

## WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT LGBTQ?

March 17, 24, and 31, 2019

Crouch Chapel, 9:45 a.m.

**PREFACE:** A word about “brave people”...and an acknowledgment of the strain of these conversations on our church.

### INTRODUCTION: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SCRIPTURE

- Christians have always read Scripture differently
  - › Alexandrian “school” (metaphor/allegory) vs. Antiochene “school” (literal/historical)
- Different interpretations over the centuries: on slavery, divorce, alcohol, Sabbath, etc.
- As well, anyone can “proof-text” anything to support just about any point of view.
- But Jesus expands Scripture towards its right fulfillment
  - › “You’ve heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye,’ but I say to you...” (Mt. 5:21ff)

### EXPANDING OUR VIEWS OF SOME TEXTS IN QUESTION

- We’ve heard it said, [Leviticus 18:22, 20:13], but...the Hebrew word for *tô’êbah* (“abomination”) also applies to eating shellfish, crossbreeding plants, etc.
  - ∞ Prov. 6:16-19: *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.*
- We’ve heard it said, [Genesis 19: Sodom/Gomorrah], but...Jer. 23:14 and Ez. 16:49-50
- We’ve heard it said, [Romans 1:26-27], but...same-sex relationships occur throughout nature; Paul uses the term “unnatural” positively in Rom. 11:24
- We’ve heard it said, [1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Tim 1:8-11] but...*malakoi* (soft/luxurious) and *arsenokoitai* (pedophilia) do not point to *committed* same-sex relationships; context points to fornication (*porneia*), idolatry, prostitution, domination and humiliation

### OTHER OFTEN-OVERLOOKED TEXTS

- Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28: “There is *no longer* ‘male and female’...”
  - › The resurrection has dissolved old categories of human difference.
- 2 Cor. 5:16ff: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view...So if anyone is in Christ, **NEW CREATION!** everything old has passed away.”
- Gen. 2:18: “It is not good for man to be alone...”
- Jesus’ preferential option for eunuchs after question about divorce (Mt. 19:10-12)
  - › Eunuchs were excluded from worship due to their sexual identity (Lev. 21:20)
  - › But, see the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26:40
  - › *Also see* Isaiah 55:3-5: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off...”

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- While Scripture nowhere explicitly refers positively to same-sex acts, it also does not specifically address a contemporary concept of same-sex relationships. In a couple of passages, Scripture has been read to refer positively to intimate relationships between people of the same sex (see: Ruth and Naomi's story in The Book of Ruth; or David's lament for Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:26).
- Based on my own reading of the Scriptures, I see no reason to prevent the church from welcoming committed, faithful people into all aspects of our fellowship, including the sacraments of marriage and ordination.
- Faithful people may disagree on this conclusion and remain in loving unity. The early church in Acts also faced questions about inclusion regarding other complicated matters (for example: whether to include Gentiles, or allow eating food that had been sacrificed to idols).
- God is calling the church to discern the Spirit's leading now as then.
- Augustine's principle for reading complicated Scriptures: "Anyone who thinks he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double-love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them," (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. R. P. Green [Oxford University Press, 1997] 27).