

259 Guidance for gay Christians

Sally and Cathy (not their real names) are real people,^[258] but as the Bible has little to say about female gay sex, let's move to hypothetical people, Ian and Mike, who are also gay, and are strong Christians. Like Sally, Mike is a leader within their church. They have fallen in love and want to get married, but because of their love for God and their belief in chastity before marriage, they have remained celibate.

They go to their vicar and explain that they want to get married and would she conduct a service of blessing, please? But Rev. Jane¹ is a traditionalist (View 1, last time^[258]) and here is her reply.

Sorry Ian. Sorry, Mike, but Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 6:9 is very clear: he lists 'men who have sex with men' alongside prostitutes and adulterers. That's the apostolic teaching; for gay Christians, any thought of consumating your love would be sin – plain and simple.

We love you very much and you're still very much part of our fellowship, but sin is sin. So I'm afraid that if you marry, we can't allow you to continue in your leadership role, Mike.

It's really tough, I know, but God expects us to be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. You can remain friends, of course, but you must remain celibate. And so it wouldn't be good for you to live together, would it? As Paul goes on to say, 'Flee from sexual immorality. ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.'^[1Cor 6:18,19] A very serious matter, you see!

As one of my questioning friends just emailed, 'Where do you draw the line?' Where indeed? That's what I'm asking: can lines move? They do; should this one?

But the implication behind his question (from our previous discussions) was, 'If we give in to the pressure on *this* issue, what will we be pressurised into next. Or as the vicar I quoted said,^[255] 'what other forms of sexual relationship ... will be accepted next?'

But fear of the future must not blind us to this pressing issue in the present. We must focus on what our interpretation of the Bible enables us to say **now** about **this** one single (not) simple issue. Should our view change, in the light of modern science?

For me, the issue is debatable, and should be up to individual conscience. So, if you want to hold the traditional view, you need to be very sure of your ground. (1) It has serious emotional and spiritual consequences for gay people such as Mike; (2) it is likely to split the church; (3) people outside the church – gay or not – may struggle to take Jesus' message of love seriously if we say that their married gay friends are sexually immoral.

Are you sure enough that you are right?!

¹ I hope you will forgive the irony of setting the vicar as a lady because 30 years ago she would not have been allowed to be a vicar!