

*My friend **Andy Hickman** is an amazing LGBT ally. He recently had the following online conversation with another Christian which demonstrates a lot of the underlying bigotry and prejudice in the religious mindset.*

*We need more allies like Andy who have the guts to stand up for what is right and confront religion. Thank you Andy!*

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My latest exchange with "Mrs YZ".

(Mrs YZ) Andy, I see that you have not posted anymore on gays since January. I assume you've finally got around to actually believing the Bible and you've recanted your wrong stance?

(me, AH) Yes, I've read the Bible and no I haven't recanted. I never used the word 'stance', not even 'position', if anything I would use the word 'posture'.

(YZ) Sad. The bible clearly says homosexuality is evil.

(AH) I'm not interested in arguing. As a rule I avoid texting, emailing or private messaging about it. I'd prefer not to talk about it. I have "lost" too many friends as it is.

(YZ) Well if you answer my questions I give you permission to share with others, whether or not I win.

(AH) In my experience these things only produce Bible-debates. Each side loads up their arsenal with as many Scriptures as they can, they blast away at each other, and the one with the most verses claims "Verse Victory". But the loser simply dismisses the other as a deceived, apostate heretic. It's all about the ego, not about truth. Christians don't want to change, just win. We hate to admit that we might be wrong. We're not really interested in love, just "Who is the greatest amongst us?" (Matt 18:1). It's a pathetic game that doesn't interest me.

(YZ) If you can prove that being gay is ok then I will accept it.

(AH) No matter what I say, it won't change what you believe. This is because our world-views (including our fears & prejudices) reside not in our heads but in our hearts. We are governed by personal preferences and what we don't like more than what we know to be true. Ultimately, most Christians reject full LGBTQ rights (human and civil) because of a perceived "ick-factor". But I reckon our generation will be remembered as either the first to come to terms with it or the last to fretfully ignore the injustices of our traditional stance.

(YZ) Come on, Andy, just prove me wrong.

(AH) Well, ok then. I have studied this stuff extensively. I won't give you all the data, you can look it up yourself if you really are keen to learn and grow. I will give capsule responses. But since the Bible never condemns being gay or same-sex marriage you are free to disagree but the duty to prove otherwise is up to you.

(YZ) God destroyed the male Sodomites for homosexuality.

(AH) Wrong. Genesis 19 is about inhospitality and the violent rejection of the stranger as a result of selfish idolatry. The exact same cultural violence against the stranger occurs in Judges 19. It has absolutely nothing to do with being gay or straight, nothing to do with monogamous same-sex marriage. The many many references to Sodom (even mentioned by Jesus) always condemn Sodom for it's idolatry and inhospitality. Never is homosexuality ever mentioned (interesting that modern Christians who associate Sodom with homosexual "sin" fail to admit that the supposed "sin" never even occurred, unlike the heterosexual rape in Judges 19). The only hint of sexual sin by Sodom is in Jude 7 where the word describes "heteras" ("strange" or "other" or "heterosexual") sexual activity! Certainly nothing at all with being gay or same-sex marriage. I ask you: Why did God destroy ALL the residents if (as you say) the men were gay? Aren't you repulsed by Lot's actions of offering his daughters to rapists?

(YZ) what about the Ten Commandments?

(AH) Nope, but I figure you mean Lev 18:22. What is the context? Adultery by heterosexual married males engaged in temple idolatry. Note the instruction to Israel to avoid the pagan cultic fertility rites. Look at the verses either side addressing idol worship involving child sacrifice and defiled fertility sex acts with animals. Lev 20:13 was the resulting punishment.

(YZ) the NT does though.

(AH) Let's see. Rom 1:26-27. What is the context? Temple idolatry. This is NOT about lesbianism, as it is about the unnatural act of sex with animals (birds, animals, reptiles v23) in order to instigate fertility favor from the Roman pagan gods. Note that the temple was the central commercial, cultural, spiritual, social place of Rome. Everything was conducted there. See the Rom 14 argument about eating the meat sacrificed to idols since the temple was the abattoir. 1 Cor 6:9. What is the context? Temple idolatry. See the 1 Cor 8 argument about eating the meat sacrificed to idols and the 1 Cor 7 endorsement of marriage.

1 Tim 1:10. What is the context? Temple idolatry. See the 1 Tim 4 argument about eating the meat sacrificed to idols and the prophecy about how some Christians will take heed to doctrines of hate (e.g. Homophobia) and even try "forbidding to marry."

In each of these NT references Paul is referring back to the Leviticus prohibitions concerning idolatry, never does he refer to marriage or sexual orientation. Paul condemned the abusive prostitution of boys caught up in this temple idolatry. Neither Paul nor Jesus ever condemned being gay.

Ironically, the whole point of Paul mentioning Rom 1:26-27 was in order to address the MAIN issue, Christians (who once engaged in the same temple idolatry) JUDGING and CONDEMNING those who still did (Rom 2:1) for all of them used to do the same thing (Rom 2:3!! What? They were ALL "gay"? No, they were ALL idolaters).

Neither Paul nor Jesus nor anyone in Scripture used the word 'arrenomanes' which was the common word for being a homosexual. If the Bible supposedly clearly condemns gays then why didn't any of the biblical writers mention it?

(YZ) I will never attend a gay wedding. I cannot endorse it by my attendance. Out of conviction and conscience I chose to boycott.

(AH) Endorsement? Didn't your father remarry (Matt 19:9)? You attended his wedding! By the way, what was the wedding ceremony like for Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 24)?

(YZ) Genesis says male and female. Jesus also said male and female. Why didn't God put in the Bible any gay marriages?

(AH) Genesis and Jesus rightly highlighted the core element of marriage – two people who are compatible, helpers to each other, partners. Jesus reiterated this in Matthew 19 and even went so far as to describe three clusters of people who are exempt from heterosexual marriage, saying in v12 “He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.” (See also 1 Cor 7).

The Scriptures ALWAYS condemn adultery.

The Scriptures NEVER condemn being gay or same-sex marriage.

(YZ) How come we don't read of any person in the Bible or in church history being validated for being gay?

(AH) Try reading the “eunuchs” as 2000 yr old references to gay folks (the Roman centurion's servant; Matt 19; Acts; Esther; etc). There have been many gay saints, even the widely respected Henry Nouwen.

(YZ) Well I don't think we should let gays in church leadership.

(AH) And yet we see the importance of accepting ALL and the inclusion of every Christian's gifts (including LGBTQ) in 1 Corinthians 11, 12, 13; Ephesians 4 etc. Isaiah 56 prophesies that ALL (including LGBTQ “eunuchs”) will have notable places in the God's House of Prayer.

(YZ) Sorry, but I cannot accept it. Homosexuality is just so gross.

(AH) Ah, there we have it, just as I said at the start of this discussion. I have shared multiple verses compared to your 6 (which I made reference to for your sakes). Yet you are driven by the “ick-factor”. Your denial of what the Scriptures actually say is called “cognitive dissonance.” It's a common human phenomena. The continuum works like this. On the left hand extreme we have hatred. On the right hand we have advocacy. In between we find another five stages such as dislike, discomfort, tolerance and acceptance. One of the major contributing factors to people moving along the continuum and becoming more, tolerant, accepting or pro-gay is that they have come to know gay and lesbian people or that a friend or family member has come out. This challenges their pre-conceived ideas, prejudices and stereotyping creating the possibility of a change in understanding and attitudes.

Until you actually get to know someone who is gay I don't think you will budge in your attitude or opinion. I wish you all the best.