

258 *One single simple issue*

I went for a walk-and-a-coffee with one of my eight friends who challenge what I'm writing.^[248] I studiously avoided 'that subject', but just as I was thinking it was time to go home for lunch, he asked, 'Do you want to see what I said I'd been studying?'

His email had said that he'd linked the Greek Septuagint of the Leviticus passage with Paul's neologism, *arsenokoitai*, in 1 Cor 6:9 and, to be fair, I could see exactly what he was saying. I don't know any Greek, but I could plainly see that the string of Greek letters in the Septuagint looked remarkably similar to *arsenokoitai*.

For my friend, there's just *one single simple issue*: men having sex with men. Is it right or is it wrong? I had to agree: Paul clearly and unequivocally says it's wrong. 'That's the apostolic teaching,' he said, 'so we have to accept it as the truth.'

Aside: I checked 1 Cor 6:9 in my 1980s NIV, and the word is translated '*homosexual offenders*'. To compare some different translations, I looked online and found that the NIV translation has, at some stage, been **changed** to '*men who have sex with men*'!

This is more evidence for another thing I've been saying: if we want to know 'what the Bible teaches', we are in the hands of the translators. What **we** read has been translated according to **their** theological views (that's not a criticism; that's what they have to do). So, in the 1980s, 'homosexual offenders' was considered the best translation.

To return to my theme, for me there's *one single not-so-simple* (but very real-life) *issue*. In terms of sexual ethics, the most important issue to get across, say to young people, is that sex is not just a way to make babies, not just something enjoyable; it's a very special intimate action between two people that can seal the bond of their (hopefully lifelong) commitment to one another.

The Bible principle to emphasise is: sexual relationships are for lifelong, monogamous marriage.

Now, Cathy is a real-life church leader who is gay. She met Sally and they fell in love. What should they have done?

View 1: Gay sex is wrong; the Bible teaches it clearly; reject that and you're rejecting the apostolic teaching; you're therefore effectively rejecting the Bible.

Knowing how strong sexual temptation is, we advise you to break off that relationship. It would be very difficult being near each other and not falling into sin. Clearly, celibacy is God's calling for you (and all gay Christians).

View 2: Given our increased knowledge of human sexuality, some Christians feel that Paul's prohibition was one of those biblical specifics,^[257] where the wider biblical injunctions for care, faithfulness, mutual support etc. take precedence.

While accepting that some Christians might disagree with you and judge you (cf. 1 Cor 9), marry and be a witness to all around you – including (especially?) other gay people – of God's love.