

FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

A Guideline for Understanding Biblical Truth and Current Issues Regarding Homosexuality

Position and Policy 09/30/2012

This document represents the understanding and position of the Elders and Pastors of Fellowship Church concerning the issue of the homosexuality.

Preface

We believe the Bible is the Word of God; verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and that it is the supreme, final, and infallible authority in doctrine and practice. By inspiration we mean God's superintendence of human authors, so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs. We further believe that there is but one method of Bible interpretation-- the literal, or historical--grammatical, method. This method recognizes the fact that the authors of Scripture meant what they said. Therefore, we consistently apply the rules of grammar, literature, history, and culture to Scripture in order to unlock and understand the author's meaning (Matt. 5:16-18; II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:20, 21).

Introduction

The rapid rise of the issue of homosexual rights has been one of the fastest cultural changes in Western Civilization's history. If one tries to find a suitable reference or template, one will fail. Homosexual rights were not even a thought in broader culture in the 1990's but by the 2010's they have become one of the culture's hot topics. The charge has been swift, calculated and determined. The cultural impact and debates are beginning to be no less contentious than those of the 1960's.

How the Church has chosen to respond is as widely varied as the Church itself. Some denominations have largely acquiesced, ordaining openly gay priests and pastors and allowing the performing of homosexual weddings. Other more conservative religious groups and denominations are increasingly being hounded for being "intolerant" or "hate groups" for adhering to what they understand as the Bible's teaching about sexuality and marriage. Additionally, and sadly, still others have espoused the Bible's clear teaching but have done so in a relational manner that is inconsistent with biblical teachings on how to speak the truth in love.

It is the desire of Fellowship Church to be a place where all who seek to know and serve the Lord according to His commands will be welcomed and loved. We understand, because of the Bible's clear instructions, that there are none that are righteous but the grace of our Lord forgives all sins. We would never claim that any sin made someone ineligible for the grace and mercy of our Lord. Anyone confessing their sins and claiming the Lordship and grace of Christ will be loved and accepted just as the Lord commands. We desire to love and respect those who do not confess the Lord though we may have to disagree with their actions and beliefs. We hope to be a support and resource to all who try to live with the burden of any sin while trying to obey the Lord. We long to be a brotherhood and sisterhood of believers, loving and correcting one another as the Lord would have us to as members of His body.

Sexuality is a creation of God meant to be a blessing to humanity with the ultimate purpose of pointing to Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32). A sexual life lived according to the commands and will of God is meant to be a blessing (Proverbs 5:15-23). Sexual sin, of any kind, is one of the most warned against in Scripture. The apostle Paul points out the singular nature of sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. One could write many pages on all that the Bible teaches regarding sexuality. This paper will be focusing specifically on homosexuality. It should be clearly and

plainly stated that the Bible warns against all types of sexual sin, whether hetero- or homosexual in nature. The Elders and Pastors of Fellowship Church would warn all to carefully guard their hearts when it comes to the issues of sexuality. Sin, of any kind, easily entangles (Hebrews 12:1). One might ask, “Why write about homosexuality at all?” The current issue of homosexuality needs to be addressed because of the unique challenge that is being presented to the Church in the area of homosexuality. Homosexuality is an activity that has been understood as sinful that is now pushing forward and demanding to be received as not sinful. The unique response of the Church towards homosexuality comes from the unique presentation of homosexuality. One would no doubt see the same type response if, say, theft was suddenly asking to be received as normal and not sinful. Beyond these reasons, making sure that we are people that are trying to live out the example of Christ by loving all people is a key concern to the leadership of Fellowship Church. We desire to treat all with compassion and love, as commanded by the Lord, while never allowing our obedience to the Lord to wane because of social pressures.

This paper hopes to address many of the concerns surrounding the issue of homosexuality and whether or not it is sinful. “What is the nature of marriage?” has been addressed in a previous position paper (“Marriage: Our Position and Policy” found at http://fellowshipknox.org/#/we_believe) so this paper will not engage that particular point. It will rather engage the Bible on the issue of homosexuality and the relevant Biblical texts and interpretations that are springing up because of the current debates.

Biblical Texts

1. Old Testament references

Leviticus 18:22- You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13- If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

2. New Testament references

Romans 1:26-27- For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Corinthians 6:9- Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality.

1 Timothy 1:9-10- understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

3. Summary

One will immediately note the absence of such texts as the Sodom incident or the event recounted in Judges 19 which are commonly referred to in reference to the issues of homosexuality. These will be dealt with in an apologetic fashion but are not listed here as the point of the grouping of these present texts is to show regulative, or “command,” texts. The Sodom and Judges texts are narrative in purpose. We will now consider each text singularly. (Please note: we will deal with questions about the nature and relevance of these texts below. The immediate context is just a strict look at the wording and syntax of the commands.)

Textual Analysis and Contexts

1. Leviticus 18:22

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

The context of Leviticus 18 is the giving of the Mosaic Law to the Israelites. It is a normative and commandment laden context. The immediate predecessors are all laws regarding sexual conduct and prohibiting certain sexual actions. The commandment against homosexuality is within this vein. The underlying Hebrew is unambiguous.

2. Leviticus 20:13

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

The context of Leviticus 20 is the giving of the Mosaic Law to the Israelites. It is a normative and commandment laden context. The section in Chapter 20 is more focused on the punishment to be doled out for the breaking of the commandment as well as the commandment itself. The immediate predecessors are all commandments and punishments regarding sexual sin. The underlying Hebrew is unambiguous.

3. Romans 1:26-27

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

With the switch to the New Testament, we have a switch from the straight out commandment format of the Levitical law to the epistolary format of the Apostles, namely Paul. The context of the reference in Romans is important so as to see why it was included in the list above.

The context for Romans 1:26-27 is set in Romans 1:18. It states, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who

by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” Paul’s beginning purpose is to show why the wrath of God is being revealed among humanity. The reason, he argues, is sin, which he calls ‘unrighteousness’ and ‘ungodliness.’ Verses 26-27 flow from verse 25, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!” Paul’s obvious point is that the wrath of God, stirred by sinfulness, is being revealed. One of the ways he points out, in verse 25-26, is homosexuality. This is, of course, not the only reason.

Paul’s clear opinion is that homosexuality lies outside God’s intent. The underlying Greek is unambiguous. Recent arguments regarding Paul’s intention of using the word “natural” will be dealt with later. Recent arguments that Paul was speaking of male prostitution will be dealt with later.

4. 1 Corinthians 6:9

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality

The context for 1 Corinthians 6:9 is Paul’s reprimand to the Corinthian church that they are to live by different standards than the world around them. The scope of this call to different living is wide and varies from everything from issues in lawsuits to being defrauded. It is within this context that the reference to homosexuality is made. It is clear that Paul considers it an action of unrighteousness. The underlying Greek is unambiguous.

5. 1 Timothy 1:9-10

understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

Paul is discussing false teachers who have infiltrated the Ephesian church in which Timothy is serving. They were using the Law in some way that was counter to Paul’s teaching of the Gospel. Paul is discussing the Law and points out that the Law’s purpose was to point out human behaviors that were unacceptable. Homosexuality is one of those behaviors. The underlying Greek is unambiguous.

6. Summary

These texts are clear and unambiguous. They clearly state that homosexuality is against the Law and purposes of God. This does not end the discussion, as many groups and individuals have questions about how relevant these texts are and how to properly interpret them. These points will be dealt with below. As it stands, the references in the Bible that directly speak to or reference homosexuality are unequivocal in their denouncement of the action. It can only be

rhetorically argued that the texts don't mean what they plainly say. To do so is to completely ignore basic reading comprehension. "Are they still relevant?" is another question.

Practical Questions and Applications

Many questions and concerns have arisen regarding the issue of homosexuality and the interpretation of Bible. We hope to, in this section, answer some of the more prevalent questions and give a more secure footing in why we believe the Bible condemns homosexuality as a sin.

1. "I was born/God made me this way." "God wouldn't give me a desire He didn't want me to fill."

This is one of the most prevalent arguments against the Church and its stance against homosexuality. Christians have, rather unthoughtfully, ceded ground on this argument by answering, "no, you weren't born this way," rather than letting the Bible speak to it. While we can never claim that God is the author of sin, the Bible clearly teaches that all humanity is born into sin (Ps 51:5, Rom 5:12, Eph 2:3) and is sinful by nature from birth. While we are not completely sinful in every way possible, the Bible is clear that we are not born righteous. For anyone to claim that any action they take that seems natural to them is right with God because they have felt that way from birth is to disregard the Bible's teaching as to what is the human condition. A person could claim, "I have been gay since birth," and be within what the Bible describes as the human condition because the Bible says humanity is sinful from birth. The issue is that just because these feelings have been innate does not excuse them. "There is a way that seems right to a man but it's end is death"- Proverbs 14:12. The first commandment of God to all is to repent, meaning to turn from one's sinful ways (Acts 17:30).

In a related point, there is no one whose sexuality is not regulated by the Bible. All are called to some kind of sexual regulation. Those who are single are called to wait till marriage. Those who are married are called to keep sex within the marriage covenant. Within the frame of the argument that God would not give desires that could not be met, anyone could argue that any sexual regulation from the Bible was irrelevant because of the desires for sex which fall outside of Biblical lines, namely heterosexual marriage. Anyone, married or single, who found themselves with desires for another who was not their spouse could claim they were excluded from the commandments of God based on that desire. Clearly, this is an untenable point.

2. "Homosexuality would be ok if homosexual marriage was allowed. The fact that homosexuals can't marry is the reason for their sinfulness."

From Fellowship Church's position paper on marriage ("Marriage: Our Position and Policy"- available at http://fellowshipknox.org/#/we_believe) "Marriage was God's idea, not man's. God defines what marriage is, not man. He created marriage at the same time He created man and woman. And He created marriage to achieve his purposes in and through their union. The primary purpose of marriage is not man or woman's happiness or personal fulfillment; marriage, including the idea of family, is of God's design-- His divine deliberate, purposeful plan to display His glory and create and sanctify a people for Himself to enjoy and worship Him forever" (Marriage- pg. 1).

Also from the position paper-- "God instituted marriage to be a lifelong covenantal relationship between Himself and two willing adults, one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Rom 7:2; 1 Cor 7:39; Eph 5:31). The Bible views a marriage covenant as more than a legal contract between two people. It views it as an unconditional commitment between a man and woman to serve God through the fulfillment of their biblical responsibilities as a husband and wife until death or God release them from this commitment (Matt. 19:4--6)" (Marriage- pg. 2).

3. "Jesus never mentioned homosexuality."

Jesus also never mentioned: pedophilia, bestiality, having sexual relations with one's mother, having sexual relations with one's father, having sexual relations with one's siblings, rape, etc. (This list does not, of course, suggest that to be engaged in homosexuality necessarily suggests participating in pedophilia, bestiality, etc.). The list could go on and on. Do we think these things lay inside the realm of things that Jesus would approve of? Of course not. Argument from absence is a poor exercise.

Furthermore, we do see Jesus address the sexual ethics of his time in certain ways. For example, in Matthew 15:16--20 we see Jesus speaking specifically about the nature of condemnation. In a list of things that will condemn a person, Jesus uses the Greek word *porneia*, translated as 'sexual immorality.' *Porneia* is used some 25 times in the New Testament, usually translated as 'sexual immorality' or such. The word in Greek was a catch all phrase used to mean any action which fell outside of moral sexual behavior. For example, Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 5 for an incestuous relationship and in the same letter, 1 Corinthians 7, to mean extra--marital sexual activity. It is a broad term. Jesus and Paul would use it in the context of the Law and its moral precepts regarding sexuality. This would, because of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, refer to homosexuality as well. The arguments today about the validity of these commands are whether or not we would have to follow them, not whether or not Paul and Jesus would. It is beyond credulity to suggest that Paul and Jesus were not orthodox Jews of their time. Jesus' use of the word *porneia* would encompass all the things his audience understood as sexually impermissible. Homosexuality would be on that list because of its direct inclusion in the Law of Moses.

4. "Why don't Christians also follow the commandment against 'x?'"

One of the arguments against using the Bible's commandments against homosexuality today are typified in the refrain that Christians hold to one part of the Law but not another. For example, the Law forbids the wearing of cloth woven from different fabrics (Lev 19:19). The Law forbids sowing two types of seed in the same field (Lev 19:19). If Christians are so serious about keeping God's laws, why aren't these commandments kept?

This argument is made because of an ignorance of, or ignoring of, Scripture. The answer lies in understanding the nature of the Law. There were three types of Law given by God to Moses and Israel. The first type was the national law. Those specific laws were given to the nation of Israel and are applicable only to them. They went out of 'enforcement' with the Fall of Israel before the time of Christ. The religious laws of Israel were the second and third types of Law given to Moses. They were the ceremonial and moral law groups. Actually, one of the first controversies in Christianity was whether or not the ceremonial law group applied to Christians. Types of the ceremonial laws were the prohibitions of the dietary law, commands to keep the

Sabbath and the command for circumcisions. The commandments regarding seeds and cloth would fall into this category. It is specifically in the commandment regarding circumcision that the controversy in Christianity came to light first. Both Acts and Galatians recount the debate. In both places, it is determined that the ceremonial law about circumcision did not carry over from the Old Testament to the New. In fact, Paul forbids Christians from reverting to the ceremonial law. In Galatians 5:3--6 Paul in no uncertain terms denies that circumcision still has any merit and in fact asserts that the one who reverts to it has denied the very essence of Christianity. We see him make the same sorts of statements about the food laws in Romans 14. He tells the Christians in Rome that if they choose to eat foods that lie outside the dietary code of the Law, then they are fine as long as they are not violating their or their neighbors' conscience. Further than that, Paul condemns Peter when Peter tries to make others adhere to the dietary code (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter himself had a vision regarding the ceremonial food laws and the overturning of that branch of the Law (Acts 10 and 11). Paul commanded the Colossians to not allow ceremonial Law regarding the Sabbath to be used against them (Col 2:16-17). It is a clear teaching of the Apostolic tradition that the ceremonial Law was ended when Christ fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of the Law (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4).

So it is clear that Paul and the other apostles did not consider the ceremonial code something that survived into Christianity. The same cannot be said of the moral code. In order to stay within the scope of this paper, let's look at the sexual commands written by Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does he relax the sexual codes of the Law like he does the ceremonial commands. For example, in the book of Galatians where he has spent so much ink showing that the ceremonial law has passed he quickly supports the prohibition against "sexual immorality" (again the word *porneia*) in Galatians 5:19. Paul goes to great lengths in his epistles to warn Christians against sexual immorality while at the same time going to great lengths to show Christians the ceremonial Law has passed. Christians can rightly conclude that the command against homosexuality is within the scope of the moral law which is still in effect within the bounds of Christianity.

5. "Romans is not referring to actual homosexuals but heterosexuals acting homosexually."

As referred to above in the listing of Romans 1:26-27, the crux of this objection centers on Paul's use and meaning of the word 'natural.'

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

To begin with, this is a prime example of the logical fallacy called begging the question. In other words, the person making this argument is already assuming that homosexuality is not a sin in order to make this argument. Paul, an orthodox Jew, would have no category of homosexuality being a moral act in any instance. So to make an argument that Paul is saying that the immorality being addressed is heterosexuals acting against their nature in a homosexual manner and that it would not be immoral for homosexuals to act thusly is to assume homosexuality is moral. Paul, an adherent to the Law, would not have these categories

in any sense. Philo, a Jewish writer from the time of Jesus and Paul, and other Jewish writers contemporary to the time continually show that one of the main Jewish criticisms of the Roman culture was the homosexuality within it.

More specifically to the text, homosexuality advocates question the use of the word 'natural' and Paul's meaning. The use of this Greek word, and Paul's usage of it and its relatives, generally means the way things "should" be because of their intrinsic state or birth. It is because these references have no immediate connotation of divine purpose or intention that homosexual advocates have said this is not a claim of the immoral nature of homosexuality. In other words, the homosexuality advocate critiquing this passage is saying that Paul is not using these words to mean that homosexuality is wrong. But a closer look at Paul's intent in the passage overwhelms this line of thinking.

Paul's immediate point is that humanity, in seeking unrighteousness, has done many evils including rejecting God as Creator. Note the phrases Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, uses as indictments: verse 19-- *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*; verse 21- *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*; verse 25- *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* Paul's clear context is that our Creator, God, has been rebelled against in hearts of humanity. Paul's use of 'natural' must be seen in its immediate context of being a rebellion against what the Creator intended.

This point is highlighted further by the use of the Greek word *chresis*. There is no direct English translation but its meaning is "the sexual use of a woman" or "how one has sex with a woman." Combining the word 'natural' with this word, Paul's meaning is 'how one would naturally have sex with a woman.' Furthermore, Paul does not use the standard words for 'man' and 'woman' here but rather 'male' and 'female,' a more graphic physiological description. Paul is not arguing orientation but physiological design. "Sexual orientation" is a modern construct, not a Biblical one. Paul's intent of showing God's creation of male/female sexuality is clear both thematically and linguistically.

6. "Paul was not speaking of homosexuality in Romans 1 but rather male prostitution."

That homosexuality occurred in the shrines of Gentile pagans is not in dispute. There are some homosexuality advocates that are attempting to show that Paul is in fact condemning Gentile pagan and shrine worship in Romans 1. They point to references like verse 23's ". . . exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." The ultimate point, they claim, is not that Paul is condemning homosexuality but rather idolatry.

Not only does this claim fail to overturn the larger point Paul is making about natural relations (see above point) but if that is true then Paul is also not condemning the list of things that he points out in Romans 1:29-31 that includes things like murder, deceit, hating God and being "inventors of evil." Could anyone seriously argue God only condemns these activities if they are associated with pagan shrine worship? No. Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy

Spirit, is making the larger point that neglecting to worship God as God will lead to an individual and cultural rejection of God the more it plays out.

Some of the arguments used about language and the words Paul uses, particularly about the Greek words *malakos* and *arsenkoites*, focus their critiques by drawing from extra-Biblical sources. They tend to limit their references to places where other authors use these words to mean “male prostitution.” Critics using a source, say Philo, to redefine Paul’s meaning typically neglect to mention Josephus (another contemporary of Paul) and his use of the words that agree with a reading of Paul that condemns homosexuality as sin. Space does not allow for a full discussion but the point would be the same: it is highly likely the words for homosexuality would include ideas of male prostitution. Philo using the words for male prostitution would fit into the larger scale of how Paul and Josephus use the words. If the words meant only male prostitution, then how Paul and Josephus use the words would make no sense.

7. “Isn’t love more important than condemning people?” “How can love ever be wrong?”

Love is the central virtue of the New Testament. It is the primary commandment given to people regarding one another (Matthew 22:39). Christians consider Jesus as the prime example of humanity. Jesus commanded us to walk just as he walked (John 13:15). Peter understood this exemplary model of Christ (1 Peter 2:21). One would be well within the bounds of Christian thinking to say that Christ was the most loving person who ever lived and we are to emulate Him in that action. Within that framework we see that Jesus never shied from calling sin “sin.” He confronted the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11). He confronted the rich young ruler of his covetousness (Luke 18:22). He confronts the disciples of prideful ambition (Mark 10:37-45). Being loving has never meant not calling sin “sin.” One can rightly argue that there is *no such thing* as love without truth.

8. “The Church is only calling out homosexuality. They don’t treat other sins like this.” “Christians are discriminating against homosexuals.”

Some feel the Church is singling out homosexuality and ignoring other sins. There is no question that the Church has not pursued purity with the passion that it should. Church members that should have long ago been disciplined by their congregations have perpetrated much of the testimony of hypocrisy charged to the Church. Many of today’s congregants are so removed from any sense of church discipline that any call of repentance toward a church member seems unbiblical rather than orthodox. It is within this culture that the teaching of many churches regarding the sinfulness of homosexuality seems undue. In some, but not all cases, the voices of the culture are specifically militant against the Church, perceiving Christians as the primary enemy of their cause. Homosexuality advocates and questioning church members, however, are right in one sense about homosexuality being treated singly.

The distinction one might observe regarding the way the church is being forced to deal with homosexuality comes from the way in which homosexuality is being presented by significant voices in our culture, particularly through the popular cultural media. In other words, other sins are not being brought to the church and demanding acceptance. No one is coming into the church saying “I am an adulterer. I have no plans to change so accept me as I am.” Or perhaps, “I am a liar and have been one as long as I can remember so I am not going to change.” Any such person would, in any church that treats the Bible seriously, be met with stern

opposition. The Church is treating homosexuality uniquely because it is being presented uniquely.

As to the charge of discrimination, as stated earlier there is no one whose sexuality is unregulated by Biblical mandate. To argue as some have that heterosexual promiscuity is not prosecuted in churches is to count as irrelevant that the Bible teaches sexual immorality is wrong. Any church that treats the Bible seriously is active in its teaching of the Biblical mandates regarding sexuality. Churches that are subjugating the Bible underneath human wisdom and human desires will not treat this subject with the severity it requires. Fellowship Church actively teaches the Biblical mandates of sexual purity, of all types, before marriage. For example, couples cohabitating are required to cease that activity and are counseled as to its inappropriateness before a Fellowship pastor will perform a marriage ceremony.

9. “The events in Sodom and Gibeah were not about homosexuality but inhospitality.”

The well-known attempted homosexual rape in Sodom accounted in Genesis 19 has a lesser-known echo in Judges 19 and the men of Gibeah. In each case, visitors are attacked by crowds whose intentions include homosexual rape. Homosexuality advocates will argue that the sin being committed here is transgression against the hospitality code of the time, not the homosexual aspect of the attack.

These objections fail to accomplish a lasting dent against a Biblical warrant against homosexuality because there is no reason that, even if one removed all reference to the homosexual activity, the Levitical code is changed regarding its ban against homosexuality. In other words, even if Sodom is not about homosexuality, Leviticus 18 and 20 are clearly referring to it. The Sodom event changes nothing regarding how one must deal with the moral issues of homosexuality. This does not even include a critique of the rather spurious claim that the crime in Genesis 19 and Judges 19 is not about homosexuality after all.

10. “The Bible condemns lust, not love. When two homosexuals love each other, the Bible is not talking about them.” “The Bible is condemning homosexual promiscuity, not homosexuality itself.”

Again, we see a begging of the question (refer to “Romans *is not referring to actual homosexuals . . .*” above). It assumes that homosexuality is right and then shows how the Bible is not really addressing a form of homosexuality we know today. Is lust condemned in the Bible? Yes, clearly (Matthew 5:27-28). Is homosexuality condemned in the Bible? Yes, clearly. To say that “being in love” changed the laws against homosexuality, or made them not count, is to deny the teaching of the condemnation of homosexuality.

In order to see this more clearly, let’s look at the premise removed from the realm of homosexuality and place it in a heterosexual context. Suppose a couple began having sex outside of marriage. They claim that they are in love so the clear Biblical teaching against pre-marital sex does not apply to them. Or take a married person who falls in love with someone who is not their spouse and then claims that the affair they engage in is not wrong because they are in love. Does this make any sense? In fact, the commandment is there to stop the very activity they are trying to normalize. This type of behavior acts to treat the command with the

most clear disrespect. Homosexuals trying to make an “end run” around the command by trying to shift it to a place that does not apply to them are engaging in a clear form of denial.

The same can be said when the argument is about homosexual promiscuity and not homosexuality itself. In other words, some argue that Paul is only addressing homosexuals who are sexually promiscuous and not homosexuality itself. This is again begging the question. The Old Testament commands were clearly against homosexual acts in any form. There would have been no context in which Paul or any other Biblical author, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, would have seen these acts as sanctionable, whether in a committed relationship or not. Specifically, Paul’s arguments regarding “natural” and “unnatural” due to created order and intent would precede any claim of acceptance due to monogamy (Again, refer to “Romans *is not referring to actual homosexuals . . .*” above).

Conclusion: Fellowship Church’s Stance and Practices

It is the intention of the Elders and Leadership of Fellowship Church to be a people intent on following the commandments of God to the best of their ability and understanding. With that purpose in mind, Fellowship Church must follow the Biblical counsel and call homosexuality sinful.

Homosexuality will be treated no differently than any other sin when it comes to church membership and being in good standing of that membership. Any person who struggles with homosexual feelings but comes confessing it as sin and trying to live a life of repentance will be welcomed into fellowship and church membership as would any other repentant and confessing sinner. Any church member who struggles with homosexuality will be treated with love and compassion as would any other church member struggling with any other sin. Praise the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father who forgives all our sins!

However, continuing in obedience to the commands He has given us, any church member who engaged in homosexual behavior and would not, after intervention and multiple attempts toward restoration, repent of those actions would then be removed from fellowship and membership as would any other unrepentant sinning member. Anyone unrepentantly practicing homosexual activities will not be admitted in membership to Fellowship Church, as any other unrepentant sinner would be denied membership as well. Any person who disagrees with this statement is always welcome to attend our worship services as long as they are not divisive and are respectful of our beliefs. Furthermore, we ask any current member of Fellowship Church who disagrees with these conclusions to approach leadership in order to make sure that true disagreement exists. After much discussion and prayer, if true disagreement indeed does exist, we would ask that member to withdraw their membership.

We want to acknowledge that there are people within our congregation who struggle with homosexuality. We desire for you to know that we want to stand with you. The grace and power of the Lord has been unleashed in your favor and we want to see the Lord work in you and in us as we all face our sins and come face to face with the love and forgiveness of God. We want to be a resource to you in your stand and a help in times of tempting and failing.

We also want to acknowledge that some who read this will be people who do not know the Gospel of our Lord and His offer of grace and forgiveness. The Bible teaches us that humanity is fallen and broken. Christ's mission was to start the process of God's restoration of humanity. This offer is made by grace, or freely. All who sin and are trapped in sin are offered the freedom that comes in Christ. We desire for you to know that if you want the forgiveness of God for sins, any and all sins, He has offered it in Christ. The Christian life is one of constant renewal and purification. It is not easy. But we testify and confess that God is faithful. He has been for us and He can be for you. To Him be the Glory.

We pray that the glory and grace of God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit would temper all our actions and decisions. We seek only to honor the Lord and the ways He would have His people live. We ask the Spirit to come and intercede for us, not only that we would know how to lovingly and compassionately deal with those who are struggling with any sin but also that sin within ourselves would be exposed and scrubbed away.

Praise the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!