

Marriage and Homosexuality in a Christian Worldview

1. Introduction

A. Importance of the subject

The issue of homosexuality is huge in the contemporary church and merits attention because there is a growing number who claim to be gay Christians and who offer "gay exegesis" of Scripture. Much is at stake in these discussions including the biblical teaching on marriage, the reformed doctrine of total depravity, and the call to put sin to death. The study of sexual sin yields many lessons for the spiritual battlefield: **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry** (Col 3.5) and lessons for growth in holiness: **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness** (Eph 4.22-24). We must ever be aware of the deceitfulness of sin that leads to the hardening of the heart and captivity to false teaching. Therefore, this study is not just about others, it is about a very real danger we all face and about which we need to be prayerfully diligent according to cautions like the following: **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** At stake is our eternal safety. **For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end** (Heb 3.12-14). Also, Paul says, **See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ** (Col 2.8). The last phrase in 3.8 chimes with the need to exhort one another regularly in the church family (Heb 3.13) because it indicates that the empty deceit of false wisdom has its roots in asserted human autonomy. Therefore, the remnants of sin in the Christian life not only have roots in the dangerous core sin of autonomy, but they also have their roots in the former manner of life that **is corrupt through deceitful desires** (Eph 4.22) and in the heart which **is deceitful and difficult to understand** (Jer 17.9). Finally, and hardly least in importance, we have to figure out how to maintain a loving posture toward people that we think are practicing sin and claiming a Christian basis for the practice. That has to be one of our goals. (other things you would like to mention?)

B. Marriage and sexual immorality

(Gen 1.27): **God made them male and female...(2.24): Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh** in a oneness that includes the delight of shared nakedness (2.25): **And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.** This intimacy has the potential of procreation to fill the earth with the family of Adam and Eve (1.28); and it has the larger context of a covenant of companionship (Mal 2.24: your wife is **your companion and wife by covenant**). Accordingly, Jesus put Gen 1.27 and 2.24 together in Mark 10.6-7: **But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'**⁷ **Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife** showing that the polarity of male and female was created for marriage which is only breakable by sexual immorality: **whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery** (Mat 19.9).

Per these texts, we have a definition of marriage and of sexual immorality. Marriage is a covenant of companionship for life in which two people, male and female, have the potential of bearing children. Sexual immorality is any form of sexual intimacy that transgresses the boundary of marriage established by the Creator's design. Accordingly, the seventh command guards the sanctity of marriage and adultery refers to any form of sex that crosses marital boundaries. Similarly, in Hebrews 13.4, honoring marriage includes keeping the marriage bed undefiled; it is dishonored not only by sexual sin committed by a married person (adultery), but it is dishonored by any kind of sex that, like adultery, violates marital intimacy: **Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.**

C. The sin of homosexuality and an interesting strategy

1. As a violation of the boundaries of marriage established at creation, homosexuality is a sin.
2. Notably, a strategy in "gay exegesis" of Scripture on this topic marginalizes the teaching cited above on the institution of marriage as a creation ordinance. In *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* by D. Helminiak (reprinted 15 times from 1994 to 2007 with 50k copies in print), the author seeks to deal with all the references to homosexuality in the Bible and show that the traditional understanding that it is a sin is wrong. He speaks of homosexuality over against the biblical teaching on heterosexuality and says that Gen 1-2 is simply a story about how sin affects humans, parents and children. Adam and Eve are incidental to the point, which is not about sexual orientation: "Nothing in those two chapters suggests that heterosexuality, in contrast to homosexuality, was a concern in the author's mind. To read that modern concern into the text is simply to misuse the Bible."

More about Helminiak's handling of Scripture later, for now, what is tricky about how the language in this quote? What implications are thereby set in place? [*Briefly: to compare homosexuality with heterosexuality subtly marginalizes marriage and thus fragments and distorts the picture elevating human sexuality out of perspective and opening the door for simply finding one's preference. When we compare homosexuality with marriage we keep all of Scripture squarely before us emphasizing God's design of male and female for marriage with the potentiality of procreation in a covenant of companionship for life*]