

Does

the

Bible

Affirm

Same-Sex

Relationships?

Discussion Guide

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Claim 1: Christians Should Just Focus on the Gospel of God's Love

1. The biblical boundaries around sexual relationships are "charcoal lines around a living picture of the most amazing love relationship we've ever seen"—God's love for his people fulfilled in Jesus' marriage to the church.
 - How new to you is this biblical teaching?
 - How has this chapter helped you begin to see those boundaries in a positive light?
2. According to the Bible, marriage is just a scale model of the ultimate relationship.
 - Which is more likely to tempt you: viewing the scale model as the real thing or questioning/rejecting the design of the scale model altogether?
3. The biblical ancient story "makes surprisingly good sense of our experience [of sexual relationships] today."
 - Reflect on how you have seen both goodness and blight in the area of romantic and sexual relationships.

Claim 2: Jesus Was Silent on Same-Sex Relationships

1. How does chapter 2 help you to answer the following people?
 - Someone confused by Jesus' silence on same-sex relationships, compared with Paul's explicit teaching.
 - Someone who believes same-sex sexual relationships can't be wrong because same-sex desire is simply natural to some people.
 - Someone who believes they are more innately sinful than others because they experience same-sex attraction
2. What do the biblical accounts of Jesus' encounters with sinners show us about both his uncompromising view of sin and his heart for sinners?
 - How do you respond to this depiction of Jesus?
 - What response is Jesus looking for?
3. Sam says, "If it was a choice between following an ancient religious leader or fulfilling my sexuality, it would be hard not to argue in favour of the latter. But that is not the actual choice I face."
 - What is the actual choice that Sam faces?
 - What choice do you think you might be facing?

Claim 3: God's Judgment on Sodom Isn't a Judgment on Same-Sex Relationships

1. It's essential to carefully read biblical references to God's judgment on Sodom in order to correctly understand the Bible's interpretation of that event. What do the biblical references to that story teach us about...
 - what incurs God's judgment?
 - what God will judge more severely than any sin of Sodom?
2. The story of Sodom doesn't really speak to the specific question of whether or not a Christian can pursue a monogamous same-sex relationship, but it is still relevant to us all today.
 - What future reality does it point to?
 - What response does this call for from us?

Claim 4: It's Inconsistent to Follow the Old Testament on Same-Sex Sex but Not on Shellfish

1. Jesus said, "I have not come to abolish [the Old Testament laws] but to fulfill them."
 - In light of this, in what three categories can Old Testament commands now be grouped?
 - How do Christians know if an Old Testament command must still be obeyed?
2. If the Old Testament laws against adultery and same-sex sexual relationships still apply to Christians today, why not the accompanying death penalty as well?
3. How does this chapter help you answer someone who believes that Jesus doesn't mind how we use our bodies sexually, based on the fact that he offered forgiveness to those who had sinned sexually?

Claim 5: Paul Condemns Exploitative Same-Sex Relationships, Not Consensual Ones

1. The apostle Paul used Greek words for “males” and “females,” rather than “men” and “women,” when he wrote about same-sex sexual relationships in Romans 1.
 - What light does this shed on the description “contrary to nature”?
 - According to Paul, what precisely makes same-sex sexual relationships unacceptable to God?
2. “If someone you love follows Christ but is in a same-sex relationship, he or she would appear to have been swept up by Paul and deposited in the dustbin of condemnation.”
 - What have you learned in this chapter that can help you to respond to this view?
3. Paige says, “I thought [Romans 8:28] meant that God would get on board with my agenda. But now I realize it means the opposite.”
 - In what areas of your life have you been hoping that God will get on board with your agenda?
 - What needs to change in your life if the opposite is true?

Claim 6: Paul Was Condemning Excessive Lust, Not Same-Sex Sexual Orientation

1. Some Christians have stereotyped anyone who experiences same-sex attraction as promiscuous, lust-driven and incapable of or hostile toward loving, faithful sexual relationships.
 - Why is such stereotyping both inaccurate and unnecessary?
 - What often drives us to stereotype people in this way?
2. Louis Crompton says, “The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any other Jew or early Christian.”
 - How would you explain to a non-Christian who experiences same-sex attraction...
 - (1) why they need to be redeemed?
 - (2) how in fact they can be redeemed?

Claim 7: The Word “Homosexual” Wasn’t Used in Bibles until 1946—It’s a Misinterpretation

1. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, what exactly did Paul have in view when using the words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* to identify those who will not inherit the kingdom of God?
 - In what ways do some people today misrepresent or misunderstand what Paul is saying here?
2. What are followers of Jesus promised and also not promised regarding temptations like same-sex attraction?
 - What two opposite errors can we make regarding the temptation of same-sex attraction?
3. How has chapter 7 equipped you to help someone like Brian (or how has it helped you yourself)—who loves Jesus but struggles with unwanted same-sex attraction and feels condemned because that struggle is ongoing?

Claim 8: The Trajectory of the Bible Is toward Rejecting Slavery and Affirming Same-Sex Marriage

1. Rebecca says, “You can shoot an arrow from a host of Bible texts to pierce the heart of race-based chattel slavery.” Practice explaining why the trajectory of the Bible is toward the abolition of slavery.
2. The argument goes, “If there is ‘no male and female’ in the church [quoting Galatians 3:28], this opens the door to sex difference not mattering in marriage.” Practice explaining why this is not a valid biblical argument.
3. What is the endpoint of all biblical trajectories?
 - To what extent are you living on the same trajectory or a different one?

Claim 9: Unchosen Celibacy Yields Bad Fruit

1. Some argue that the suffering caused by unwanted celibacy imposed by Christians on gay people is “bad fruit” and reveals that any Christian prohibition on same-sex marriage is false teaching (see Matthew 7:15-20).
 - Why is this argument biblically invalid?
2. According to the New Testament, what has superseded marriage and child-rearing as the ultimate purpose of humans in this world?
 - What purpose does the New Testament reveal for marriage and for singleness within this greater purpose?
 - How can this help believers who face a lifetime of unchosen singleness?
3. Rebecca says, “Whether we’re single or married today, followers of Jesus are running toward eternity with him and each other—an eternity of love so unimaginably great that any human love that draws our hearts today is like a drop of dew compared to a vast ocean.”
 - How real does that Christian hope of eternity seem to you at the moment? What would help you to anticipate that future reality more powerfully?

Claim 10: A God of Love Can’t Be against Relationships of Love

1. Rebecca says, “In modern Western culture and within the church, we’ve drained the blood from same-sex friendship. Those who want to follow what the Bible says about same-sex relationships must urgently transfuse it back.”
 - How would you explain the Bible’s view of same-sex friendship to someone who knows nothing about it?
2. Rebecca quotes Jesus: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Then she says, “In the Bible, married love, parental love, and friendship love are all held up as precious. But only this last kind of love is mandatory.”
 - How new to you is this understanding of the New Testament teaching on relationships?
 - How has Jesus loved us? What are the implications for you and your friendships?