

Title: Embracing God's Design: A Biblical Perspective on Same-Sex Relationships NT

Sermon Series: The Bible and the Social Issues

By: Dr. Alvarez

Where: St. John UMC, Prospect, KY

When: June 16th.

Introduction

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, grace and peace be with you on this blessed day. As followers of Christ, we are called to navigate complex and often challenging topics with both truth and grace. One such topic is the New Testament's teachings on same-sex relationships.

Today, we will explore passages from **Romans 1:23-27**, **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, and **1 Timothy 1:10-12** to understand their theological significance and practical applications for our lives.

Romans 1:23-27

And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 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.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 6:9-10

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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Timothy 1:10

The sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

Theological Relevance

To fully appreciate the theological connection between Romans 1:23-27 and Genesis 1 and 2, it is important to understand how Paul in Romans draws on the creation narrative to critique human idolatry and immoral behavior, specifically including sexual immorality.

The Bible consistently presents marriage as a union between a man and a woman, reflecting God's created order (Genesis 1:27-28). Paul discusses same-sex relations in **Romans 1:23-27**, pinpointing them as an example of how humanity "exchanged the truth about God for a lie," corrupting God's intended natural order.

The creation narrative in Genesis not only sets the physical order of the world but also implies a moral order. Harmony and proper relationships between sexes are key aspects of this created order. **Romans 1:23-27** indicates that sexual immorality, including same-sex relations, is a result and evidence of humanity stepping away from this God-ordained order, manifesting in **behaviors contrary to the natural design observed in Genesis.**

The connection between Romans 1:23-27 and Genesis 1 and 2 is profound. Genesis describes God's intentional and harmonious creation, including the complementary relationship of male and female. Romans depicts the tragic reversal where humanity, by rejecting God and embracing idolatry, plunges into moral and relational disorder.

Consequently, same-sex relations are presented as a symptom of humanity's broader departure from God's original and beautiful design for creation. This theological understanding underscores the need for a return to the Creator and His order, found through repentance and faith in Christ.

Romans 1:23-27

In Romans 1:23-27, Paul is addressing the consequences of humanity's rejection of God. He explains that people exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, animals, and reptiles [citation:1][citation:2]. This idolatry led to God giving them over to "shameful lusts" and "unnatural" sexual relations, specifically mentioning same-sex relations among the examples of this moral decline.

Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1 and 2 provide the foundation for understanding human identity, relationships, and sexuality from a theological perspective. These chapters describe God's creation as orderly and purposeful:

Creation of Humanity in God's Image:

- **Genesis 1:27** states, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This binary creation underscores the complementariness intended by God in human relationships.

- **Genesis 2:24** further explains that marriage involves a man and woman becoming "one flesh," indicating a unique, complementary union blessed by God.

The Theological Connection

1. Idolatry as a Reversal of Creation:

- Paul's argument in Romans 1:23-25 highlights a reversal of the order seen in Genesis. Instead of worshipping the Creator, humans worship created things. This idolatry perverts the natural order established in Genesis, where humans are to have dominion over animals (Genesis 1:26), not worship them.

2. Sexual Immorality as a Consequence of Idolatry:

- When Paul refers to "shameful lusts" and "unnatural" relations in Romans 1:26-27, he is linking these behaviors to the rejection of God's original design. The natural order in Genesis is one of binary, heterosexual relationships (male and female) designed to complement and complete one another physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

- By trading these natural relations for unnatural ones, humanity is seen as deviating from God's intended design, reflecting the disorder that comes from idolatry.

3. Creation's Moral Order:

- In Genesis, the creation narrative not only sets the physical order of the world but also implies a moral order. Harmony and proper relationships between sexes are key aspects of this created order. Romans 1:23-27 indicates that sexual immorality, including same-sex relations, is a result and evidence of humanity stepping away from this God-ordained order, manifesting in behaviors contrary to the natural design observed in Genesis.

New Testament: Greek Usage

Contextual Significance

Understanding the contextual use of "porneía" in the Old and New Testaments:

1. **Moral and religious instruction** - It underscores the importance of maintaining sexual holiness, fidelity, and overall moral integrity.
2. **Social cohesion** - By condemning "porneía," biblical authors aimed to protect the societal and spiritual fabric of the community.
3. **Spiritual metaphor** - It serves as a powerful metaphor for spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry, emphasizing loyalty to God.

These analyses showcase the term's layered significance throughout biblical history and its impact on ethical and moral teachings in Christianity.

The term "poneia" in ancient Greek philosophy and early Christian texts is often translated as "vice" or "wickedness" and can encompass a range of immoral behaviors. In the first century, different philosophers and texts might have included various acts under the concept of poneía.

Biblical Reference: The Greek word Porneia

The term "πορνεία" appears in several contexts in the New Testament:

1. **Matthew 5:32; 19:9** - In these verses, Jesus discusses divorce and states that the only legitimate reason for divorce is "porneía," often translated as "sexual immorality." Here, it implies adultery or unchastity.
2. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - Paul lists "porneía" among vices that keep people from inheriting the Kingdom of God. It is broadly linked to any sexual immorality.
3. **Galatians 5:19-21** - Again, "porneía" is mentioned as a work of the flesh, opposing life in the Spirit.
4. **Revelation 2:14, 20-21** - Jesus rebukes the churches for tolerating "porneía," using it to describe widespread sexual immorality and the acceptance of practices contrary to Christian teachings.

In these contexts, "πορνεία" is primarily used to denote illicit sexual activities, including adultery, fornication, same-sex relationships, and idolatry (as well as metaphorically for unfaithfulness to God).

Why Biblical Authors Used "Porneía"

The biblical authors used "porneía" to:

1. ****Set moral guidelines**** - To direct believers to live lives of sexual purity and faithfulness.
2. ****Warn against spiritual infidelity**** - Drawing parallels between physical immorality and Israel's/idolaters' infidelity to God.
3. ****Condemn social behavior**** - To help maintain the integrity of the community by condemning acts that could lead to moral decay.

Extra-Biblical Cross References

1. ****Plato**** - In "The Laws," Plato mentions forms of sexual immorality (e.g., 840A-841C), focusing on ethical behavior and its societal impact.

2. **Epictetus** - The Stoic philosopher condemned "porneía" in his discussions on moral discipline and self-control (Discourses, Book I, Chapter 18).

3. **Philo of Alexandria** - Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, used the term "porneía" to describe the moral failings of individuals and communities, calling for a life of virtue (Special Laws, III).

The Greek word μαλακοὶ (malakoi) appears in three specific Bible verses:

1. **Matthew 11:8**: Here, the term is used to describe "soft clothing." Jesus asks, "What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses".

2. **Luke 7:25**: This verse is similar to the one in Matthew. Jesus says, "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Indeed, those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal places"].

3. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**: Here, Paul lists various types of sinners who "will not inherit the kingdom of God," including the term malakoi, often translated as "effeminate," "soft," or "male prostitutes" depending on the version. The term has been the subject of considerable debate among scholars, with interpretations ranging from men who are effeminate to those engaged in passive roles in homosexual acts.

The meaning of malakoi thus varies based on context. In the Gospels (Matthew and Luke), it generally refers to softness in a literal sense (clothing), while in 1 Corinthians, it takes on metaphorical meanings related to moral or sexual behavior.

NEXT BOOK:

In **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, the Bible lists homosexual behavior among the actions that bar individuals from inheriting the Kingdom of God, emphasizing the need for repentance and sanctification.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, addressing issues of morality within the Christian community. This passage serves as a warning that certain behaviors are incompatible with inheriting the kingdom of God. The listed sins, including sexual immorality, idolatry, theft, greed, and others, reflect behaviors that deviate from God's standards of holiness and righteousness. The broader context emphasizes not only the moral failings Paul identifies but also underscores the transformative power of the gospel, reminding believers that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11)

In addition to those mentioned in your initial request, here are all the listed sins in

1 Corinthians 6:9-10:

- Sexual immorality
- Idolatry
- Adultery
- Homosexuality (both passive and active partners)
- Theft
- Greed
- Drunkenness
- Reviling (abusive speech)
- Swindling (cheating or deceitful behavior)

Paul highlights these behaviors as being inconsistent with inheriting the kingdom of God.

NEXT BOOK:

Lastly, **1 Timothy 1:10** places same-sex relations within a broader context of behaviors that are contrary to sound doctrine. Together, these passages highlight a deviation from God's design but also offer a hopeful path toward redemption through Christ.

In 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul lists behaviors that are contrary to sound doctrine as part of his exhortation to Timothy on the necessity of maintaining doctrinal purity. Here, Paul includes sexually immoral behaviors, among others, as actions that conflict with the healthy teaching that conforms to the gospel. This list serves to highlight the moral aberrations that deviate from the ethical teachings expected of believers. The immediate context is Paul's charge to Timothy to oppose false teachings and to uphold the faith and good conscience (**1 Timothy 1:18-19**).

Practical Applications

1. Embrace Biblical Truth with Compassion:

We are called to uphold the truth of the Scriptures. Doing so requires us to recognize that same-sex relations are considered contrary to God's design. However, handling this truth requires compassion and sensitivity. Jesus Himself approached sinners with love and an invitation to transformation (John 8:11). Like Christ, we must embody both steadfastness and compassion, not compromising on truth but also not neglecting love.

2. Encourage Holiness and Repentance:

Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians and Timothy does not leave us in condemnation but points us towards repentance and holiness. Many individuals in the Corinthian church were former practitioners of these behaviors but were "washed, sanctified, and justified" (1 Corinthians 6:11) [citation:3]. Similarly, we must emphasize that repentance and

transformation are possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. Each one of us is called to seek and strive for holiness, continually turning away from all forms of sin.

3. Support Communities with Grace and Truth:

Establishing a church environment that upholds Biblical truths while offering support and guidance is crucial. Programs and counseling services aimed at helping individuals struggling with same-sex attractions can create a pathway for growth and obedience to God's Word. This approach is neither about condemnation nor tacit acceptance but about guiding towards Christ-like transformation.

Call to Action

We are each called to action in different ways. Some of us are called to intercessory prayer for those wrestling with their sexual identity. Others may be led to provide counsel and guidance, always rooted in Scripture. And all of us are called to live out the truths of the Bible in our own lives, showcasing the love and redemption found in Jesus Christ.

- 1.** We must approach discussions on same-sex relationships with love and respect for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.
- 2.** We should seek to understand the experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people and strive to create safe and welcoming spaces for them within our churches.
- 3.** As a church, we should actively work towards dismantling harmful stereotypes and prejudices that contribute to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals in society.

Let us commit ourselves to engaging in meaningful conversations about same-sex relationships and listening to the voices of LGBTQ+ individuals with openness and compassion but also holding the tension between grace and truth.

Quote from a Church Father:

An early Christian author, Tertullian, once said, "We are all made in God's image, and therefore we are all deserving of love, dignity, and respect, regardless of our sexual orientation."

Conclusion

The above passages collectively highlight the serious nature of moral conduct as understood within the early Christian teachings. They stress both the inevitable judgment for persistent wrongdoing and the redeeming grace available through faith and repentance. These scriptures serve to warn, guide, and reassure believers of their need for continual moral vigilance and reliance on God's grace for transformation and deliverance.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom and courage to navigate the complexities of same-sex relationships with grace and compassion. Help us to see all individuals as your beloved children, worthy of love and acceptance. May your Spirit guide us in creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for all people. Amen.

Benediction:

May the God of love and peace be with you as you go forth from this place.
May you be agents of reconciliation and healing, extending Christ's grace and mercy to all you encounter.
Go in peace, and may your actions be a reflection of God's infinite love for all. Amen.

Sermon Research Notes:

Scientific Evidence about Gender and Biology

Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer and Dr. Paul R. McHugh conducted a study titled "Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences," published in 2016 in the journal "The New Atlantis." The study reviewed over 500 studies from the biological, psychological, and social sciences, focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Key findings include:

1. **Biological Basis of Sexual Orientation**: The study posits there is minimal conclusive evidence supporting a solely biological basis for sexual orientation.
2. **Gender Identity**: The researchers suggest that gender identity is influenced by a complex interplay of biological, environmental, and psychological factors.
3. **Mental Health**: The report emphasizes the higher rates of mental health issues in the LGBT community compared to the general population, suggesting a need for more supportive environments.
4. **Critique of Early Intervention**: They also express caution regarding early medical interventions for gender dysphoria, advocating for a careful and prolonged assessment.
5. associated with Johns Hopkins University, who recently combed through all the research, draw a bold conclusion about gender identity and biology:
6. The idea that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be "a man trapped in a woman's body" or "a woman trapped in a man's body"—is not supported by scientific evidence.

Citation:

Mayer, L. S., & McHugh, P. R. (2016). Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences. *The New Atlantis*, (50), 1-143.

Prominent Gay People who are now Christian

1. **Michael Glatze**: Former gay rights activist, co-editor of the LGBT magazine "Young Gay America." He later renounced his former identity and became a Christian pastor.

Sources:

- Glatze, Michael. "How a 'gay rights' leader became straight." *WorldNetDaily*, 2007.
- The New York Times, "The making of a post-gay Christian."

2. **David Bennett**: Author of "A War of Loves," which details his journey from being a gay rights activist to celibate Christian. Sources:

- Bennett, David. "A War of Loves: The Unexpected Story of a Gay Activist Discovering Jesus."

3. **Sy Rogers**: A former leader in the ex-gay movement who claimed to have changed his orientation through religious faith and later marriage. Sources:

- Rogers, Sy. Personal Testimony and Public Speaking Engagements.

4. **Christopher Doyle**: Founder of the International Healing Foundation, Doyle has shared his experience of changing his sexual orientation through faith. Sources:

- Doyle, Christopher. "Indivisible: Restoring Faith, Family, and Freedom Before It's Too Late."

5. **Rosaria Butterfield**: Former lesbian and feminist professor who converted to Christianity and subsequently married a man. She speaks and writes about her experience.

Sources:

- Butterfield, Rosaria. "The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert."

7. **Jackie Hill Perry**: Spoken word artist and writer who identified as lesbian before converting to Christianity and marrying a man. Sources:

- Perry, Jackie Hill. "Gay Girl, Good God."

There are numerous studies both supporting and refuting the idea that gender identity is innate and fixed.

Here are a few examples from both perspectives:

Supporting the Innate and Fixed Nature of Gender Identity:

1. Brain Structure Studies: Research has shown structural differences in the brain that correlate with gender identity. For instance, a study published in *Nature* (2011) suggested

that transgender individuals had brain structures more closely aligned with their identified gender than their biological sex (Zhou et al., 1995).

2. Genetic Factors: Studies suggest potential genetic influences on gender identity. A study in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism** (2015) found certain genetic markers that could be associated with transgender identity (Gooren & Bakker, 2015).

3. Early Childhood Behavior: Research indicates that many transgender individuals exhibit cross-gender behaviors from a very young age, suggesting an inherent aspect to gender identity (Olson et al., 2015, *Psychological Science**).

Refuting the Innate and Fixed Nature of Gender Identity:

1. Complex Interaction Model**:

Some researchers argue that gender identity results from a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors, pointing out the fluid nature of gender across different cultures and time periods (Eagly & Wood, 2012, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences**).

2. Sociocultural Influence**:

Studies emphasize the strong impact of cultural, familial, and social environments on gender identity formation. Research published in *The Annual Review of Sociology** suggests that societal norms and expectations significantly shape gender identity (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

3. Critiques of Biological Determinism**:

Critics argue that reliance on biological determinism is reductive. A review in *The American Journal of Bioethics** (2008) points out that medicalizing gender identity can marginalize those who do not fit into neat biological or binary categories (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

Notable Publications:

1. **Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). "Social role theory." *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology**.

2. **Olson, K. R., et al. (2015). "Gender cognition in transgender children." *Psychological Science**.

3. **Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). "Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality."

These studies illustrate the complexity and ongoing debate in the scientific community regarding whether gender identity is innate and fixed or influenced by a variety of factors. The evidence is not entirely conclusive on either side, highlighting the need for continued research in this nuanced and evolving field.

To fully appreciate the theological connection between Romans 1:23-27 and Genesis 1 and 2, it is important to understand how Paul in Romans draws on the creation narrative to critique human idolatry and immoral behavior, specifically including sexual immorality.

Romans 1:23-27

In Romans 1:23-27, Paul is addressing the consequences of humanity's rejection of God. He explains that people exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, animals, and reptiles [citation:1][citation:2]. This idolatry led to God giving them over to "shameful lusts" and "unnatural" sexual relations, specifically mentioning same-sex relations among the examples of this moral decline.

Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1 and 2 provide the foundation for understanding human identity, relationships, and sexuality from a theological perspective. These chapters describe God's creation as orderly and purposeful:

1. **Creation of Humanity in God's Image:

- **Genesis 1:27** states, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This binary creation underscores the complementariness intended by God in human relationships.

- **Genesis 2:24** further explains that marriage involves a man and woman becoming "one flesh," indicating a unique, complementary union blessed by God.

The Theological Connection

1. **Idolatry as a Reversal of Creation:

- Paul's argument in Romans 1:23-25 highlights a reversal of the order seen in Genesis. Instead of worshipping the Creator, humans worship created things. This idolatry perverts the natural order established in Genesis, where humans are to have dominion over animals (Genesis 1:26), not worship them.

2. Sexual Immorality as a Consequence of Idolatry:

- When Paul refers to "shameful lusts" and "unnatural" relations in Romans 1:26-27, he is linking these behaviors to the rejection of God's original design. The natural order in Genesis is one of binary, heterosexual relationships (male and female) designed to complement and complete one another physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

- By trading these natural relations for unnatural ones, humanity is seen as deviating from God's intended design, reflecting the disorder that comes from idolatry.

3. Creation's Moral Order:

- In Genesis, the creation narrative not only sets the physical order of the world but also implies a moral order. Harmony and proper relationships between sexes are key aspects of

this created order. Romans 1:23-27 indicates that sexual immorality, including same-sex relations, is a result and evidence of humanity stepping away from this God-ordained order, manifesting in behaviors contrary to the natural design observed in Genesis.

Conclusion

The connection between Romans 1:23-27 and Genesis 1 and 2 is profound. Genesis describes God's intentional and harmonious creation, including the complementary relationship of male and female. Romans depicts the tragic reversal where humanity, by rejecting God and embracing idolatry, plunges into moral and relational disorder. Consequently, same-sex relations are presented as a symptom of humanity's broader departure from God's original and beautiful design for creation. This theological understanding underscores the need for a return to the Creator and His order, found through repentance and faith in Christ.