



Same-Sex Relationships in the Church of England

August 2, 2025

Something to consider

- Last week we had different views on Assisted Dying and managed to handle the different views well
- This week there are likely to also be differences of opinion on this matter and everyone participating in this discussion will need to be respectful to each other even when strongly disagreeing
- People leave churches over differences on this matter and this has happened on a significant level locally in recent years
- The Church of England and other denominations are also deeply divided on this issue. In the Church of England over recent years “Prayers for Love and Faith” have been discussed many times at General Synod. Now prayers for same sex couples within a Sunday morning or midweek “regular” church service are permitted, but “standalone” services or blessings are not yet permitted.

Introduction to the Debate

Core of the Debate

The debate on same-sex relationships in the Church of England centers on how biblical texts are understood. Conservative views uphold a timeless, literal interpretation of prohibitions, while liberal views emphasize context, cultural specificity, and broader biblical themes of grace and inclusion.

Conservative Perspective

"Traditional" or "Conservative" views often uphold a timeless, literal interpretation of prohibitions against same-sex relationships, seeing these commands as universal and unchanging moral laws.

Liberal/Affirming Perspective

"Affirming" or "Liberal" views focus on the context and cultural specificity of biblical texts, emphasizing the broader message of love, grace, and inclusion. They argue that some prohibitions reflect ancient cultural norms and should be reconsidered in light of modern understanding.

“Prayers for Love and Faith” in the Church of England

- The Church of England (CofE) is deeply engaged in internal debate concerning same-sex relationships, especially on Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) and same-sex marriage.
- PLF are prayers intended to bless same-sex couples in civil marriages or partnerships without altering traditional marriage doctrine. Currently this is only permitted within a normal church service, not as a “standalone” service.
- Disagreement arises from differing biblical and theological interpretations, pastoral concerns, and the Church's mission in modern society.
- This presentation explores these diverse approaches, their theological foundations, societal context, impact on the Church's mission, and the nature of disagreement within the CofE.
- Understanding this complex landscape is essential for appreciating the ongoing dialogue and challenges facing the Church today.

Affirming Approach

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) - Affirming Approach

What are PLF?

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) are prayers proposed by the Church of England for use in parishes to pray for same-sex couples who have entered into civil marriage or civil partnership, or who simply have a deep partnership without being married or in a civil partnership.

Love and Inclusion

Proponents emphasize God's unconditional love (agape) for all people, as reflected in Jesus's teachings (e.g., Galatians 3:28, John 13:34-35), affirming same-sex relationships as valid expressions of Christian love and commitment.

Pastoral Care and Scripture

The focus is on providing pastoral care and spiritual support to LGBTQ+ individuals, with a re-interpretation of biblical passages like Romans 1 and Leviticus 18 as culturally conditioned and not applicable to committed, monogamous same-sex relationships today.

Theological Anthropology

This approach embraces a developing understanding that human sexuality is diverse and that same-sex orientation is a natural variation of human experience, created by God, highlighting justice, hospitality, and welcome.



Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) - Conservative Approach

Traditional Stance

Opponents of PLF argue that blessing same-sex unions contradicts the Church of England's established doctrine of marriage as exclusively between one man and one woman. Though PLF are not necessarily for married same-sex couples, this view is that the prayers undermine the institution of marriage.

Scriptural Authority

Primacy is given to biblical passages interpreted as defining marriage as heterosexual (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24; Mark 10:6-9) and prohibiting homosexual acts (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

Tradition and Creation Theology

Upholding the consistent understanding of marriage throughout Christian history and the global Anglican Communion. Emphasis on the complementary nature of male and female in creation as foundational to marriage and procreation.

Sin and Holiness

Homosexual acts are viewed as contrary to God's design for human sexuality, calling for repentance and adherence to traditional sexual ethics.

Same-Sex Marriage - Affirming Approach



- 01** **Equality and Justice** Denying marriage to same-sex couples is viewed as discriminatory and unjust, undermining the Christian principle that all are equal in Christ.
- 02** **Covenantal Love** Marriage is emphasized as a lifelong, faithful covenant between two people regardless of gender, reflecting God's covenantal love.
- 03** **Contextual Reading of Scripture** Affirming advocates re-evaluate biblical texts in their historical and cultural context, suggesting they do not directly address or condemn committed same-sex relationships as understood today.
- 04** **Fruits of the Spirit** Committed same-sex relationships are observed to exhibit the 'fruits of the Spirit' such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

UK Society's View of Same-Sex Relationships

01 Increasing Acceptance

Over recent decades, there has been a significant shift in public opinion in the UK, with growing acceptance and support for same-sex relationships and marriage.

02 Legal Recognition

Same-sex civil partnerships were introduced in 2005, and same-sex marriage was legalized in England and Wales in 2013, followed by Scotland in 2014 and Northern Ireland in 2020.

03 Generational Divide

Younger generations generally hold more affirming views on same-sex relationships compared to older generations, reflecting changing cultural and social attitudes.

04 Secularization

As society becomes more secular, traditional religious views on sexuality are often seen as out of step with modern values, contributing to increased acceptance of same-sex relationships.

Scientific Basis for an Affirming View

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| 01 | Sexual Orientation as Innate | Scientific consensus indicates that sexual orientation, including homosexuality, is a complex, likely innate, and largely unchangeable aspect of an individual's identity, not a choice. |
| 02 | Biological Factors | Research suggests a combination of genetic, hormonal, and developmental factors contribute to sexual orientation, highlighting its natural basis. |
| 03 | Psychological Well-being | Studies show affirming environments and legal recognition of same-sex relationships correlate with improved mental and physical health for LGBTQ+ individuals, reducing depression, anxiety, and suicide risk. |
| 04 | No Harm Evidence | Major professional organizations affirm that same-sex relationships and parenting by same-sex couples are normal and healthy, with no evidence of inherent harm to individuals, children, or society. |
| 05 | Implication for Justice | If sexual orientation is innate and harmless, denying equal rights and recognition, including marriage, lacks scientific basis and is unjust. |

Interpreting the bible:

I am going to spend a lot of time on this issue this evening

- The different approaches take different interpretations of biblical texts.
- The forthcoming slides explores these different interpretations
- The modern scientific and cultural consensus has settled this question in favour of same-sex relationships so this is why there is an emphasis on biblical interpretation in tonight's presentation

Genesis and Mark

01 Genesis 1:27-28

“So God created mankind in his own image, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number...’” This highlights humanity created male & female in God's image, basis for procreation.

03 Mark 10:6-9

Jesus quotes Genesis: “God made them male and female... a man will leave his parents and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This affirms marriage as a lifelong covenant between man and woman.

02 Genesis 2:24

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” This verse establishes the 'one-flesh' union, the foundation of marriage as a man and woman forming a new family unit.

04 Key Ideas

Marriage is rooted in creation, emphasizing male and female complementarity. The 'one-flesh' union forms a deep bond. Jesus' words highlight marriage's permanence and sacredness. However, does the “norm” mean that the divergent model (same-sex relationships) is immoral or unlawful? We must remember the original model for companionship is the fact that aloneness is not God's intention (Genesis 2.18)

Genesis 2.18

- The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”
- For many who struggle with this issue theologically the simple practical need for a life partner for LGBTQIA+ people on grounds of companionship is a determinative factor in their decisions.
- It is certainly completely unfair to focus on this issue simply in terms of sexual behaviour, as most Christians either side of this debate would condemn any temporary and uncommitted sexual encounter either heterosexual or homosexual

Old Testament Laws on Sexual Conduct

01 Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus 18:22 says, "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable."

Leviticus 20:13 adds, "If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both have done what is detestable and are to be put to death."

03 Meaning of 'Detestable'

The Hebrew word translated as 'detestable' or 'abomination' (to'evah) applies to many forbidden acts, including idolatry, dietary laws, and specific sexual practices, signaling strong disapproval.

02 Holiness Code Context

These laws are part of the 'Holiness Code,' a set of rules for maintaining Israel's religious and moral purity, reflecting societal norms and religious mandates of the time.

04 Scholarly Debates

Scholars debate whether these verses forbid all same-sex acts or only those linked to pagan fertility cults and prostitution, with interpretations varying by ancient Near Eastern context.

Do we see Old Testament ethical prohibitions as binding today? One argument is that the ethical direction in Old Testament law is not always something we could support now – for example in the treatment of women....

Unilateral Power in Divorce



The Law:
Deuteronomy
24:1-4

A man could write a certificate of divorce and send his wife away if he 'found something indecent about her.' A woman did not have a reciprocal right to initiate a divorce.



**Unequal
Authority**

This law gave men unilateral control over the end of a marriage, reflecting a clear power imbalance in marital rights.



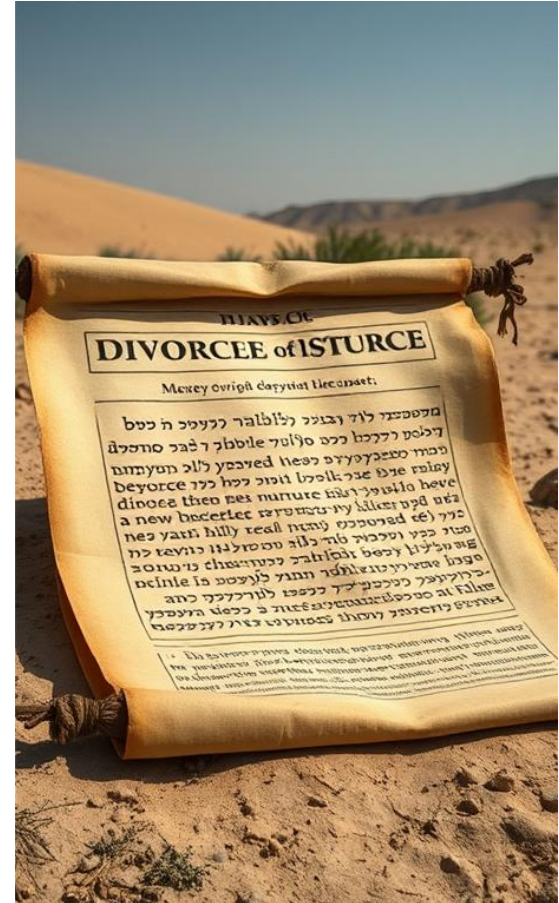
**Economic and
Social
Vulnerability**

A divorced woman often faced social stigma and economic hardship, as her identity and security were tied to her husband in that culture.



**Lack of
Autonomy**

The law denied a woman the right to make a decision about her marital status, restricting her independence and personal freedom.



Subjection of a Woman's Vows



The Law in Numbers 30:2-16

A man's vow to God was binding and irreversible, whereas a father could nullify his daughter's vow and a husband could nullify his wife's vow, limiting women's spiritual commitments.



Legal Dependency

Women were treated as legal dependents rather than independent individuals, unable to make binding promises to God without male approval, highlighting their subordinate status.



Lack of Personal Sovereignty

This law explicitly states that a woman's word was not her own, as her legal and spiritual autonomy was subject to the authority of the male head of her household.



Cultural and Social Implications

This law reflects the patriarchal social structure of ancient Israel, institutionalizing a system where women lacked autonomy and were dependent on male relatives for legal and spiritual decisions.

A Sexual Double Standard



The Law Explained

Deuteronomy 22:13-21 states that if a husband accuses his wife of not being a virgin at marriage and her parents cannot provide proof, the woman could be stoned to death.



Unequal Punishment

The law imposes a life-or-death penalty on women for premarital sexual conduct, while men's premarital history faces no similar scrutiny or punishment.



Risk of False Accusation

Women could be falsely accused without effective recourse, placing their honour and lives at the mercy of their husbands' claims.



Gendered Vulnerability

This law institutionalizes a severe sexual double standard, highlighting the deep social and legal inequalities women faced in ancient Israelite society.

Conclusion

Context and Interpretation

Reflecting on the Texts

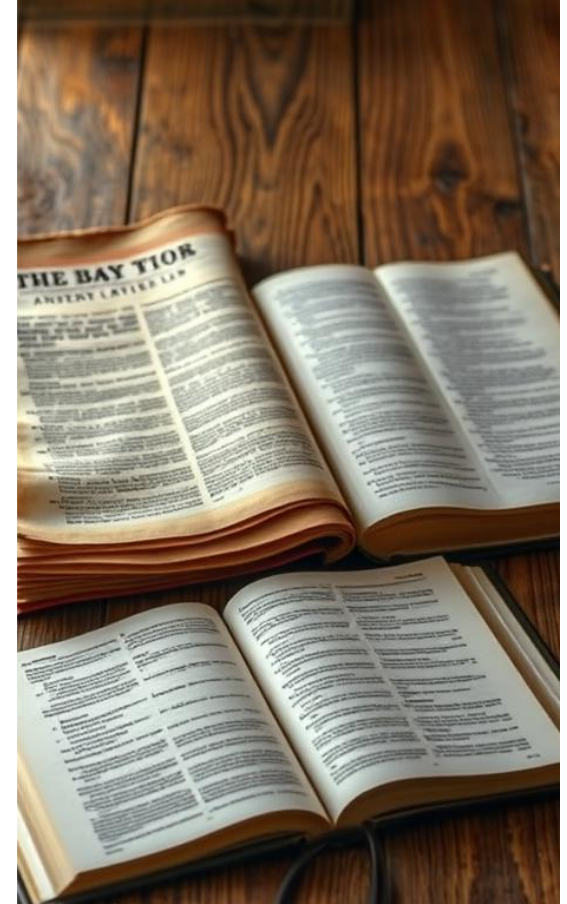
These examples demonstrate a clear legal and social imbalance, where women were consistently placed in positions of less power and greater vulnerability within Old Testament law.

Beyond the Laws

It is important to remember these laws were part of a specific ancient cultural context; modern ethical and legal standards have evolved significantly since then.

Ongoing Dialogue

These challenging passages invite us to consider the arc of biblical revelation and how later traditions, particularly in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus, offer new perspectives on love, equality, and human dignity.



So we see that many of us have reservations with the ethics in Leviticus.

Equally, the Old Testament law stems from a culture where even the main characters of the Old Testament have a complex sex life. It seems that God is very forgiving of this behaviour time and yet the attitude to homosexuality in Leviticus and beyond is very unforgiving. Let us look at these examples...

Abraham: Concubinage and Polygamy



Context: Sarah's Barrenness

Sarah was unable to have children, creating cultural pressure for Abraham to produce an heir to continue the family line, which was crucial in that era.



The Deviation: Concubinage with Hagar

Abraham takes Hagar, Sarah's slave, as a concubine to bear a child (Ishmael), deviating from the ideal of a monogamous union described in Genesis 2:24.



Consequences: Domestic Strife

The situation causes profound jealousy and conflict between Sarah and Hagar, ultimately leading to the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from the household.



Later Life: Marriage to Keturah

After Sarah's death, Abraham marries Keturah, further demonstrating a polygamous lifestyle beyond the initial concubinage arrangement with Hagar.

Jacob: A Polygamous Household



The Deviation: Multiple Marriages and Concubinage

Jacob marries two sisters, Leah and Rachel, and also has children with their slave-women, Bilhah and Zilpah, as concubines, deviating from the ideal of monogamous union.



Household Atmosphere: Jealousy and Competition

The household is filled with jealousy and competition as the wives vie for Jacob's affection and the privilege of bearing children, leading to emotional turmoil.



Dynamics: Deception and Rivalry

The marriages arise from deception and intense rivalry between Leah and Rachel, creating a complex and strained family environment.



Consequences: Human Cost Despite Tribal Continuation

Despite ensuring the continuation of the twelve tribes, the narrative highlights significant human cost and unhappiness within this polygamous family structure.

King David: Adultery and its Fallout



Compounded by Murder Plot

David compounded his sin by orchestrating the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to conceal the adultery.



The Deviation

David committed adultery with Bathsheba, which is documented in 2 Samuel 11. This act was a serious departure from accepted moral behavior.



Consequences

The prophet Nathan explicitly condemned David, leading to severe divine judgment, personal suffering, and the death of their first child. This event also triggered ongoing strife and violence within David's family.



Violation of Commandment

This act violated the seventh commandment: "You shall not commit adultery," marking a direct breach of divine law.



Key Takeaway

Adultery carries significant moral and spiritual consequences that extend beyond cultural norms, highlighting the severity of personal sin and divine accountability.

King Solomon: Excessive Harem and Idolatry



The Deviation

Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, representing the most extensive deviation from monogamous commitment in the Old Testament.



Symbolism of Royal Power

His vast number of wives and concubines symbolized political alliances and royal prestige, demonstrating power through marriage ties.



Consequences

The biblical text explicitly links Solomon's excessive polygamy to his spiritual downfall and loss of exclusive worship of Yahweh.



Quote from 1 Kings 11:4

"His wives turned his heart away after other gods," leading Solomon to idolatry and a profound departure from divine commandments.



Key Takeaway

The narrative warns that unrestrained sexual relationships, especially when connected to foreign influences, can lead directly to spiritual apostasy.

Samson's Sexual Failings & Consequences

Forbidden Relationships

Despite his Nazarite vow, Samson was repeatedly drawn to foreign, Philistine women, which was against God's commands and his special calling.

Woman from Timnah

His desire for a woman from Timnah, against his parents' wishes, led to conflict and a series of escalating tensions with the Philistines.

Prostitute in Gaza

Samson engaged with a prostitute in the Philistine city of Gaza, demonstrating his self-indulgence and disregard for his sacred Nazarite vow.

Delilah and Downfall

His intense relationship with Delilah ended in betrayal; she pressured him to reveal the secret of his strength, leading to his capture, blinding, and humiliation.

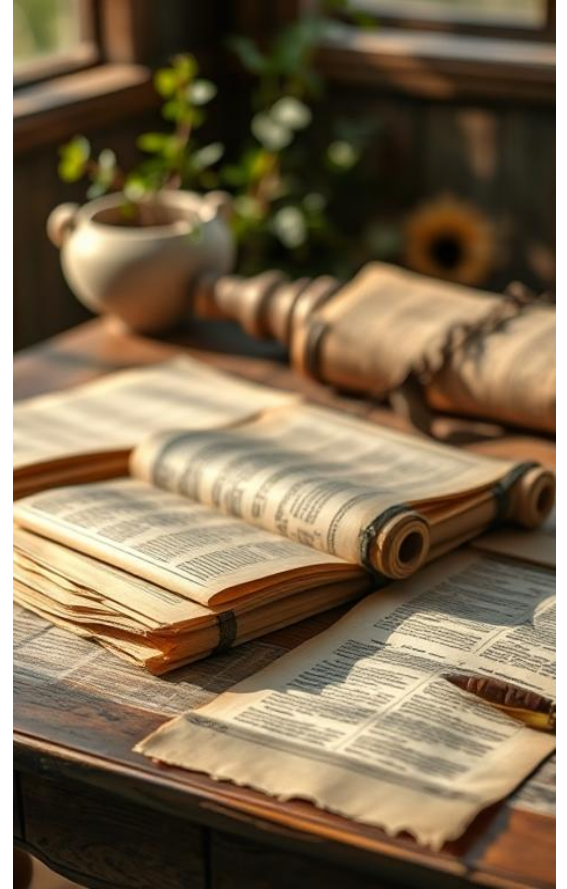
Impact of Choices

Samson's choices often led to personal suffering and complicated his divine mission, though God still used the outcomes for delivering Israel.

New Testament

What about the New Testament?

Let us start with Romans chapter 1



Traditional View: Romans 1: The Core Argument

Paul's theological framework in Romans 1 presents humanity as universally sinful and in rebellion against God. He describes a downward spiral where suppressing the truth about God leads people to idolatry—worshiping created things rather than the Creator. As a consequence of this rebellion, God "gives them over" to the consequences of their choices, which includes various forms of moral depravity such as sexual immorality. This passage is central to the traditional perspective because it explicitly connects same-sex relations with a broader pattern of sin and divine judgment, framing these acts as contrary to God's created order and will.



Traditional View

Traditional View: Romans 1 - Idolatry and "God Gave Them Over"

The traditional view emphasizes that Paul presents same-sex acts not as isolated sins, but as a consequence and manifestation of humanity's deeper rebellion against God. This rebellion is described as exchanging the Creator for creation, which is the essence of idolatry. The phrase "God gave them over" indicates divine judgment, where God allows humanity to experience the logical consequences of their rejection of Him. This interpretation leads to a universal prohibition against homosexual behaviour, regardless of the nature or context of the relationship, as it is fundamentally contrary to God's will and created order.



Traditional View: Romans 1:26-27 - "Natural" vs. "Unnatural"

Romans 1:26-27 Text

- "Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones."
- "In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another."
- "Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error."

Interpretation and Condemnation

- "Natural" is understood as heterosexual relations consistent with God's created order in Genesis 1-2.
- "Unnatural" refers to any sexual activity deviating from this divinely established heterosexual norm.
- Paul is interpreted as unequivocally condemning all homosexual acts as contrary to God's design.
- This passage is central to the traditional argument against same-sex sexual relationships.

Affirming View: Romans 1 - "Unnatural" as Against One's Own Nature

Re-evaluating "Unnatural" and Context of Excessive Lust

- "Unnatural" (Greek: para physin) may refer to acts contrary to an individual's own nature or inclination.
- Paul is seen as condemning heterosexual individuals who engage in same-sex acts as rebellion against God, not those with innate same-sex attraction.
- The passage emphasizes "inflamed with lust" and "shameful acts," suggesting a focus on uncontrolled passion and exploitation.
- This interpretation distinguishes between exploitative acts and loving, consensual relationships.

Distortion, Not Identity Argument

- The acts described are viewed as a distortion of God's created order caused by human depravity.
- Paul's condemnation targets excessive lust and distortion, not a person's inherent sexual identity.
- Affirming scholars argue this passage does not condemn loving, committed same-sex relationships.
- The focus is on the quality and context of acts, not on innate orientation.

Introduction to Ancient Same-Sex Relationships



No Fixed Sexual Orientation

The concept of a fixed sexual orientation like 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' as an inherent identity did not exist. Sexual behavior was seen through acts, status, and social roles rather than identity.



Power Dynamics in Relationships

Same-sex relationships, especially between men, were framed around power. Freeborn men could be the 'active' partner with socially inferior males, but lasting relationships between equals were rare.



Lack of Legal Recognition

There was no legal or social framework for same-sex marriage or civil partnerships in the Roman Empire. Informal unions existed but were not officially recognized and often viewed negatively.

Key Works on Christianity and Homosexuality

Boswell, John. Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Boswell, John. Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe. New York: Villard Books, 1994.

Bray, Alan. Homosexuality in Renaissance England. London:, 1982.

Brooten, Bernadette J. Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Greenberg, David F. The Construction of Homosexuality. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Helminiak, Daniel A. What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality. San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 2000.

Scroggs, Robin. The New Testament and Homosexuality. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.



Identity

Absence of Sexual Orientation as Identity

The concept of a fixed sexual orientation, such as "homosexual" or "heterosexual," as an inherent identity did not exist in the ancient world. Sexual behavior was viewed more in terms of specific acts, social status, and roles rather than as an expression of an individual's innate identity.

This means that people were not categorized by who they were attracted to in a modern identity sense but rather by their behaviours and the social context in which these occurred. The ancient framework focused on roles, such as active versus passive partners, and the social acceptability tied to these roles, rather than on a personal sexual identity as we understand it today.

Dominant/Submissive Paradigm in Roman Society



Power and Status Roles

Sexual relationships, particularly between men, were framed around power dynamics rather than mutual equality. A freeborn Roman man was socially expected to be the 'active' partner.



Acceptability of Roles

It was acceptable for a freeborn man to be dominant over a socially inferior male like a slave, prostitute, or younger non-citizen boy, but being the passive partner was shameful for a freeborn man.



Lack of Reciprocal Relationships

A lasting, reciprocal relationship between two freeborn men was largely absent or 'officially unavailable' in Roman society, highlighting the lack of egalitarian same-sex partnerships.



Cultural Context

These power-based roles reflected broader Roman social structures where dominance reinforced status, influencing the nature and perception of same-sex interactions.

Legal and Social Recognition of Same-Sex Unions

01

No Legal Framework

There was no legal recognition of same-sex unions in the Roman Empire during Paul's era. Unlike heterosexual marriages, same-sex partnerships had no official status or protection under the law.

02

Informal Unions Mentioned

Some literary sources mention informal unions or 'marriages' between men, but these were not legally recognized and were often regarded with disdain or scandal by mainstream society.

03

Social Disapproval

Mainstream Roman society largely viewed same-sex unions negatively, with no widespread acceptance or institutional support, reinforcing the absence of social and legal frameworks.

Context of Paul's Writings on Same-Sex Acts

01

Paul's Focus in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6

Paul's condemnations target exploitative and excessive sexual practices linked to pagan idolatry, temple prostitution, and pederasty, rather than consensual, loving relationships.

02

Cultural Context of Paul's Audience

Paul wrote within a Roman Empire culture where such sexual practices were often associated with temple rituals and social decadence, reflecting abandonment of God's created order.

03

Absence of Modern Relationship Concepts

Paul's references do not align with today's understanding of committed, loving, and consensual same-sex partnerships between equals.

04

Social and Religious Implications

Same-sex acts condemned by Paul were often linked to idolatry and exploitation, emphasizing the religious and moral violations rather than the identity or orientation of the individuals.

05

Implications for Interpretation

Scholars argue Paul's writings address specific cultural abuses, not a blanket condemnation of all same-sex relationships as understood in contemporary terms.

Comparison to Modern Understandings



Ancient Same-Sex Relationships

- No concept of fixed sexual orientation as an identity; focus was on acts, status, and social roles.
- Relationships often framed around dominant/submissive power dynamics, especially in Roman society.
- Lack of legal or social recognition for same-sex unions; informal unions were not legally acknowledged.
- Paul's writings likely addressed exploitative or excessive sexual practices rather than loving, committed partnerships.



Modern Committed Partnerships

- Modern partnerships emphasize lifelong commitment and mutual respect between equals.
- Concept of sexual orientation as an inherent identity shapes understanding of relationships today.
- Legal recognition through marriage or civil partnerships provides social legitimacy and protection.
- Modern same-sex relationships focus on consensual, loving partnerships without power imbalances.



Traditional View

Traditional View: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - The Arsenokoitai

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul lists behaviours incompatible with inheriting the Kingdom of God, including sexual immorality and men who have sex with men. The Greek term 'arsenokoitai' literally means 'male-bedder' or 'man-lie-with-man.' Traditional scholars interpret this term broadly as referring to those who engage in same-sex sexual acts. This understanding sees 'arsenokoitai' as a comprehensive term for homosexual practice, encompassing various forms of same-sex sexual behavior. Consequently, this passage is viewed as a clear biblical condemnation of homosexual practice, placing it alongside other serious sins such as adultery and idolatry, highlighting its significance within traditional Christian ethics and doctrine.

Traditional View: 1 Timothy 1:9-10 - Malakoi and Other Terms



Plus tip:

Include historical and linguistic background on 'malakoi' and 'arsenokoitai' to deepen audience understanding of the traditional interpretation.

01

Text from 1 Timothy 1:9-10

- "...the law is not made for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious... for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality..."
- This passage lists various types of 'lawbreakers and rebels' as those whom the law is intended to address.
- It highlights the inclusion of sexual immorality and specifically those engaging in homosexual acts within this list.

02

Interpretation of 'Malakoi' and 'Arsenokoitai'

- 'Malakoi' literally means 'soft' or 'effeminate.'
- The traditional view often interprets 'malakoi' as referring to the passive partner in male homosexual acts or men exhibiting morally negative effeminacy related to sexual immorality.
- 'Arsenokoitai' literally means 'male-bedder' or 'man-lie-with-man,' frequently understood as referring broadly to those who engage in same-sex sexual acts.
- Together, 'malakoi' and 'arsenokoitai' are seen as encompassing both active and passive roles in male homosexual behavior, forming a comprehensive biblical prohibition.
- These terms reinforce the traditional interpretation that homosexual acts are incompatible with Christian teaching.



Traditional View

Traditional View: Broader Context of Sin Lists and Implications

Traditional interpreters find a consistent message across Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy, reinforcing the prohibition against homosexual acts. These passages list homosexual behavior among sins like idolatry, adultery, theft, greed, and slander, showing its moral seriousness. The implication for salvation is clear: unrepented sin hinders inheriting God's Kingdom. The pastoral approach distinguishes same-sex attraction from acting on it—attraction is not sin, but sexual expression is only biblically approved within heterosexual marriage. This view calls for celibacy or heterosexual marriage, emphasizing doctrinal faithfulness and pastoral care.



Affirming View

Affirming View: Romans 1 - Context of Exploitation and Idolatry

Affirming scholars highlight the Greco-Roman context where many same-sex acts were linked to exploitative and idolatrous practices such as pederasty (sexual relations between adult men and adolescent boys) and temple prostitution. These activities were often connected to pagan worship and power dynamics, contrasting sharply with Christian ethics of mutual love and respect. Paul's condemnation in Romans 1 is understood as directed primarily at such exploitative, non-consensual, and idolatrous behaviors rather than the committed, loving same-sex relationships recognized today. This view draws a clear distinction between the exploitative practices prevalent in the ancient world and contemporary consensual relationships, arguing that the biblical texts do not address or condemn the latter.

Affirming View: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - Arsenokoitai Re-examined

The meaning of arsenokoitai is highly debated. Some scholars argue it refers specifically to exploitative sexual acts like male prostitution or economic exploitation through sex, not all homosexual behavior. It appears alongside sins involving injustice and exploitation, such as thieves and swindlers.

Affirming scholars see Paul's condemnation as targeting exploitative behaviours, not consensual, loving same-sex relationships. This view invites a nuanced understanding focused on ethical concerns rather than a blanket condemnation.



Affirming View

Affirming View: 1 Timothy 1:9-10 - Malakoi and Pederasty

The term 'Malakoi' literally means "soft" or "effeminate." In the context of ancient Greek society, affirming scholars interpret 'Malakoi' as describing the younger, passive partner in pederastic relationships, which were often exploitative and abusive. These relationships typically involved adult men and adolescent boys, reflecting power imbalances rather than mutual, consensual love. Affirming theologians argue that this term is not a condemnation of a person's sexual orientation or identity, but specifically targets abusive or coercive sexual practices common in the ancient world. Thus, the focus of 1 Timothy 1:9-10 is on condemning exploitative sexual behavior rather than loving, committed same-sex relationships.

Affirming View: Jesus' Radical Inclusivity and Love

Centrality of Love

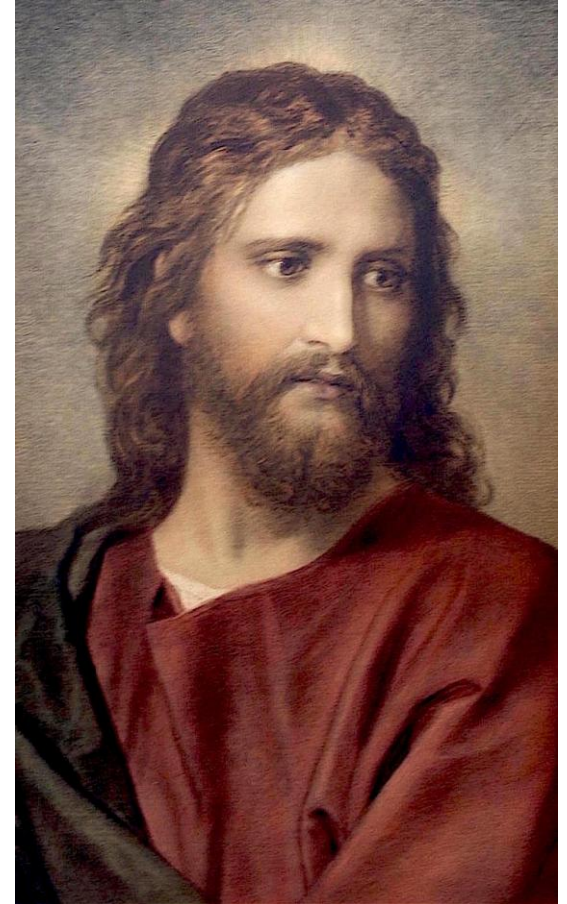
The New Testament, particularly Jesus's teachings, emphasizes love for God and love for neighbour (Matthew 22:37-40) as the greatest commandments, underscoring love as the foundation of Christian ethics.

Inclusivity of Jesus

Jesus consistently reached out to and included marginalized individuals and groups, such as Samaritans, tax collectors, women, and the sick, demonstrating a radical openness and acceptance of those often excluded from society.

No Explicit Condemnation and Spirit of the Law

Jesus himself never explicitly addresses or condemns same-sex relationships. Affirming views argue that Jesus prioritized the 'spirit of the law'—love, mercy, and justice—over rigid adherence to the 'letter of the law,' especially when strict legalism leads to exclusion.



Affirming View: Paul's Broader Themes - Grace, New Creation, Unity

01 Grace Over Law

Paul's theology emphasizes salvation by grace through faith, not by adherence to the Law (Ephesians 2:8-9). This principle highlights that inclusion in God's family is based on grace, not legalistic observance.

02 New Creation in Christ

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This implies a transformative process that transcends old categories and distinctions, inviting believers into new identities and relationships.

03 Unity in Christ

Galatians 3:28 declares, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This passage breaks down traditional social and cultural hierarchies, emphasizing unity and equality within the Christian community.

04 Implication for Inclusion

If distinctions such as gender and social status are transcended in Christ, then sexual orientation should not be a barrier to full inclusion and participation in the church. This affirms the dignity and belonging of all believers regardless of their relationships.

Affirming View: The Fruit of the Spirit and Relationship Quality

The New Testament highlights ethical living through the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Affirming views argue that relationship quality should be based on these virtues rather than gender. Loving, committed, faithful same-sex relationships embody these qualities and align with Christian ethics. Holiness is living a life dedicated to God, expressed in various loving relationships, including committed same-sex ones.

Traditional View

Same-Sex Marriage - Traditional Approach

Divine Institution

Marriage is seen as instituted by God at creation, reflecting the union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32). This view holds that marriage is a sacred, God-ordained covenant exclusively between one man and one woman.

Procreation

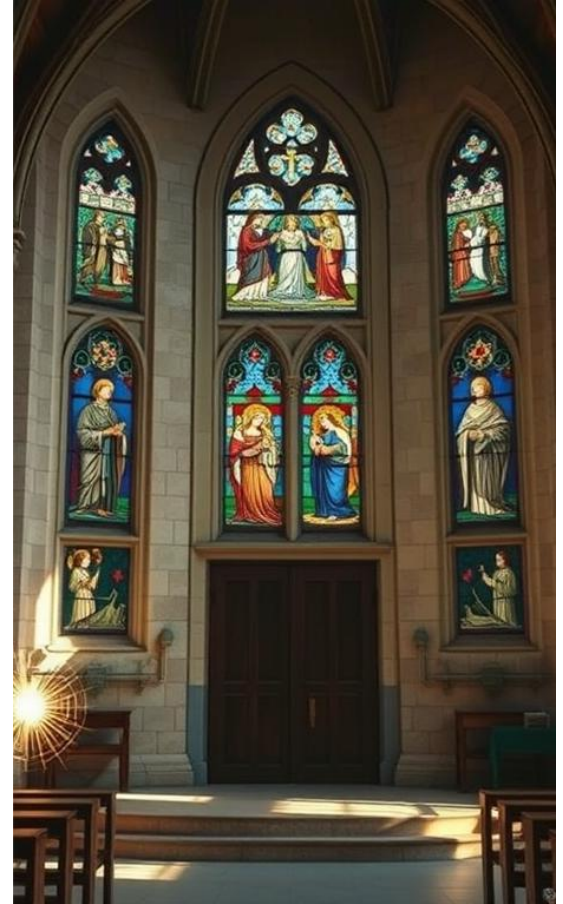
While not considered the sole purpose, procreation is often cited as a primary aspect of marriage within this traditional view. It is inherently linked to the male-female union and the continuation of human life.

Consistency with Global Anglicanism

There is a strong concern for maintaining unity and doctrine with the majority of the global Anglican Communion, which largely upholds a traditional view of marriage as a heterosexual institution.

Slippery Slope Arguments

Opponents fear that redefining marriage for same-sex couples could lead to further redefinitions that undermine core Christian doctrines, potentially destabilizing the foundational understanding of marriage.



Disagreement

Tiers of Disagreement - First Tier



Definition

A "first tier" disagreement means both sides view the other's position as fundamentally heretical or a departure from essential Christian doctrine, leading to refusal of close fellowship or communion.

Application to Same-Sex Issues

Traditionalists may see affirming same-sex relationships as rejecting biblical authority and core Christian sexual ethics. Affirming individuals might view the traditional stance as unjust and discriminatory, contradicting the Christian message of love and inclusion.

Consequence

This level of disagreement often results in schism, formal separation, or significant barriers to shared ministry and worship within the Church.

Tiers of Disagreement - Second Tier

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| 01 | Definition | A 'second tier' disagreement signifies a significant difference of opinion on important but non-essential doctrines, where parties are willing to share in fellowship, respect each other's convictions, and maintain unity despite their differences. |
| 02 | Application within CofE | Many within the Church of England, even those with strong differing views on same-sex relationships, strive to maintain a 'second tier' approach, acknowledging profound disagreement but seeking to remain in communion. |
| 03 | Focus on Unity | This approach emphasizes the broader bonds of faith in Christ that unite believers, even when they interpret specific ethical or social issues differently. |
| 04 | Dialogue and Patience | It encourages ongoing dialogue, prayer, and a commitment to discerning God's will together, rather than immediate separation. |
| 05 | Consequence | This approach aims for 'good disagreement,' allowing the Church to hold diverse views without fracturing, though it requires significant patience, charity, and a commitment to unity. |

Example of friendly and loving Second Tier Disagreement: Tony Campolo and His Wife Peggy

Tony Campolo and his wife Peggy have publicly shared differing views on theological and social issues, including church doctrine. Despite this, they maintain a strong, loving marriage based on mutual respect and open dialogue.

This illustrates 'second tier disagreement,' where significant differences exist but unity and love are prioritized. Their example shows that disagreement can be navigated with patience, charity, and shared faith, fostering fellowship without division.

Tony Campolo moved to an affirming view towards the end of his life and was rejected by many in the evangelical community as a result

Conclusion

Thank you for listening!