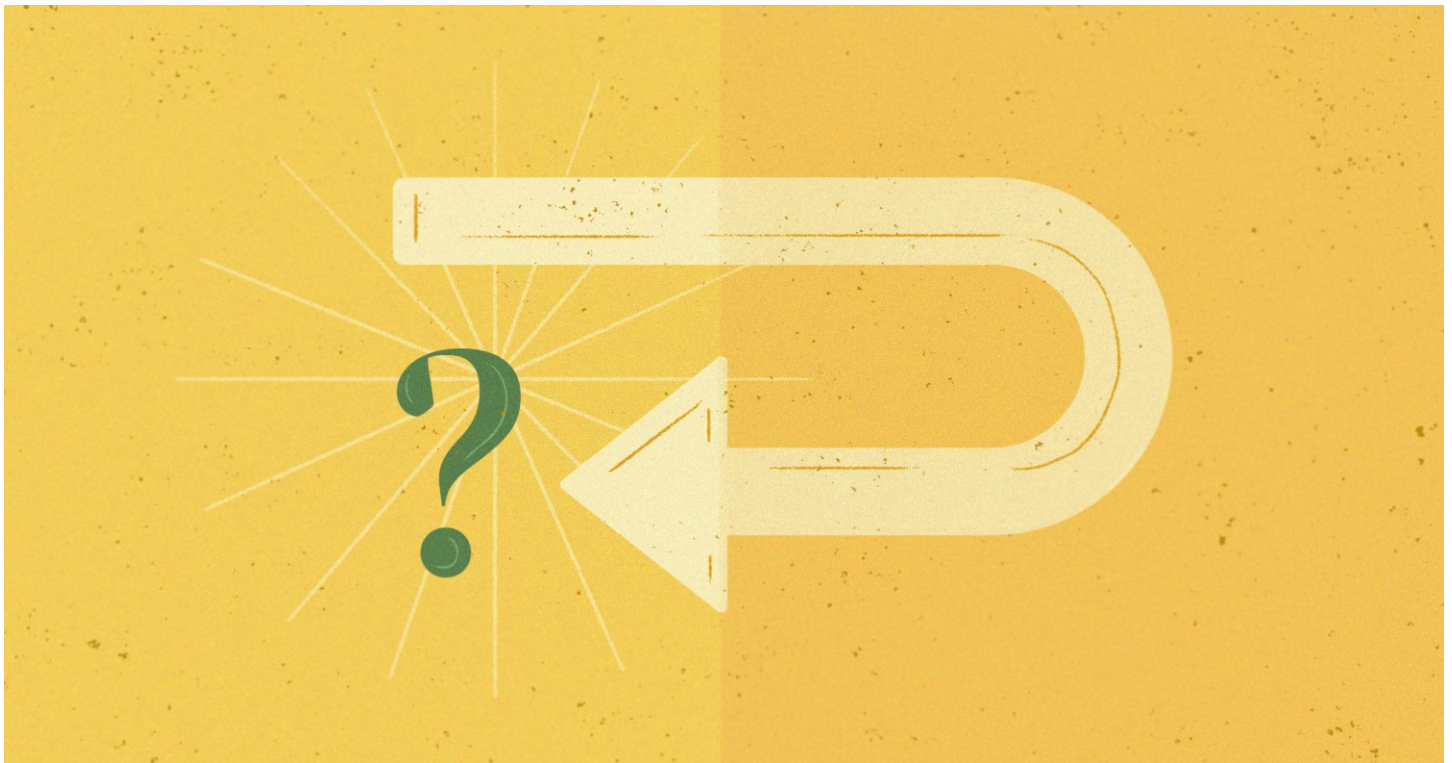


5 Questions about Homosexuality



October 14, 2020 by: [Kevin DeYoung](#) as part of the [Crossway Questions and Answers series](#).

Q1: If the Bible says so little about homosexuality, why do Christians insist on talking about it so much?

A: The reason the Bible says comparatively little about homosexuality is because it was a comparatively uncontroversial sin among ancient Jews and Christians. There is no evidence that ancient Judaism or early Christianity tolerated any expression of homosexual activity. The Bible says a lot about idolatry, religious hypocrisy, economic injustice, and pagan worship because these were common sins for God's people in both testaments.

The prophets didn't rail against homosexual practice because as a particularly obvious and egregious sin it was less frequently committed in the covenant community. The Bible talks about bestiality even less than it talks about homosexuality, but that doesn't make bestiality an insignificant issue—or incest or child abuse or fifty other sins the Bible barely addresses. Counting up the number of verses on any particular topic is not the best way to determine the seriousness of the sin involved.

Having said all that, it's not like the Bible is silent on the issue of homosexual behavior. It's explicitly condemned in the Mosaic law (Leviticus) and used as a vivid example of human rebellion in Paul's most important letter (Romans). It's listed among a host of other serious vices in two different epistles (1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy). It's one of the reasons God destroyed the most infamous cities in the Bible (Sodom and Gomorrah).

And that's not even mentioning all the texts about marriage in Genesis, in Proverbs, in Song of Solomon, in Malachi, in Matthew, and in Ephesians. When the Bible speaks in a single verse—as an aside, with no agreed upon historical interpretation—about people being baptized on behalf of the

dead (1 Cor. 15:29), we are right to think this is not a matter that should detain us long and one we should not be too dogmatic about. The biblical witness concerning homosexual behavior is not at all this obscure or this isolated.¹

Q2: Why did Jesus never talk about homosexuality?

A: To insist that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality is not really accurate. Not only did he explicitly reaffirm the creation account of marriage as the one-flesh union of a man and a woman (Matt. 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9); he condemned the sin of *porneia* (Mark 7:21), a broad word encompassing every kind of sexual sin. The leading New Testament lexicon defines *porneia* as “unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, unchastity, fornication.”² Likewise, New Testament scholar James Edwards states that *porneia* “can be found in Greek literature with reference to a variety of illicit sexual practices, including adultery, fornication, prostitution, and homosexuality. In the Old Testament it occurs for any sexual practice outside marriage between a man and a woman that is prohibited by the Torah.”³

Jesus didn’t have to give a special sermon on homosexuality because all of his listeners understood that same-sex behavior was prohibited in the Pentateuch and reckoned as one of the many expressions of sexual sin (*porneia*) off-limits for the Jews. Besides all this, there’s no reason to treat Jesus’s words (all of which were recorded by someone other than Jesus) as more authoritative than the rest of the Bible. He affirmed the abiding authority of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17–18) and understood that his disciples would fill out the true meaning of his person and work (John 14:25–26; 16:12–15; cf. Luke 24:48–49; Acts 1:1–2).

Q3: Why aren’t others sins (like gluttony) taken as seriously as sexual sin?

A: Do we really want to suggest that one sin is no big deal because we’ve been lax about a different sin? If Christians are wrongly tolerant of unrepentant gluttony, this is a matter of extreme importance. Sin separates us from God. When we choose to embrace it, celebrate it, and not repent of it, we keep ourselves away from God and away from heaven.

Q4: Isn’t the church supposed to be a place for broken people?

A: Yes and amen. We all need to be forgiven. We all need grace. The church is supposed to be full of sinners. But—and here’s the rub—the communicant membership of the church, like the membership of heaven, is made up of born again, repentant sinners. If we preach a “gospel” with no call to repentance, we are preaching something other than the apostolic gospel. If we knowingly allow unconcerned, impenitent sinners into the membership and ministry of the church, we are deceiving their souls and putting ours at risk as well. If we think people can find a Savior without forsaking their sin, we do not know what sort of Savior Jesus Christ is. “Such were some of you” is the hope-filled call to holiness for the sexual sinner and for every other kind of sinner (1 Cor. 6:11).

Few things are more important in life than repentance. It is so important that the Gospels and the Epistles and the Old Testament make clear that you don’t go to heaven without it. Ezekiel said, “Repent and turn from your transgressions” (Ezek. 18:30). John the Baptist said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). Jesus said, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Peter said, “Repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

And Paul said God “commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). No doubt, the church is for broken and imperfect people—broken people who hate what is broken in them and imperfect people who have renounced their sinful imperfections. If those with same-sex attraction are being singled out for repentance, the solution is not to remove forsaking of sin from the gospel equation, but

to labor for a church community where lifelong repentance is the normal experience of Christian discipleship.

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Q5: How can it be a sin if someone is born with homosexual desires?

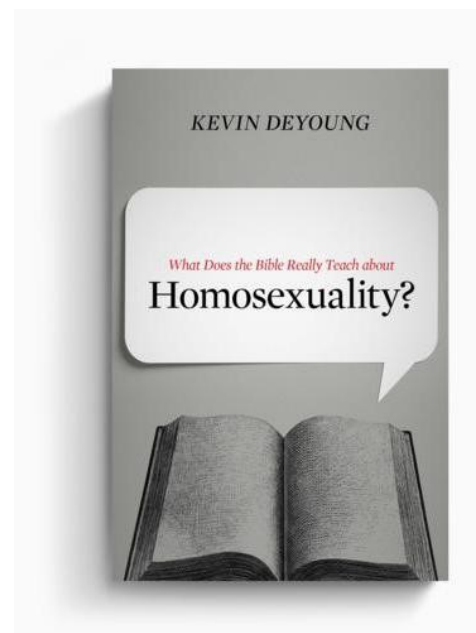
A: We are all products of nature and nurture. We all struggle with desires that should not be fulfilled and with longings for things illicit. As Christians we know that the heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). We are fallen people with a propensity for sin and self-deception. We cannot derive oughts from what is. Our own sense of desire and delight, or of pleasure and of pain, is not self-validating. People may, through no conscious decision of their own, be drawn to binge drinking, to promiscuity, to rage, to self-pity, or to any number of sinful behaviors.

If the “is-ness” of personal experience and desire determines the “ought-ness” of embracing these desires and acting upon them, there is no logical reason why other sexual “orientations” (say, toward children, or animals, or promiscuity, or bisexuality, or multiple partners) should be stigmatized.⁴As creatures made in the image of God, we are moral beings, responsible for our actions and for the lusts of the flesh. Quite simply, sometimes we want the wrong things. No matter how we think we might have been born one way, Christ insists that we must be born again a different way (John 3:3–7; Eph. 2:1–10).

This article is adapted from What Does the Bible Teach about Homosexuality? by Kevin DeYoung. Source: <https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-questions-about-homosexuality/>

Notes:

1. How many verses in the Bible speak directly to the issue of homosexuality? Robert Gagnon provides the following list: Gen. 9:20–27; 19:4–11; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Judg. 19:22–25; Ezek. 16:50 (possibly 18:12 and 33:26); Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; and probably 2 Pet. 2:7 and Jude 7. Texts referring to homosexual cult prostitution could also be added: Deut. 23:17–18; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job 36:14; and possibly Rev. 21:8; 22:15. The Bible talks about homosexuality more than we might think (Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001], 432).
2. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, based on Walter Bauer’s lexicon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.
3. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark, Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 213.
4. “There is a growing conviction, notably in Canada, that paedophilia should probably be classified as a distinct sexual orientation, like heterosexuality or homosexuality. Two eminent researchers testified to that effect to a Canadian parliamentary commission last year, and the Harvard Mental Health Letter of 2010 stated baldly that paedophilia ‘is a sexual orientation’ and therefore ‘unlikely to change’” (Jon Henley, “Paedophilia: Bringing Dark Desires to Light,” *The Guardian*, January 3, 2013, www.theguardian.com/society/2013/jan/03/paedophilia-bringing-dark-desires-light).



Offering readers a valuable resource for thinking through a contentious issue, this timely book by award-winning author Kevin DeYoung summarizes the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality and responds to popular objections raised by Christians *and* non-Christians.