

It is clear from Scripture that same-sex relationships are not acceptable to God.

Judgement or Grace

There is a tendency among some christians to condemn those who live lives which the Bible declares is immoral. While we can be fairly tolerant of issues which the Bible condemns just as strongly (e.g. gossip, greed, gluttony, pride) christians tend to be quite harsh towards sexual sins.

We need to show grace and love towards those who live an immoral lifestyle and be less quick to judge. Jesus told the men who gathered to stone the woman who was caught in adultery that the one without sin could cast the first stone. He said to the woman, "I don't condemn you; go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11)

God's mercy extends to adulterers, homosexuals, pornographers, and to all who sin in a sexual way, *just as it does to all who sin in other ways*. To all who repent of their sins, He offers mercy and grace.

We must always love the sinners even while we hate sin. Jesus hung around prostitutes even though He did not approve of their lifestyle. As christians, we must maintain the same balance.

Conclusion

Sex is God's gift to us; it is deeply embedded in our human nature; sex is good. The Bible tells us that some expressions of sexuality are not good, and that some practices are detestable to God. Some activities will lead us away from God's presence. If we are serious about pursuing God then we must allow Him to rule over every part of our lives, including the sexual area.



NEW LIFE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WHAT WE BELIEVE # 4

Human Sexuality

Introduction

We live in a culture and an era which, by historical standards, is extremely frank, open and at times obsessed with sexuality. As our culture has challenged traditional taboos, the church has been forced to think seriously about where it stands on all kinds of issues surrounding our sexual identity and practices. Many denominations are struggling with issues such as homosexuality and ministry.

Sex Is Good!

Contrary to what many people in our nation believe, the Bible teaches that sex is good, and that it is to be enjoyed. In fact there is a whole book in the Old Testament devoted to the beauty of sexual love- The Song of Songs.

In the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, God repeatedly says "It is good" after each stage of creation, until in 2:18 he sees that the man is alone and he says "It is NOT good!", following which He creates Eve.

While the Bible declares that sexuality is part of our God-given nature, it also gives directions as to how our sexuality is to be expressed. It is often claimed that this is repressive and limiting, but in actual fact the Biblical guidelines for sexuality allow men and women to find the deepest fulfilment and security.

The Golden Rule

People have attempted to summarise the Bible's teaching about sex into one phrase. The most helpful of these is "celibacy in singleness; faithfulness in marriage." This basically says that God's intention for us is that the only legitimate place for sexual relationships is within the boundaries of marriage.

Celibacy means voluntarily refraining from sex until marriage. Faithfulness means once married you look only to your spouse for sexual relations.

The Bible calls the practice of sex by unmarried people "fornication" and unfaithfulness to a marriage partner is called "adultery." Both are described in Scripture as sin. See Exodus 20:14, 17; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 5:11

Apart from the fact that the Bible teaches that God's intention is for celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage, there are all sorts of reasons why we should follow this principle:

- * surveys show that couples who have the highest values on the sanctity of marriage report the highest levels of satisfaction in the sexual area.
- * sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, chlamydia and herpes are virtually impossible to catch when partners have had no prior sexual activity.
- * children are more secure and confident when they know their parents are totally committed to one another.

The Higher Path

For Christians there are higher reasons to be sexually pure. Paul tells us that when we come to Christ we are united with Him. He goes on to say that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that therefore to engage in sexual immorality is to not just sin against our own bodies but against the Holy Spirit also. (See 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

Jesus set the standard for purity at an almost impossible level

when He said: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28)

We need to realise that we don't have to live up to these standards on our own strength. As in every part of our lives, God is present to enable us to live entirely for Him. Self-control, goodness and faithfulness are listed among the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. When we fail, there is God's promise of mercy: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Homosexuality

In the last few decades there has been a massive campaign by the homosexual lobby to recognise homosexuality as normal and of equal status to heterosexuality. In some places homosexual "marriages" are recognised. In some denominations, notably the Uniting Church in Australia and parts of the Anglican Church in other countries, homosexual ministers are being ordained.

The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is wrong, describing it as an abomination or detestable to God. Leviticus 18:22 says, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." The chapter then goes on to state that if the people do these and other things the land would vomit them out, and that such people were to be "cut off from their people."

In Romans 1, Paul describes the wrath of God against all people for worshipping the creation (idolatry) rather than the creator. He says, "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another... in the same way men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (Romans 1:24, 26-27)