interpreted differently today due to a cultural context differently than they've been interpreted throughout history. It's frustrating to the point that it's like how can you even get there to think that that's what this passage is talking about. And one thing that I've seen with increasing frequently is referred pointing to these two passages in Leviticus, the ones you quoted and saying they have to do with pedophilia rather than homosexuality. Just talking about an adult male having sexual relations with a, a, a child. A young male.

Shea Houdmann

Now the two Hebrew words in both of these passages, if I remember correctly. It uses different words. If a man has sex with a male and the second word can sometimes be used to refer to younger men. And so that's what people will like to focus on. You will see is this talking about pedophilia, not homosexuality? Well, the first word in the passage can also be used to refer to young men. The second word can be referred to just males in general, if a man has sex with a male. So you're not going to get anywhere if you actually look to see how these words are used throughout the Old Testament and that both of them could be used to refer to a an old man, a young man, a middle-aged man, or a male. Age is not inherent in either of the two terms here. Neither one of them is used exclusively or even predominantly to refer to a male of a certain age. So this, this is the sort of reinterpretation. I'm seeing a lot of people are going to focus on the different words being used, but if you actually study the different words that are being used you will see that they both in their inherent definition, are just referring to males, human males. So if a human male has sexual relationships with a another human male, this act is detestable in the Lord's sight. That's what these verses are saying, and that's how they've again always been interpreted and up until very recently.

Jeff Laird

When we start to bring this into a New Testament context, that is good to keep in mind that Scripture is talking about something that's relatively easy to see, understand, or to grasp. You know which which body parts of which persons are interacting in which ways is, even if somebody considers that to be none of their business or oppressive, that's what it's discussing. So it's not that we can, we we can't try to impose other ideas. So for example, we'll hear people say that writers in the Old Testament and into the New Testament didn't understand what we would now call sexual orientation. The idea that somebody has a natural proclivity to those things, and that because those writers did not understand that they weren't really speaking of what we see today. But there again, they weren't speaking about natural inclination per se. They were discussing the actual actions in question.

Jeff Laird

So we get to like the Book of Romans. We have Romans 1:26 and 27 when Paul talks about this. And one of the things he says there in verse 26, he says for this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions, and he's talking about non believers, for their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to the nature. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. So here Paul is talking about men and women in this sense, and he makes the reference to this being something that's not natural. And there again is this idea that it does not have really anything to do with an orientation. Paul, throughout the Book of Romans especially Chapter 7 makes it pretty clear that he's not a man who believes that anything that's normal natural is automatically good just because it's natural. So there's no reason to think that Paul in this case is saying that something is unnatural in the sense that it goes against your preferences, or it goes against your instincts. Which is how some people want to interpret that to say that Paul is merely saying, well, he's just saying that if you are inclined towards same sex romance, that's what you should pursue if you're inclined towards opposite sex romance. That's what you should pursue. That's not what he's saying. He's making the point that the natural, the thing that God would want, is the thing that's being moved away. Some people also try to interpret that as saying that it has something to do with forcing intimacy on people. But there again we see that he talks about being consumed with lust for one another.

Jeff Laird

So Paul can't be accused of not understanding sexual orientation. Because he's not discussing the question of are you going with or going against your nature in that passage. He says elsewhere that there's times that things that we want or things that we would prefer, things that we like are not the things that God wants us to do. And that continues with other things that Paul has to say.

Jeff Laird

When we get into First Corinthians and First Timothy. A major claim that we will sometimes hear is that in First Corinthians 6:9, the term homosexual was only added to the Bible in the 1940s. And that's part of the rolling argument that claims that prior to that, that was not how people interpreted Scripture. As we've discussed. There is no way to sort of take that argument seriously. We can be mature, we can be respectful. But the suggestion that Judeo Christianity did not view homosexual behavior as a sin until sometime in the 1940s and 1950s is simply, historically absurd, it's false. And what we see in here is that the terminology that's in there really does echo things we saw before. As Kevin was mentioning, the Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Old Testament that was made hundreds of years before Jesus was born. That was hundreds of years before Paul wrote what he wrote. But it used 2 words. So the Greek scholars of that time looked at the idea of intimacy between men, and they used arsenos and koinos, as the two words. Well, Paul sort of puts those together in some of his terminologies and he says Arsenokoitai and he's talking about that basic idea. He's using the same language that Jewish scholars of centuries before had used in reference to males having sex with males. And it was translated in the Old Testament as to have intercourse with a man the way you would with a woman is the meaning of that.

Jeff Laird

So when we try to pull this into the New Testament context, it's important to recognize that there is still clarity that what's being discussed and talked about is understood. In other words, it's not that Paul doesn't understand what he's saying, or that he's saying it in a different way or in a different sense. Or that he doesn't grasp something that we now today understand that he did not mean. He's being very direct. He's being very clear about something that's specific. And when it comes to that in orientation, as we said, we cannot go to the extent of calling something a sin which the Bible does not call a sin. And this is where a very important distinction comes up, in this, is that Paul's reference is to something physical. He's referring to an act. He's referring to a behavior. And Paul is the first one to say, Lord, help me. There are things I want to do that I know I should not do. Things that you want me to do. But the Bible tells us that temptation, the urge to do something, the want to do something, is not in and of itself a sin. So Paul is not in these passages saying that if you have that feeling, that feeling in and of itself, that is something that is a sin. What he's saying is that is one of those things that God does not want us to act on. That is one of those sins that we're supposed to recognize this is something that God has said is not part of his plan, not part of his design. We are supposed to put that in that category of saying who's going to rescue me from this body of death? Thank God. Christ can help me overcome that.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff's excellent explanation there. And like you said, the whole thing with the homosexuality not being in the Bible until 1946 and that's another one I'm hearing again and again and again. And it's just like, is ludicrous, a strong enough term to address the concept that Christians weren't against sexuality until 1946. I mean, it's just, it's crazy to think that. You you can look at Bible translations that are translated centuries before even the King James version. Or you can go all the way back to Wickliffe, the first English Bible. While, it does not use the term homosexuality. That term does not exist yet. It is very clear in the passages we just discussed what it's talking about and it's condemning it as a sin. So the whole idea that it's because the word homosexual did not occur in the Bible until 1946 is irrelevant in determining whether the act that the term homosexuality refers to is condemned in scripture. And you don't have to go to English you can go to Martin Luther's translation in the 1500. You can go back to the Latin Vulgate, translated 400 ish AD. And go back to the Septuagint. Every translation of the Bible in the history of Bible translation in all these passages we've discussed today is clearly identified homosexual behavior as something that is sinful. So the whole 1946 thing, it would make me laugh if it didn't make me cry that people were so buying into something that's so clearly false. And yet trying to find any and every possible way to explain away the the clear teaching of scripture on this issue.

Jeff Laird

And if you didn't know, if you don't have a sense of that history, I can understand why a person who doesn't have much grounding in the idea would say oh well, that does make sense. Why would anybody have a problem with it up until that point in time? But just because the word doesn't exist in a particular culture does not mean that the idea in and of itself is not there. Especially when we remember that these are people talking about specific behaviors. An analogy I've used, I think we used it in one of our articles talking about the subject is, if you if you read some 12th century account where a knight was criticizing his Squire because the Squire went and sort of arrogantly explained to a seamstress the right way to sew, even though he sort of knows. But she's really the expert. Well, today, that's what we would refer to as mansplaining. And I, whether you like that term or not. That's the way that people use it. It wouldn't make sense for us to say that well, no, the knight wasn't condemning mansplaining because

that word didn't exist. He knew exactly what he was saying and what he was talking about. It's very much the same thing with these passages that we see. The the term specifically in English didn't come around until we translated the Bible in English, which is no different than things like murder, rape and everything else. Those English words weren't there until we put them in English, but people understood what they meant.

Shea Houdmann

Good point, Jeff. One thing that I'm I've been brought to my attention a few times recently is so we've covered today the six main passages on the deal with homosexuality. That's again Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, and Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26 to 27, First Corinthians 6:9, and first Timothy 1:10. So a question that we received several times especially recently, if if the Bible only talks about homosexuality 6 times why are Christians so fixated on it? Why do Christians want to talk about it so much? And as I said at the beginning, I really don't think we do. At this point we would very much like to be able to move on to other things. But right now this is the primary cultural issue where there is a significant divide between what the Bible teaches, what most Christians believe, and the culture that surrounds us. If for some reason. I think, Jeff, we talked about it before the show, that if the culture around us were suddenly embracing adultery, that cheating on your wife or husband is something to be celebrated. Oh Christians would definitely be fighting and arguing against that. But that's not what's happening. What is happening is a view that Christians have held for the entire history of Christianity that homosexuality is immoral, it's unnatural. It's not something Christians should participate in. Culture is now saying that this is OK and not only is it OK, it's to be embraced. It is to be celebrated. So that's the reason why it at least seems like Christians will spend so much time for talking about homosexuality. Because that's the primary issue where they're, in terms of Christian morality, Christian ethics, and ethics of the culture around us. There is a huge difference of opinion or difference of interpretation. If we are confronted of this issue at Got Questions, if we're asked about this issue, we are going to do our best to give, here's what the Bible says, and here's why we believe what we believe, and here's why we have to talk about it. It's not like this is something we enjoy. It's like there's not something, like telling people they're engaged in immoral behavior is really not my favorite thing to do, not even close. I'd much rather be focusing on the gospel, on how you can serve Christ, how you can love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, those type of things. And continually having to deal with people who are trying to justify a sinful behavior.

Kevin Stone

Right.

Shea Houdmann

So this has been the Got Questions podcast on what does the Bible say about homosexuality. And again, let me just reiterate and say very clearly, we do not hate homosexuals. We do not view homosexuality as a greater sin than any other sin. At the same time, the Bible very clearly teaches that homosexuality is immoral. It is not something that we should be engaging in. And as a ministry that answers questions, we have to do that. But we reject all forms of hatred against the LGBTQ+ Community, so please hear that. And please hear us is doing our best to present the biblical truth in a spirit of love.

Shea Houdmann

Kevin, why don't you close this out and just talk just briefly about the idea that many Christians struggle with on viewing homosexuality is some greater sin, is some sin that God can't forgive, because that is a question that we received quite a bit, and it's definitely something that needs to be addressed.

Kevin Stone

Well the blood of Christ covers all sin. And if we and in Scripture says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, there are no exceptions to that statement. There no caveats that are listed there. It's whoever calls in the name of the Lord in faith is going to be saved, and the sin is forgiven. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he made a list of sins and he said, you know, all of these things are are are wicked things. But and he said to the Corinthians, you practiced some of these things, but now you are washed. Now you are cleansed, now you're sanctified. And so all of those sins were, homosexuality, is listed among those sins. It's they were all sins that had been practiced previously by the Corinthians and their and their pre Christ state. But once they came to Christ those sins were forgiven. And my mind goes to the Pilgrim's Progress book by John Bunyan, where the interpreter is speaking to a man who thinks he's beyond hope. He sees himself as locked in an iron cage and he has no hope of salvation. Forgiveness has passed him by. And the words of the interpreter to this man are the son of the blessed is very pitiful. That is Jesus Christ shows great compassion and mercy. You need to call on him. Your focus needs to be on the Savior, who can take away your sin. And there is a promise, that that is the promise of scripture that when we call on the name of the Lord, we will be saved.

Shea Houdmann

Amen and well said. So we'll include some links to the articles that we have on these issues because they go into further depth than we are able to in the limited time we have here today. This has been the Got Questions Podcast episode on what does the Bible say about homosexuality? Got questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.