

contentious ISSUES

A Biblical Perspective on Tough Topics

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 5 February 2, 2025

“Human Sexuality”



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we have been given the gift of your forgiveness and your life-changing grace, while others sit in darkness, mistakenly thinking that you have forgotten and abandoned them. Soften our hearts and use us as your disciples to sincerely extend a hand of love and mercy to those who so desperately need to hear the message of your grace and salvation. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

Romans 1:26-27 (NIV)

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of whether the United Methodist Church should marry and ordain gay and lesbian individuals has been extremely divisive for decades. And in 2024, the General Conference changed the official Methodist stance of this issue. This resulted in a quarter of United Methodist Churches leaving the denomination. Why did this happen? The issue is not one of scriptural authority, as some would say; the issue is over scriptural interpretation.

There are generally eight scripture passages that mention some sort of same sex relationship, although three of those are generally not viewed as being about homosexuality. The question comes down to whether the other 5 passages reflect God’s timeless and eternal will or do they reflect the culture in which the writer lived? Christians may not agree on how to interpret these passages, but when it comes to how we treat homosexual individuals, scripture is very clear: we are to love our neighbors as ourselves and we are to see others through the eyes of Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you personally know someone who is gay or lesbian? How has it affected your view of LGBTQ people?
2. Read Genesis 1:27 (on page 1). Ancient cultures valued men more than women. How did the creation story seem to value women? What has shaped your views on your own gender and the other gender?
3. Read Romans 1:26-27. Do you think Paul is talking about two people living as a family together for the rest of their lives and loving each other or was he referring to deplorable sex acts he saw in his culture? Why would this matter?
4. In 2024, the United Methodist Church approved a measure to begin ordaining gay and lesbian pastors and to make it permissible for UMC clergy to officiate gay and lesbian weddings? Do you agree with this decision? Why or why not?
5. Have Christian churches always been merciful in welcoming in those they judged as “sinners”? If not, has that personally affected you?

FINAL APPLICATION

What is one thing you can do this week to try and understand another person’s point of view who you disagree with?