

There are 6 Scriptures about homosexuality in the Bible. Here's what they really say.

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The video above does a really great job of explaining Matthew Vines' own story and also contextualizing these Scriptures (because we all know that Scriptures out of context can cause misinterpretation at best and d-r-a-m-a at worst), so I encourage you to watch it - and then do some digging yourself!

But, for a quick overview, here are the six specific passages that he presents:

The Story of Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 19)

This story in Genesis 19 is probably the most popular passage used to condemn homosexuality. Here is how Vines explains it:

*"God sends two angels disguised as men into the City of Sodom where the men of Sodom threatened to rape them. The angels blind the men, and God destroys the city. For centuries, this story was interpreted as God's judgment on same-sex relations, **but the only form of same-sex behavior described is a threatened gang rape.**"*

So gang rape = not good (also not the same thing as homosexuality). But the recap of Sodom & Gomorrah found in Ezekial 16:49 highlights what Vines believes is the *real* point of the story:

"Now, this was the sin of your sister, Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned, they did not help the poor and needy."

In other words, everyone using this story as evidence of the sin of homosexuality, might be missing the point entirely.

When God calls homosexuality an abomination (Leviticus 18:22) (Leviticus 20:13)

Yep. We've all heard that Leviticus is where the Bible straight-up says that homosexual behavior is an abomination. And yes, it does. It also says that homosexuals should receive the death penalty (!!!). It also says the same thing about eating pork or shellfish, charging interest on loans, and a whole bunch of other restrictions that were a part of the Old Testament Law Code. But for Christians, the Old Testament doesn't (dare I say "shouldn't?") settle any issue because Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law. Which is probably why most Christians today eat meat, use credit cards, wear makeup, and support equality for women. Because, as Hebrews 8:13 says, the old law is obsolete and aging.

When people turn away from God (Romans 1:26-27)

"Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones; in the same way, men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error."

This is where Vines really digs in on the the cultural context angle. In Biblical times, same-sex behavior was primarily seen as happening between adult men and adolescent boys (masters and servants — yikes), via prostitution, and by men who were married to women. In all of those cases, we can see why it would have been viewed as sinful, excessive, lustful, and against God's law. But he makes no mention of love, commitment, faithfulness, or the type of same-sex relationships that are at question in the debate around marriage. (By the way, Paul also says that men having long hair is "unnatural" and that women shouldn't speak in church, so it's clear Paul himself may have had some issues of his own.)

Uses of the Greek works "Malakoi" and "Arsenokoitai" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) (1 Timothy 1:10)

These words are included in the New Testament's lists of people who will not inherit God's kingdom. And there has been much debate over their original meaning. (Translating ancient words is hard, guys.) Some believe them to mean homosexuality and sodomy, whereas others have said that the closest modern translation would be "dirty old men." Ha! Here's how Vines explains it:

Many modern translators have rendered these terms as sweeping statements about gay people, but the concept of sexual orientation didn't even exist in the ancient world. Yes, Paul did not take a positive view of same-sex relations (nor did he support women speaking in church...), but the context he was writing in is worlds apart from gay people in committed, monogamous relationships. The Bible never addresses the issues of sexual orientation or same-sex marriage, so there's no reason why faithful Christians can't support their gay brothers and sisters.

Fascinating, right?

If you'd like to learn more and hear Matthew Vines' story, check out the video above and his book "[God and the Gay Christian](#)."

[View transcript](#)

Matthew Vines: Marriage equality is on the rise, but despite this trend, religious beliefs remain a major obstacle to acceptance. Many conservative Christians believe that the Bible condemns all same-sex relationships. That question drove my own intensive study of this issue when I came to terms with being gay, as with my parents and my church in Kansas believed that gay marriage was wrong. But what I learned whenever I studied the relevant scripture passages changed my parent's minds along with the views of many other Christians in my life.

They are six passages in the bible that refer to same sex behavior, three in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament. The most famous passage is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. God sends two angels disguised as men into the City of Sodom where the men of Sodom threatened to rape them. The angels blind the men, and God destroys the city. For centuries, this story was interpreted as God's judgment on same-sex relations, but the only form of same-sex behavior described is a threatened gang rape. Ezekiel 16:49 sums up the stories focused on violence and hostility towards strangers. "Now, this was the sin of your sister, Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned, they did not help the poor and needy."

In Leviticus 18:22, male same-sex intercourse is prohibited, and violators are to receive the death penalty. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." Other things called abominations in the Old Testament include having sex during a woman's menstrual period, eating pork, rabbit, or shell fish, and charging interest on loans, but they're part of the Old Testament law code, which was fulfilled by Jesus.

Hebrews 8:13 says that the old law is obsolete and aging. Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law, so the

Old Testament doesn't settle the issue for Christians, but lets look to the New Testament which contains the longest reference to same-sex behavior in the bible.

In Romans 1:26-27, people who turn away from God to worship idols are then turned over to their own lusts and vices. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones, in the same way, men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Paul's words here are clearly negative, but the behavior he condemns is lustful. He makes no mention of love, commitment, or faithfulness.

His description of same-sex behavior is based solely on a burst of excess and lust. In the ancient world, same-sex behavior mainly occurred between adult men and adolescent boys, between masters and their slaves, or in prostitution. Most of the men engaged in those practices were married to women, so same-sex behavior was widely seen as stemming from out of control lust and vice of excess, like gluttony and drunkenness. And while Paul labeled same sex behavior unnatural, he says in 1 Corinthians 11:14 that for men to wear their hair long also goes against nature, and most Christians interpret that as a reference to cultural conventions.

In the last two likely references to same-sex behavior in the Bible, two Greek words, malakoi and arsenokoitai, are included in lists of people who will not inherit God's kingdom. Many modern translators have rendered these terms as sweeping statements about gay people, but the concept of sexual orientation didn't even exist in the ancient world. Yes, Paul did not take a positive view of same-sex relations, but the context he was writing in is worlds apart from gay people in committed, monogamous relationships. The Bible never addresses the issues of sexual orientation or same-sex marriage, so there's no reason why faithful Christians can't support their gay brothers and sisters. It's time.

If you'd like to learn more, check out my new book, "God and the Gay Christian," then, sign with the Reformation Project to make a difference in your church.

There may be small errors in this transcript.