

# The Gay Rights Battle

*Is there a logical and biblically supportable solution to the gay rights battle?*

by Gary Petty

**T**he cultural battle over gay rights has taken on a renewed energy. A decade ago the gay rights battlegrounds were the military and increased exposure in television and movies; now the battleground has extended to society's acceptance of gay marriage's equality with traditional heterosexual marriage and family.

Some U.S. political leaders are busy trying to garner support for a new law that would define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. At the same time, other lawmakers are lobbying for expansion of gay rights including the legalization of homosexual marriages. Even President Bush got into the act when he publicly declared his belief that marriage is between a man and a woman and equated homosexuality with sin.

Gay rights activists have scored some impressive victories in recent years, both culturally and politically: the Supreme Court's striking down a Texas antisodomy law as unconstitutional, a leading retail chain's public statements about protecting the rights of gay employees and public homosexual parties at Disney World to name a few.

A *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup Poll shows some backlash against the gay agenda in the general public. While 48 percent of Americans polled said they supported legalization of same-sex relations between consenting adults, 46 percent said that same-sex unions should be illegal. This is the highest number of people taking a stand against homosexuality since 1996.

## History of U.S. views toward homosexual behavior

To understand the intensity of this debate we must know a little of its history. The early settlers of the United States were nearly all Christians. They belonged to various denominations but overwhelmingly agreed that homosexual acts were morally wrong.

All of the original 13 states passed laws declaring homosexual activity punishable

by death. Thomas Jefferson felt that capital punishment was too strict and proposed it be replaced with a lesser punishment. The last state to remove the death penalty for homosexual acts from its books was North Carolina in 1869.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s many in the medical profession, especially in the



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field of psychology, considered homosexuality a mental illness. The cultural revolution of the 1960s created a new sexual freedom that included acceptance of same-sex relationships.

Today, the country is split over the traditional Christian view of homosexuality and a secular outlook rooted either in the rejection of the teachings of the Bible or in a radical reinterpretation of biblical statements.

The secular position is founded on the argument that the health of a democratic society is dependent on the acceptance of minority behavior like homosexuality. On

the surface that seems like a legitimate argument, but the real issue is this: What criteria determine moral behavior that is beneficial both for the individual and society?

There was a time when most people in society believed that pornography was demeaning to women and contributed to unhealthy attitudes about sex in men. Under

the guise of tolerance, pornography is now argued as a right of free speech even though the negative influences of pornography on male perceptions of women are well documented.

The real issues are vital to the future of Western civilization and the United States. Are there standards of conduct that are intrinsically wrong? Who determines right and wrong? Are good and evil simply a matter of subjective feelings so that what might be wrong for me is not wrong for you, or are right and wrong founded on objective

laws designed into creation?

## Growing cultural acceptance of deviant behavior

More and more movies, television sitcoms and daytime soap operas feature gay or lesbian characters in positive roles. It was not that long ago that it would have been inconceivable for a network to air a television program like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, a big hit for the cable network Bravo.

Where homosexuality was once considered a mental illness, today a person rejecting it is criticized for being homophobic.



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as he and guests explore current trends and biblical truths and teachings with the kind of fresh, in-depth perspective you get in *The Good News* magazine.

Christians who oppose the gay lifestyle are in danger of being labeled as bigoted, hate-mongering or even mentally ill themselves.

In an opinion column appearing in the *San Antonio Express News*, author Ira Issachar describes himself as an avowed “heterosexual agnostic.” He claims to have “no quarrel, issue or discomfort with people who are gay.”

Mr. Issachar goes on to ask a question that he says is a “fundamental point of the struggle. Who is the real source of the Bible? God or man?” He finishes his editorial with these comments: “The Bible, to me, is just another religious book, written by a culture thousands of years ago.

“But I am intelligent enough to know that my views are fallible. Who knows? Maybe God does exist. Maybe God is the author of the Bible. If that was the case and I was involved in active homosexuality, I would no doubt need to soberly reassess my theology.”

### Does God exist, and does it matter?

Mr. Issachar hits on a number of important points. First, there can be no compromising between those who believe in a traditional, biblically based view and the homosexual agenda. If one accepts the Bible as inspired by God, then homosexual activity is intrinsically wrong and unacceptable in a truly Christian society.

In the New Testament the apostle Paul writes to the church at Rome: “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened” (Romans 1:20-21, New Revised Standard Version).

Paul says that the obvious design, intricacy and grandeur of the creation unmistakably declare the existence of God. If there is a Creator, then He must know how His creation is supposed to function. But human beings want total self-determination and reject the Creator’s instructions.

Paul continues: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature [i.e., the creation] rather than the Creator . . .” (verses 22-25, NRSV).

Human beings may reject the revelation of God in His creation, and His instruction

book on how to live life, but because of the spiritual aspects of human nature we still desire answers to the meaning of life and death. So we create our own religious standards and values. But hollow religions built on human opinion not only fail to fulfill our need for God, they allow, or even promote, destructive behavior the Creator never intended.

Paul writes next: “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done” (verses 26-28, NRSV).

Here gay and lesbian sexual activity is clearly condemned as sin. Paul also lists other sins condemned by God like murder, hatred, envy, violence and many other human actions that the Bible says are sin, or rebellion, against the Creator. Homosexual behavior isn’t the *only* sin, but it is definitely on the list.

### Christian confusion

A good example of how even professing Christians are divided on this issue is the election of an openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church. An Associated Press story highlights the confusion over this issue by stating that “the Episcopal Church has no official rules—either for or against—ordaining gays.” A paragraph later the same article states, “In 1998, Anglican leaders approved a resolution calling gay sex ‘incompatible with Scripture.’”

Of course, it’s impossible to have it both ways. If a church claims to be biblically based, then it must follow the Bible’s teachings. The sad reality is that many churches are more in tune with societal trends and political correctness than following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Some radicals claim that to brand homosexuality as a sin is to violate Jesus’ instruction not to judge one another. But Jesus taught against murder, stealing and dishonoring your parents. Is anyone prepared to say that murderers should be allowed to freely kill because Christians supposedly aren’t to judge between right and wrong?

### How should Christians react to homosexuals?

When discussing homosexuality, many Christians immediately think of God’s pun-

ishment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The Genesis account describes God destroying with fire a populace that reveled in its acceptance of homosexuality.

Under the theocracy of ancient Israel, death was the penalty imposed for homosexual activity and other sexual sins. Jesus Christ didn’t give that same judicial authority to the Church. Christians do have the commission to proclaim the gospel, which includes a call for repentance from rebellion against the laws of the Creator—including those that forbid homosexual behavior.

This is an important question for both Christians and homosexuals to consider: Does God love homosexuals?

The Scripture says that God sent Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of *all* people. This includes the sins of homosexuality, lying, hatred, adultery, greed, lust and all other destructive behavior that goes against the way God intended for human beings to live. Christians should then reach out to homosexuals with the message of hope and forgiveness that would bring them spiritual healing and strength to abstain from any form of sinful behavior.

The battle over gay rights is more than a democratic discussion over tolerance. The future of any society depends on the strength of its families, and homosexuality strikes at the very foundation of marriage and family. The gay agenda also strikes at the very heart of Christianity, which rests on the validity of the Bible and the sovereignty of the Creator over His creation.

Christianity is more than simply professing Jesus’ name or belief in Him. It is being His disciple, a follower of what He taught. If you claim to be a Christian, it’s time you studied what God really says about issues like homosexuality. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Our Creator, in His Word, repeatedly tells us that His laws are given for our good, and that they will bring blessings when obeyed and prevent the painful consequences that come from ignoring and flaunting them. To learn how these laws could transform our world and show us the way to truly abundant living, request our free booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*.

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# Controversies Concerning Homosexuality Hound the Anglican Community

*Gay issues are troubling the Church of England and its Episcopal community in America. Its evangelical wing takes issue with liberal clergy who promote acceptance of openly gay priests. What is the true biblical approach?*

by John Ross Schroeder

**A**t the end of the day Dr. Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, concluded that the proposed appointment of gay priest Jeffrey John as bishop of Reading would imperil the unity of the Anglican church. This official position seems somewhat in contradiction to his personal convictions of many years. As Ruth Gledhill, religion correspondent of *The Times* (London), recently reported: “The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, believes that the Church of England should change its mind on homosexuality in the same way that it has already altered its teaching on slavery, hellfire, usury and marriage after divorce” (May 27, 2003).

Across the Atlantic in the United States, the American Episcopal Church’s General Convention gave final approval of Gene Robinson’s appointment as bishop of New Hampshire on Aug. 5. Although formerly married with two children, he has lived with a gay partner for 13 years.

## Liberal and conservative viewpoints

In Mr. Robinson’s words: “God is teaching us something about gay and lesbian people. It will not be too many years before we look back on this recent controversy and think, ‘My goodness, how misled we were’” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, July 20, 2003).

A group of Anglican bishops in England apparently have a similar liberal approach. They are set to publish a radical report titled “Some Issues in Human Sexuality.” It tells us that “what makes us Christians is our common relationship to Christ, which is rooted in repentance, faith, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit [so far so good, but notice what follows], and not the correctness of our beliefs about matters of sexual conduct” (*The*

*Sunday Times*, July 13, 2003).

George Austin, former archdeacon of York, reacted to this report by saying, “Anyone who knows the liberal mind will realise this document is simply a ploy to push ahead the gay agenda in which all homosexual activity by priests and lay people is accepted in the church” (ibid.).

These sharp differences of opinion are also reflected in the media. One example of a liberal approach is contained in a feature article in *The Times* by Libby Purves, a noted British columnist. “The Old Testament prohibition on homosexual love sits among many other prohibitions and taboos long since discarded by Christians. The later strictures of St. Paul are, *I think*, less binding than what we find in the true core of the Bible, the four gospels—humane gentleness, forgiveness and an honouring and transfiguration of earthly loves” (July 10, 2003, emphasis added).

Joseph Farah, who is the founder of WorldNetDaily.com and former editor of *The Sacramento Union*, espouses a totally different view about intimate same-sex relationships. He wrote in *The Washington Times*: “You see where the brave new world is heading. When the church abandons its tenets, when it refuses to recognize sin, when it glorifies immorality, when it compromises on the Word of God, when it becomes a tool of political correctness, it becomes a tool of evil. It becomes an abomination” (Weekly Edition, June 30-July 6, 2003).

Strong words those! But how does the Bible approach human sexuality?

## Sexuality in the Bible

When questions about marital matters arose in His ministry, Jesus Christ nearly always referred people back to the creation

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account in Genesis. From the beginning our Creator realized the need for intimate human companionship. After creating Adam, “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable [suitable] to him’” (Genesis 2:18).

After the first man awoke from a deep sleep, he found a complement to himself standing before him, another human being like himself but with a clear difference of gender. Adam was deeply affected and was immediately moved to proclaim: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man” (verse 23).

God inspired the writer to add: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (verse 24). Jesus Christ strongly emphasized this centrally important point: “God made them male and female . . . and the two shall become one flesh; so that they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Mark 10:6, 8).

The book of Genesis and the Gospel accounts teach that God created humans heterosexual. They also teach that marriage between male and female is a divine institution and that fidelity between one man and one woman is the Creator’s expressed will and intention—supported by many other passages in God’s Word.

A homosexual relationship contradicts the Creator’s principles and pur-

poses concerning human sexuality. That is why biblical law strongly condemns it in the book of Leviticus (18:22; 20:13), and the apostle Paul goes on to sternly warn against its practice in several of his New Testament epistles (Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-10).

### The Church and human sexuality

By quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus Christ clearly showed that the Church must base its teachings on the entire Bible (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). The apostle Paul called this “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Human beings are told to live by every Word of God. The Church is not free to selectively pick and choose biblical principles and passages according to the dictates and current fashions of our modern world or our frail human nature.

That said, Jesus Christ said: “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). So biblical teaching also requires the Church to wholeheartedly accept *truly repentant* sinners, whether they have been idolaters, fornicators, homosexuals or guilty of any other sins contrary to sound biblical doctrine.

All are guilty of having broken God’s great spiritual law, the Ten Commandments—summarized by Jesus Christ as loving God above all and loving others as much as we love ourselves.

In principle, the Seventh Commandment covers all forms of sexual immorality and unchastity. In regard to several major sins, including homosexuality (all threatening our entrance into the Kingdom of God), the apostle Paul said this to Christians: “Such were some of you. But you were washed [by the blood of Christ, Revelation 7:14], but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Later in this chapter Paul tells us to “flee sexual immorality.” Then he explains that “every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (verse 18). The strong implication is that this form of sin can be very difficult to fully overcome.

Often people have been raised in a dysfunctional home environment they could not control, which left them susceptible to sexual sins. In light of this, God’s ministers compassionately help Christians to conquer wrong sexual inclinations of whatever nature. The United Church of God provides a compassionate ministry to help educate, comfort and assist Christian men and women in surmounting this challenging personal issue. We offer a publication titled *Anchor*, a magazine of hope for Christians struggling with homosexuality. More information about *Anchor* can be found at its Web site, [www.anchorhelp.com](http://www.anchorhelp.com). ❖

## Recent News Items Illustrate Increasing Controversy

- Americans are becoming more tolerant of gay people on TV, as shown by a prime-time network slot for a new makeover show (*The Times* [London]).

- Televangelist Pat Robertson is praying to God to undo a U.S. Supreme Court decision that opened the door to recognition of new gay civil rights. Other conservative activists are seeking a more earthbound response: a constitutional amendment barring marriage between gay couples (*USA Today*).

- Same-sex couples in Britain are to be given the same legal rights as married couples under plans outlined recently (*Daily Mail*).

- When the Supreme Court struck down laws banning

sex between homosexuals last month, a dismayed Justice Anthony Scalia warned that the court was siding with gay men and lesbians in a “culture war” and flouting public opinion (*USA Today*).

- A lesbian pastor is a focus of controversy among Southern Baptists. The congregants support the cleric, calling her a strong spiritual leader (*Los Angeles Times*).

- On July 6 *The Dallas Morning News* said it would begin running advertising notices of same-sex unions with its wedding announcements on Sunday (*USA Today*).

- *The Boston Globe* editorialized in favor of gay marriage and compared state laws against it to those that once banned interracial marriage (*USA Today*).

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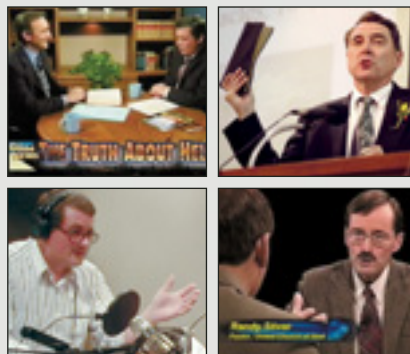
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# Hope for Homosexuals

Interview by Melvin Rhodes

**The Good News:** What is homosexuality and how do you define it?

**Joseph Nicolosi:** Homosexuality is a developmental disorder. It has nothing to do with sex. It's really the person's search for belonging—what we call the three “As”—attention, affection and approval. These are the normal, emotional, affectional needs, which have been sexualized.

**GN:** In your book *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*, you use the expression “non-gay homosexual.” What exactly is meant by that?

**JN:** Well, we make a distinction between *homosexual* and *gay*. Unfortunately, too many people think they're synonymous and that's due to the success of the gay activists who have sold people on the idea that to be homosexual means they're automatically gay.

But there is a population we're concerned with, in particular, whom we call the non-gay homosexual, which is to say they have same-sex attractions, they have same-sex feelings, and they even engage in same-sex behavior, but they do not identify with the gay sociopolitical identity. They see themselves as having heterosexual values and want to live a heterosexual life.

**GN:** Is it possible to change from homosexual to heterosexual?

**JN:** Yes. There are many studies that show many men and women do come out of homosexuality. We see more and more of the evidence, more and more of those studies; and if the person is highly motivated there is a very good chance that he or she can come out of homosexuality.

**GN:** How do you help someone who wants to change?

**JN:** They have to begin to understand the origins of their homosexuality. It's not about sex. These are *emotional* needs, and in therapy you direct the client to address these emotional needs. These needs usually go back to the father—not having enough of the father's love, enough of the father's affirmation, and they begin to get these needs met in more authentic ways, ways that really transform a person rather than the sexual, which is a kind of repetitive and nonproductive attempt at meeting those emotional needs.

**GN:** How long does the treatment take and does it last?



**Dr. Joseph Nicolosi** is a clinical psychologist. He is the president of NARTH, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, a 1,000-member organization. Dr. Nicolosi has successfully treated thousands of patients to help men transition from homosexuality to heterosexuality. He is author of several books, including *Parent's Guide to*

*Preventing Homosexuality* and *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*.

He has spoken at hundreds of conferences worldwide and has appeared on hundreds of radio and television programs around the world as the preeminent authority on reparative therapy. He also heads the Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic in Encino, California.

**JN:** Usually the therapy is about two years. We're talking about once a week. And long-term studies show it does last. In fact, these people, once they have learned certain skills and insights, actually continue to get better long after they terminate therapy.

**GN:** What other sources and support are available?

**JN:** We at NARTH [National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality] have a national referral list of therapists around the country who see homosexuality as a developmental disorder and as a treatable condition. Someone can call our main office to see if there is a therapist available for them. Besides the professional assistance, we have ministries for ex-gays like Exodus International and a few other ministries around the country.

**GN:** What are the basic causes of homosexuality?

**JN:** The basic cause of male homosexuality is an emotional detachment from the father or the father figure and that becomes the foundation of insecurity about the person's own masculinity and his desire to make that male connection, that male bonding. When that is frustrated, the male homosexual finds that he can do it through sex, but, of course, sex does not give the quality of attachment that is necessary.

**GN:** Are there any other contributing factors?

**JN:** One of the things that we are seeing that contributes is sexual child abuse. About one third of the men in therapy with me report having been sexually molested as little boys by older males—which would include an adolescent male—and that is much higher than the average population. Many studies

show sexual molestation between a boy and an older man as being the history of gay men.

**GN:** Do genetics play a role?

**JN:** There's been a lot of talk in the media about genetics or the biological origins, but none of those studies have really proved anything conclusive. There seems to be, what we *concede* to be, what we call a *temperamental disposition*. This is to say that the boy has a temperamental, sensitive, introverted and artistic side, but we need a family environment to really take that temperamentally vulnerable boy and push him in the direction of homosexuality.

**GN:** In your book you use the term “gender identification.” Please explain what this is and why it's important.

**JN:** Gender identification is for a boy to really gender identify with masculinity and for a girl to really develop her gender identity, which is to say her femininity.

These are fundamental traits of human nature. There is so much talk today about how a person can develop without the definitions or without the parameters of gender, but that is not true. We all need gender as a fundamental support to our personal identity. That is the foundation of the homosexual problem and in the course of treatment that is exactly what we focus in on as being the target to develop.

**GN:** How do parents sometimes thwart this natural process?

**JN:** Boys need to be supported and affirmed in a masculine identity. Even though the boy or girl is biologically “hard-wired,” to use a term, to be male or female, they still need the active support and encouragement of the family.

Boys need masculinity to be affirmed by the family, by the mother and father, and likewise for the girl in terms of her femininity, especially by the same-sex parent—that is to say, the father for the boy and mother for the girl.

**GN:** In your book you state that an absent father is not the primary cause of homosexuality. Rather, it is the boy's defensive detachment against male rejection. What is defensive detachment?

**JN:** Defensive detachment is really the psychological armor, barrier or defense of the personality which keeps homosexuality alive. You might see defensive detachment as a sort of cell that protects the person and also protects the homosexuality inside. It's an anticipation of being hurt and rejected by other men. And this comes from the earlier rejection by the father.

The predicament of the male homosexual is that he is *sexually attracted* to men but, because of his defensive detachment, keeps an *emotional distance* from them. It prevents him from getting what he really wants, which is to have those *emotional* needs met. So the focus of therapy is to get him to drop that defensive detachment so he can allow himself to experience the healing benefits of non-sexual, intimate male relationships.

**GN:** Is it desirable for fathers to be warm and affectionate with their sons?

**JN:** It is more than desirable. It is *essential*. Fathers have to be warm and physically demonstrative. We encourage fathers to hug and to kiss and to wrestle and to have physical contact with their boys because when we listen to these homosexual men, they are so starved for male contact. All of them report almost without exception, "My father never touched me." "My father never hugged me." "My father never kissed me."

**GN:** Does divorce play a role in causing homosexuality?

**JN:** In a general sense yes, but in a specific way no, if the father continues to keep a relationship with the son. We say in a general way yes, because the family structure is designed to really enhance all the members of the family, especially the children.

Someone once said what makes a young man spend time with a little boy is when the woman he loves has that little boy. In other words, it's really his relationship with the mother that connects him with the son. Most fathers who are young men in their mid-to-late 20s aren't really going to spend time with a little boy unless there is a relational context, meaning the woman in the center keeps the relationship there.

**GN:** What percentage of Americans are homosexual?

**JN:** To be clearly homosexual, we believe it's 1½ to 2 percent—at most 2½ percent. We've been hearing 10 percent for the last 50 years, but that was due to the Kinsey study—and it turned out that Kinsey himself was a homosexual. Actually, Alfred Kinsey was a sadomasochist who derived sexual pleasure from receiving pain, which is another story in itself. This is the man that influenced generations through his Kinsey Institute and his biography just came out revealing all this stuff.

Anyway, it's really not 10 percent—it's 2 percent. But even though we say that about 2 percent are exclusively homosexual, we are assuming more homosexual experimentation is acted out, especially with young and adolescent people.

**GN:** Are there comparatively more homosexuals today than, say, 100 years ago?

**JN:** Again, we make the distinction between homosexual behavior and true homosexual orientation. I think homosexual orientation is still the same but I think there is more homosexual behavior. Also, we are seeing more homosexuals take a more overt role in the culture. We are seeing them more readily on television and in movies.

**GN:** What research led to the legalization of the gay lifestyle and homosexual acts?

**JN:** You mean the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association? That was

emotional needs that were frustrated in childhood and have developed into a sexualized pattern.

We need not to condone homosexual behavior but to be supportive of those Christians struggling with homosexuality and try to give them the understanding and support and the *emotional* connection that we can offer them, which will help them in the healing process.

**GN:** How can ministers help?

**JN:** By first of all being educated as to what homosexuality is, knowing that there is a population of non-gay homosexuals that we really need to reach out to. The pastor needs to have resources—therapists he can refer to whom he trusts, ministries for ex-gays that can be supportive, books and materials that he can recommend. That's an obligation the pastor has, I think.

**GN:** In the last few years, AIDS has become primarily a heterosexual problem internationally. In the United States it still affects gays disproportionately. Why is that?

**JN:** AIDS affects gays disproportionately because of the behavior that they engage in, behaviors that will spread AIDS. Anal intercourse is *the* way of spreading AIDS. And there is a great deal of sexual promiscuity and a lot of reckless self-deceiving, self-destructive impulses in gay men and they are killing each other.

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not scientific; that was purely a political decision. It happened in one day. It was motivated out of compassion. The idea was that by normalizing homosexuality, these people would not have to suffer social ostracism and social criticism. While that was a good intention, you don't compromise science for a sociopolitical end, which is what happened.

**GN:** Is lesbianism caused by the same factors?

**JN:** Basically, yes. There are some complicated factors but, basically, lesbianism, just like male homosexuality, is really rooted in an emotional breach between the daughter and the mother.

**GN:** What can a Christian male heterosexual do to help a Christian struggling with homosexuality?

**JN:** I think we as Christian men need to realize that these are not simply degenerate, perverted people, but they are basically individuals who are seeking basic, authentic

Paradoxically, all this talk about homophobia and hatred toward gays—when you think about it, who is really killing gays? Other gays! A very sad irony is that they are killing each other through a behavior that should be associated with love. Paradoxical, isn't it?

**GN:** How important are religious beliefs and church affiliation in overcoming homosexuality?

**JN:** I think it is very important. The majority of people who come to us are Christian. The church means something important to them. God is a living, powerful force in their lives. I think that their Christian foundation is a sound support as a motivator—not only in terms of right and wrong, but it actually gives them strength in the process of overcoming homosexuality.

A very interesting thing I have observed over the years is that many of the men, almost without exception I would say,

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# Same-Sex Marriage: Does It Meet With God's Approval?

The gay agenda is steadily gaining ground in Western nations, with same-sex marriage finding acceptance. But what does the Bible say—and why? And what's at the root of same-sex attraction?

by Melvin Rhodes

**T**he U.S. Supreme Court's June 2003 decision striking down state laws banning homosexual acts between consenting adults was the latest victory in the cultural war between those advocating full acceptance of homosexuality in public life and those opposed on various grounds.

It followed decisions announced earlier in the month from Britain that a law banning the promotion of homosexuality in schools would be repealed and a stunning announcement from Canada that an Ontario appeals court had ruled that refusing same-sex couples the rights of marriage was discriminatory.

With three European countries already allowing it, and several others allowing civil unions, same-sex marriage is a major and growing issue.

Nor is this only a secular issue. In August 2003 the U.S.-based Episcopal Church shocked many of its members by approving its first openly homosexual bishop and giving local dioceses the option of deciding whether to perform same-sex marriages.

## How did marriage begin?

Marriage is a constant theme throughout the Bible, as we might expect it to be. After all, the Bible is largely about human relationships, and none is so fundamental as marriage.

At the beginning, when God created Adam, the first man, He said: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). God created for him a female companion, Eve, meaning "life" or "living," for "she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20).

God's plan for the male and female sexes is then clearly instituted: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). In joining them as man and wife, the Creator of mankind instituted marriage. In the next verse Adam and Eve are clearly described as a married couple: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (verse 25).



In recent years same-sex couples have increasingly pressed for the legal option of entering a full marital union.

Thousands of years later we see the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel, whom He had chosen, likened to the marital relationship (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ reinforces the special relationship between a husband and wife: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6).

He stated further: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (verse 8). Clearly, marriage between a husband and wife was intended to be for life.

Following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul wrote extensively on marriage. In his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, he compares the marital union of a husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the Church.

He writes: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . that He might present her to Himself a glorious church . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives . . ." (verses 23-28).

Later we see, at the very close of the Bible, a time still ahead when Jesus Christ returns and marries His Bride, the Church (Revelation 19:7). In these scriptural references we see a totally committed relationship between Jesus Christ and His true followers, the Church.

## The Western crisis in marriage

Today we live in an age in which commitment within marriage has become rare, especially in the richer Western world. For centuries the laws of Western nations relating to marriage were very strict. Divorce was not usually permitted.

In the last century, however, we have seen dramatic changes in laws relating to marriage. Among the most significant were the no-fault divorce laws passed in most of the Western democracies a little over 30 years ago. These laws contributed greatly to the trivialization of marriage, making it easier for a husband or wife to walk away from that commitment.

At the same time, the availability of the birth control pill made it quite acceptable for unmarried couples to live together, as supposedly there were now no negative consequences to sex outside of marriage. These major societal shifts further diminished the

marital relationship even as they encouraged a vast rise in premarital sex and adultery.

In turn, these were—and still are—promoted as “alternative lifestyles,” with mass media constantly depicting temporary relationships without commitment as fun and faithful marriage as tedious. The tragic result was an explosion of terrible consequences—broken homes, abandoned children, depression, crime, substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases that remain with us today.

### Another major shift in sexual attitudes

In the “anything goes” atmosphere of the 1960s and 70s, it was only a matter of time before other lifestyles would become accepted.

Before 1973 American psychiatrists considered same-sex attraction (homosexuality) as abnormal behavior and offered treatment accordingly. But a decision that year reversed this long-held stand. No longer was same-sex attraction classified as abnormal.

Similar decisions had already been made in other Western nations. In a span of 30 years, people practicing homosexual acts would go from being considered criminals by society to being accepted, if not fully embraced, by much of the heterosexual community.

In recent years same-sex couples have increasingly pressed for the legal option of entering a full marital union. Two European countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, already have laws permitting such marriages. Several other European countries allow civil unions, which give same-sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples without a legal marriage. The American state of Vermont also permits same-sex civil unions.

Following the June Ontario appeals court decision that ruled in favor of same-sex unions being equal to heterosexual unions, the Canadian government announced that it would legislate same-sex marriages into law in the near future. In the United States, Massachusetts appears likely to make a similar decision in favor of same-sex marriages. It seems only a matter of time before the whole country follows suit.

It should be noted that, in the United States at least, it is the courts that have made these changes possible rather than the voters, as polls consistently show that a majority of Americans do not support same-sex marriage. Federal and state lawmakers wouldn't risk the ire of voters on this issue, and even Canada is simply following a decision of the court.

As with so many of the liberal social reforms of the last four decades, the courts

have played a leading role in changing society, with activist judges sometimes arbitrarily creating new rights and law where none were previously spelled out.

While many on both sides of the argument will claim that this is a worldwide issue, the fact remains that this is essentially a Western phenomenon, thereby further widening the gap between the rich Western democracies and the poorer nations.



## The Word of God approves *only one* sexual relationship: that between a husband and wife within marriage.

The fault lines are also spreading throughout the Western religious world, with major international church denominations facing increasing division over this issue and that of the ordination of homosexual clergy.

### Does the Bible offer guidance?

Why doesn't the Bible mention same-sex marriages? The answer is simple—no such institution existed when it was written! No matter how bad some of the societies described in the Bible were, they never went so far as to have same-sex marriages.

Make no mistake, the Word of God approves *only one* sexual relationship: that between a husband and wife within marriage. You can search the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation looking for the existence or approval of such alternative relationships as living together and same-sex marriage, but there is none. Certainly there are accounts of fornication, adultery and same-sex relationships, but they are always in the context of *sin*, which is the breaking of God's law (1 John 3:4).

And yes, some of God's most faithful servants committed sins in the sexual area—and the Bible duly records the painful

consequences their actions had on them and others. These servants of God allowed themselves to be unduly influenced by the society around them, just as Christians can be today.

So why does our Creator forbid all sexual relationships outside of marriage? Does He not want us to have what some consider to be fun? Does God not want those who are attracted to the same sex to have the same happiness, commitment and sense of fulfill-

ment that is achievable within a committed, lifelong, heterosexual marriage?

In John 10:10 Jesus Christ states, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” God wants us to be happy, to live fulfilled and joyful lives.

That is precisely why He gave us the Ten Commandments, some of which deal with the family relationship. It is also part of the reason He instituted marriage. Within the framework of a stable, committed marriage, people can find a sense of loving security. Children especially need this when they are brought into the world.

So why can't gay couples have it too? Some argue that they also deserve the happiness of a stable and committed marriage. And in this age of AIDS and many other terrible diseases, shouldn't we encourage same-sex partners to remain faithful to one another, just as we do heterosexual couples through the institution of marriage?

### Sex and the Bible

In the Bible, marriage is always between a husband and wife. There are no scriptural accounts of same-sex marriages, even though homosexual relationships were common

and sometimes encouraged in the Greco-Roman world of early New Testament times (although an exclusively homosexual orientation was considered an aberration even in that society, which understood the necessity of heterosexual marriage for the production and raising of children).

Pagan gentile society notwithstanding, both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible clearly condemn sexual acts between members of the same sex. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination,” says Leviticus 18:22.

Why does the Bible forbid such behavior? God created the first two human beings male and female, bound them as husband and wife in a sexual union and instructed them to have children (Genesis 2:24-25; 1:28). The biblical account of our first human parents makes it clear that God ordained the marriage of Adam

and Eve, creating the family union of a man and a woman.

good,” including His creation of the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve. Even their naked bodies were physically perfect, created differently, but also perfectly, to complement each other and to bring additional human beings into the world, in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). Adam was pleased with his new companion, to whom he remained married for a very long time, until death. He was clearly attracted to her—they gave birth to many children.

What we learn from these passages is that a man should naturally be attracted to the female body. As Adam and Eve were the only two people living at this time, they could walk around unclothed without any sense of shame or embarrassment.

God intended men to be attracted to women, and vice versa. When a man is not attracted to women, something has gone wrong in the

tion he received from his mother often will have contributed to a rejection of women as a source of love.

This developmental tragedy often takes place within the first two or three years of childhood. Typically, in the first year, a baby bonds with the mother as she gives birth to the child and then breastfeeds and generally nurtures him. After the child is weaned, the father must play a more prominent role.

This is the time when sexual identity is formed. If the father is absent, or unwilling or unable to fulfill his role, then the child will feel rejection—and the basis on which homosexual feelings can develop will have been laid.

Note the importance of *perception*—either of the lack of loving affection or of rejection. In some cases a father truly may be affectionate and loving to his son, but the boy may not perceive it and instead develops feelings of rejection.

Or, in a family of several boys where the father is so busy with work or other things that he fails to spend any time with them, all are neglected, but only one may turn out to have homosexual tendencies. This is the one who perceived rejection, perhaps because he was more sensitive than the others.

## Both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible clearly condemn sexual acts between members of the same sex.

and Eve, creating the family union of a man and a woman.

God designed this union to stabilize and protect male-female and parent-child relationships with love and security. It was also designed to serve as a pattern or model of the relationship God wants to have with His people (Ephesians 5:23-33).

There is no question that male-female attraction is God’s intended design. Homosexuality, on the other hand, is a developmental disorder that leads to actions and lifestyles diametrically opposite to the male-female design.

When Adam and Eve rejected God’s instructions and determined to do things their own way, they set humanity on a course that every human being since has chosen to follow. Consequently, as a result of man’s rejection of God, men and women are experiencing an array of confused or conflicted interpersonal relationships—including homosexuality. Although homosexuality may feel “natural” to people who have same-sex attraction, it in fact reflects a yearning that God intended to be met within the natural male-female family context, with parents providing the proper natural affection and approval their children need.

### Man and woman: A perfect creation

When God created Adam and Eve, “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). Additionally, we read that “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

This tells us that God’s creation was “very

natural development of his mind, as this is not the way God intended things to be.

### Causes of same-sex attraction

It is common today for men who consider themselves gay to say that they were born that way, but there is no convincing evidence for this. Homosexuality is not caused by a “gay gene,” or identical twins would always both be gay—and they usually aren’t.

What is the truth? As most homosexual males and some lesbians can only remember same-sex attractions, even when very young, we can conclude that their early development was affected in some way that led to a different sexual orientation.

Research has shown that the basic common cause of homosexuality, whether male or female, is an emotional detachment from the parent of the same sex (see interview with Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, page 6). This causes insecurity about the child’s own masculinity (or femininity) and makes the forming of friendship bonds with those of the same sex much more difficult, frequently leading to painful rejection. Often added to this in the case of boys is a mother who overly compensates, giving the son too much female affection and fawning over in the early stages of his life.

Deprived of normal male love and affection, the boy starts out in life with a desperate longing for what is a legitimate unmet need. The inevitable attraction to the same sex in itself is not a sin. Later on, however, that need often becomes sexualized—leading to sinful homosexual acts with other boys and men. At the same time, the smothering love and affec-

### Struggle for those dealing with same-sex attraction

Sadly, these tendencies and unmet needs remain. Because this lack becomes a part of one’s mental and emotional makeup at such an early age, it should be understood that exclusively same-sex attraction is seldom a voluntary, conscious choice.

Homosexual *acts*, however, just like heterosexual acts, *are* a voluntary choice. While the attraction may be there in a way that is *not* a matter of choice, it *is* one’s choice to dwell on or entertain thoughts that can lead to sin. Jesus Christ pointed out that mentally entertaining thoughts of illicit sexual acts is itself a sin (Matthew 5:27-28).

Paul urged Christians to be aware of the spiritual struggles in which all of us are engaged, emphasizing our need to discipline our thoughts and bring “every thought into captivity” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). James, Jesus’ half-brother, wrote that mentally dwelling on temptations typically leads us into lust and sin, so we must short-circuit the process before sin results (James 1:14-15; compare 4:8).

Some give in to their same-sex attraction later on in life and enter the gay lifestyle. Others, often due to religious beliefs, try to fight their desires and overcome them. These people are often called *strugglers*, reflecting the reality that it is a lifetime

struggle. Another term increasingly used is *healers*, recognizing that they are seeking emotional healing for their condition. A combination of both terms (struggler-healer) is appropriate.



## Research has shown that the basic common cause of homosexuality, whether male or female, is an emotional detachment from the parent of the same sex.

Many people with same-sex attraction experience social isolation and emotional pain as they struggle to cope with their lives. Some endure a struggle between coping with their homosexuality and remaining faithful to their religious beliefs. For many, it is a lonely, secret struggle that can sometimes involve excruciating pain.

Some give in to their same-sex attraction and enter the gay lifestyle. Others, in spite of their pain, continue to struggle, often in isolation, to remain faithful to their religious beliefs. In recent years, a number of social and religious organizations have recognized the need to help and support these individuals who struggle to be faithful to their religious convictions, although the work of these organizations has often been viewed as controversial.

This is where churches and individual Christians can help. Those who struggle with same-sex attraction not only battle with their

unnatural sexual desires every day of their lives, they also have to do so in secret. Sometimes they seek help from others. Typically, they will either go to their church pastor or priest, seek psychological help or talk to a close friend. All three choices are problematic. Seeking help from the wrong person can lead to even greater withdrawal and a deepening fear of sharing with anyone.

Some church pastors may overreact when the problem of same-sex attraction is brought to them. This can push the person seeking and needing help into further isolation, even to the point of feeling rejected by God. Some people have made things worse by betraying the confidence of the individual out of misguided concern for others in the congregation.

Seeking professional psychiatric help can also be a problem for struggler-healers. Since the American Psychiatric Association's change of policy on homosexuality 30 years ago, most of those seeking help today will not be encouraged to change, but rather to reaffirm their same-sex feelings and embrace the gay lifestyle.

Sharing the problem with a friend can often end a friendship, as most men cannot handle a confession of homosexual feelings. Another obvious complication is the possibility of physical feelings developing toward the friend. While this is a problem that will need to be resolved, it should not rule out helping someone struggling with same-sex attraction.

Since the root cause of such attraction

is rejection causing emotional detachment, someone struggling with this problem will find further rejection devastating. Not having had a close, loving relationship with the father in early childhood, there is a great need for such a relationship with another male. This need should be met in a nonsexual relationship with a heterosexual male who wants to help.

The apostle James wrote: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). It should be possible for Christians to share their problems with other Christians, expecting help and encouragement in return, even when their problem is one of unresolved homosexual desires and feelings.

Sadly, most people who struggle with this problem will say that the response to sharing is usually negative. They soon learn to shut up and keep their problem a secret. Many,

through discouragement, have even given up on trying to live God's way and have sought solace and acceptance in the gay community.

However, this is never the answer for a Christian. Christians realize that God gave us His laws because He cares for us. Certain sexual relationships are forbidden because they can never satisfy and lead to great emotional pain from which God wants to spare us.

The apostle Paul wrote: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). This is not just a warning against sexually transmitted diseases. It is also a warning against all the emotional damage that results from unfulfilling relationships based on sex, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Sadly, this lack of fulfillment for homosexuals often leads them into more and more sin, in a desperate and futile attempt to find the love they never thought or felt they received as a child.

### Encouraging lessons from ancient Corinth

We learn from the apostle Paul's letters, preserved in the New Testament, that some people in the Corinthian church had come out of this homosexual lifestyle to become truly converted Christians.

Corinth was a port city in which all kinds of sexual and other vices were all too common, and notice that Paul warns the Church members there against slipping into such sins. "Do not be deceived," he wrote. "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites . . . will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The separate references to "homosexuals" and "sodomites" in Greek refers to different roles taken in homosexual couples.

We should note that in Paul's writings here, he condemns not only homosexual acts, but fornication and adultery as well. Too many Christians are quick to turn a blind eye to their own heterosexual sins while quickly condemning homosexual acts on the part of others.

It cannot be emphasized enough: *All* sexual acts outside of a biblically sanctioned marriage are a sin. The apostle James put it well when he wrote, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). So gay-bashing—attacking gays or singling out homosexual behavior as the worst sin—is unjustified.

In the following verse of 1 Corinthians 6, those struggling with same-sex attraction can read some very encouraging words from Paul: "And such *were some of you*," he notes. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord

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# Hope

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become more religious in the course of therapy. Even if they began not particularly religious, at the end of two years, with all the soul searching and really digging deeply into deep issues, they *become* more religious.

**GN:** What can wives do to help?

**JN:** I think wives, number one, have to understand what is going on, what the husband is really looking for, and have to be supportive of the husband's attempts.

She needs to understand that he needs close male friendships and she might feel threatened by that. Especially if the husband has betrayed her trust in the past, it will be difficult for her to really trust it will be a friendship and nothing more. She has to be educated, she has to be informed, and she has to be supportive of his healing process.

**GN:** Does pornography play a role in leading people toward homosexuality?

**JN:** I really think it does. I think that pornography on the Internet is exacerbating the problem. It is not only increasing homosexuality, but it is entrenching those who are already dabbling with homosexuality.

In other words, the greater exposure to pornography is making the healing process more difficult. We see this—men who are still looking at the porn are going to move slower in therapy than those who do not have it in their lives.

**GN:** You said they need close male relationships. How can men struggling with homosexual feelings have a close male relationship without those feelings becoming sexual?

**JN:** Well, he's going to have those feelings. No doubt about it. And he shouldn't be afraid of those feelings but he has to learn how to translate those feelings into authentic friendship.

One of the questions I often ask a man just beginning therapy, I will say to him, "Have you had the experience of being sexually attracted to a guy but when you got to know him as a person and a friend, the sexual attraction disappeared?" And they almost always say, "Yes." And I ask, "Why do you think that was so?"

They have no answer for it. Because they have translated the mystique and there is no more sexual energy there. It is now a friendship and when you develop that kind of brotherly feeling, the idea of having sex is absurd. That's exactly the process they have to go through time and time again until all men seem like just other guys and there is nothing sexual about them. **GN**

# Same-Sex Marriage

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Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11).

"And such *were* some of you" is in the past tense. The implication of this is clear: There were people in this Greek-speaking congregation, in a part of the world where homosexual acts were typically considered normal, who came out of their homosexual practices upon repentance and were able to overcome their desires.

## What happens when society rejects God?

Although homosexuality is common to all cultures, it is in the Western democracies that the gay movement is most vocal. This was not the case even 50 years ago. This could mean that there are more people with homosexual leanings today than there were then, although militant gays would argue that it simply reflects progress made by them in gaining societal acceptance.

The truth, however, is that the greater numbers can easily be explained by the fact that the traditional family has progressively broken down in the last four decades with easier divorce and greater promiscuity. Absent or distant fathers are more common now than ever before, creating conditions in which the factors that may lead to homosexuality can flourish.

Writing to the church in Rome, Paul wrote a passage of Scripture that is quite applicable today. He showed a certain progression that takes place in human thinking that flows from man's rejection of God.

"... Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves . . .

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:21-28).

What this passage shows is that man progressively moves farther and farther away

from God's way of thinking when he rejects the Bible. Our societies testify to this fact. Since the theory of evolution gained popularity a century and a half ago, Western nations have progressively distanced themselves

from God. Now the thinking of most people is warped, not based on and often not even taking into consideration godly values or biblical teaching.

The theory of evolution—and its attendant arguments that there is no such thing as a Creator and that the Bible is merely a collection of myths—has affected man's thinking to the point of acceptance of gay marriage. It has taken a long time, yes, but the link is there. When people believe that human beings are nothing more than highly evolved animals, there is no basis for saying "no" to same-sex marriage—and many other things as well.

When God's Word has been rejected by government and banished from schools and public life, anything is acceptable. After gay marriage, can we expect to see pressure to legalize group marriage, incest and pedophilia? After all, the same rationale the U.S. Supreme Court used in striking down state laws against sodomy also applies to these sins.

Collectively, Western society is heading down the same road as ancient Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities that God destroyed for their varied sins—one of which was homosexuality, Sodom giving its name to *sodomy*. Yet individually, everyone has the opportunity to *repent* and *come out* of this society's sliding standards and morals, to embrace *God's* way and fight, with His help, against any tendencies that do not conform to His law. This is the only way to true happiness and fulfillment. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Our Creator, in His Word, repeatedly tells us that His laws are given for our good, that they will bring blessing when obeyed and prevent the painful consequences that come from ignoring and flaunting them. To learn how these laws could transform our world and show us the way to truly abundant living, request our free booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*.

Those who are struggling with same-sex attraction (or would like to help someone who is) can request a free subscription to *Anchor: A Publication of Hope for Individuals Struggling With Homosexuality* by visiting its Web site at [www.anchorhelp.com](http://www.anchorhelp.com).

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download these booklets from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

