

## ***423 Gay marriage – time to change?***

A lady friend has emailed to join my six other friends in support of the traditional view that gay sex is immoral. She has helped me to see a further implication of the passage that another friend introduced earlier.<sup>1</sup> <sup>Cor 5</sup>

Suppose a gay couple comes to your church, showing an interest in the Christian faith. They are welcomed with open arms, applying what has been said to me many times: ‘Hate the sin; love the sinner.’ Eventually, they make a personal profession of faith. Brilliant!

But you now have a problem: *you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler.*<sup>5:11</sup>

Paul says he is ‘*not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral.*’<sup>5:10</sup> So it was OK to welcome them at first, but now they have come to faith, you will have to explain that gay sex is immoral and warn them: *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves ... will inherit the kingdom of God*<sup>6:9–10</sup>. If they refuse to repent, we should ask them to leave the church – and my friend concurs.

Now, I have two other friends, a married gay couple, worshipping and serving God within their congregation – and serving the local community too – but if they are part of Paul’s two lists of immoral people, they too should be expelled from the church.

All ten of us (me+7+2) agree that the Bible is clear: man–woman relationships are God’s ideal. We all agree, too, that any physical intimacy that this non-consensual is most definitely sinful. I suspect that we also agree that sexual intimacy is a precious God-given gift that helps cement personal togetherness, and it should be expressed *only* within lifelong committed relationships.

My seven friends think I am rejecting the plain teaching of Scripture and promoting immorality. My view is that Paul’s teaching concerns a range of situations that are *clearly sinful*, and that applying that to a very different situation is an error – my two gay friends are not immoral.

Now, we can’t both be right, so what I am suggesting is that Christians who are gay should pray and seek God’s plan for their lives, then follow their consciences. Sadly, the traditional view admits no discussion: God’s plan for every Christian who is gay is that they resist their ‘shameful lusts’<sup>Rom 1:26</sup> and remain single and celibate throughout their lives.

I respect my friends for seeking to uphold biblical standards of behaviour. However, if God is indeed trying to get Christians to change their minds on this issue, the damage that is being done by trying to enforce the traditional view is potentially massive: false guilt, spoilt relationships,<sup>1</sup> split churches and non-believers turned away from the gospel by what they see as judgementalism.

A difficult issue with very serious consequences. Please think again.

Paul Bev. 5.4.26

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<sup>1</sup> Worst case: a gay couple come to faith and then they are asked to leave the church. Maybe even worse: your own offspring is gay and enters a relationship, but they are believers; do you obey Scripture: ‘do not even eat with them’?<sup>5:11</sup>