

CATECHISM ON HOMOSEXUALITY

by Klemet Preus

Lately the topic of homosexuality has been in the news. The ELCA in convention has approved same sex relationships and homosexual pastors. This has led a number of congregational members to ask questions about what the Bible teaches regarding homosexuality. Below is a brief catechism which should answer most of your questions about homosexuality.

1. Is homosexual behavior a sin?
 - According to the Bible, yes. In [Romans 1:26-27](#) God considered homosexuality a sign of human depravity and says that He is angry with those who practice homosexuality. Also read [Leviticus 18:22, 20:13](#); [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) and [Genesis 19:4-9](#).
2. Some have suggested that homosexual behavior is only wrong when people practice it against their natural inclinations. It's suggested that if a person's natural sexual inclination is toward the same sex than homosexuality is OK.
 - Actually, God calls all homosexual behavior unnatural and perverted. In [Romans 1:27](#) He says "Man abandoned their natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another."
3. Is homosexual behavior any worse than fornication or adultery?
 - Any sin which we try to justify and which we allow to dominate our lives will lead to God's condemnation. Jesus died to forgive all sinners and all sin including homosexual behavior.
 - However, there is no context in which homosexual behavior can be pleasing to God. God has instituted marriage so that heterosexual behavior can be enjoyed in a God-pleasing relationship. So, unlike heterosexual behavior, homosexual behavior is always wrong and is considered unnatural by God.
4. But couldn't homosexuals get married?
 - The state may pass laws giving homosexuals or lesbian couples the same legal rights as heterosexual married couples. God, however, instituted marriage only for heterosexual couples. Both a male and a female are required for marriage in God's eyes. [Genesis 2:18-24](#)
5. What if a person has homosexual urges but out of obedience to God doesn't engage in homosexual acts. Is the homosexual urge a sin?
 - Jesus said, "Any man who looks at a woman to lust after has committed adultery in his heart." The same would be true of a man who lusted after another man. We ask God to forgive sins of thought, word and deed. Obviously to act on a sinful urge is not what Christians do. But since all people including Christians have a sinful nature we will all have sinful urges. We should daily repent of them.
6. So homosexuality is a sin and not just homosexual acts?
 - Yes.
7. Does this mean that all homosexuals go to hell?
 - No. Homosexuals are forgiven by God if, like all Christians, if they repent of their sinful acts and their sinful nature and trust in Christ to forgive them.
8. Many researchers have concluded that people are born homosexuals. Can this be true? If it is true how can it be wrong?
 - Many homosexuals claim not to have made any conscious choice to be homosexual. They insist that their sexual orientation was homosexual as long as they can remember. This has lead many scientists to conclude that homosexuality is either learned very early in life or is genetic. Much recent behavioral and sociological studies have concluded that

homosexuality is not learned. Some research strongly suggests that homosexuality is not genetically caused but is caused in part by a malfunction in the brain's development while in the mother's womb. All these scientific theories, while perhaps helpful, don't address the question of repentance and forgiveness.

It is not Biblical to conclude that something is sinful and wrong only when a person consciously chooses to do it. Some churches erroneously hold that faith is a choice and so is sin. The Bible teaches that faith is a gift and sin is a condition. This sinful condition shows itself both in our consciously wrong choices and in those things we think, say and do of which we are unaware. Even if it could be shown beyond any doubt that homosexuality was not a conscious choice this wouldn't relieve homosexuals of the burden of their sinful nature. So homosexuality is sinful whether it is genetically caused, hormonally caused in the womb, learned subconsciously or a conscious choice.

Much valuable research has suggested that alcoholism, drug addiction, violent aggression and even sexual promiscuity are genetically caused or at least caused in the mother's womb. We can deeply sympathize with those who are plagued by those burdens. We know that God forgives and strengthens those who trust in His Son. But society, the church and God all expect people to seek the help necessary to end their urges. Nothing is gained by saying, "They can't help themselves." So with homosexuals, God and the church expect homosexuals to seek help necessary to curb their urges.

9. But aren't homosexuals condemned to a life without sexual expression?
 - Possibly. A homosexual may have to forgo sexual pleasure much as an alcoholic must forgo the pleasure of a glass of wine. Mature Christians have learned that the abundant life doesn't depend on sexual expression or pleasure.
10. Recently some churches, even Lutheran churches, have encouraged homosexuals to "come out of the closet" and have encouraged their members to be accepting of homosexuality. Is this appropriate for a Lutheran church?
 - Obviously the church should accept all who trust in Christ for reconciliation. We should also distinguish weak sinners from strong sinners. Those homosexuals who sin in weakness, are ashamed of their sin, but may lapse need to repent of their condition and struggle against it. These people need to be helped, encouraged and accepted. Those homosexuals who insist out of strength that their condition or lifestyle must be accepted by the church should be challenged, resisted and ultimately condemned. No true Lutheran church would encourage homosexual behavior or would allow itself to be a vehicle for the advocacy of homosexuality.
11. Is it really all that harmful to homosexuals if they are in committed relationships?
 - Yes, most certainly it is harmful of their relationship with God if anyone continues in behavior which is clearly contrary to the word of God. ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)) The Bible says that those who persist in sin will have no part in the kingdom of God. So those who continue in homosexual behavior are persisting in sin and are jeopardizing their eternal lives. The great tragedy of the recent actions of the ELCA is that the church is actually encouraging people to continue in precisely the type of behavior and attitude which result in the loss of eternal life.
12. Doesn't "reconciled in Christ" mean that we accept all people regardless of their sin?
 - No. "Reconciled in Christ" means that we accept all Christians as equally forgiven and equally saved.
13. Should homosexuals be pastors?
 - When the Bible says that pastors should be blameless this means that they should have no public scandal connected to them. If a known homosexual, even one who repented and controlled his urges, were to apply for the ministry the church should not call him.

Obviously a recovering homosexual could serve God in many productive ways, but not as pastor.

14. Is AIDS God's punishment for sin?

- The vast majority of AIDS cases in our country were caused directly by homosexual behavior. So there is a cause and effect relationship. In other countries AIDS is more common among heterosexuals. We're all aware of innocent children with AIDS and of infants with AIDS. God works in hidden ways. Often we are wise not to draw conclusions about why God does things. Unless the Bible gives clear indication, Christians should be reluctant to conclude that God is punishing or rewarding in a given way. "Let he who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Read also [Luke 13:1-5](#).

15. Do you think it would be proper to discriminate against homosexuals in the workplace or the armed services?

- Certainly, justice, fairness and equal opportunity should be afforded to all people regardless of their sin or their faith, provided their sin does not involve criminal behavior. On the other hand, when public or civic institutions develop policies which implicitly accept homosexuality as a viable, natural lifestyle this has the effect of blurring society's eyes regarding what is normal behavior. More tragically, homosexuals are not helped when their lifestyle is benignly ignored. The question our society faces is not "should homosexuals be allowed in the military?" or "should homosexuals be allowed an equal place with heterosexuals in our society?" Rather it is "how can we give civil rights to people while also deploring their lifestyle as unnatural?" It would be nice to do both. Whether it is possible is another question. Obviously the state is not bound by the Bible in its dealings with homosexuals. The state is, however, bound not to encourage sexual deviancy. Neither should Christians twist and turn the Bible because of changing cultural values.

16. Why do you think homosexuality is so rampant these days?

- I'm not sure it is all as extensive as we sometimes think. Public acceptance has made homosexuality more open but not necessarily more rampant. If homosexuality is more common these days, I believe one significant cause is society's separation of sex and marriage. So much sexual activity takes place outside of marriage these days that society is reluctant to condemn any type of extra-marital sexual behavior. The way to decrease homosexuality is to deplore all extramarital sex, including premarital affairs, living together before marriage, pornography, unfaithfulness and society's casual and careless attitude towards sex. When we view our bodies as God's temple purchased, owned and controlled by our Lord, then heterosexual marital commitment and sexual activity will be the bedfellows God intended.