

The "New" Church of God Messenger  
A Newsletter for the People of God  
February 19, 2022 --- Issue No. 55  
Special Edition

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Lead to an Acceptance of  
Homosexual Practice?**  
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## Articles

**Does Belief in Women's Equality  
Lead to an Acceptance of Homosexual Practice?**  
by Catherine C. Kroeger (Brewster, Massachusetts)

As Katharine Bushnell pointed out nearly a century ago, there are some hundred passages in the Bible that bespeak God's direction, affirmation and blessing upon the ministry and leadership of women. There is also profound sympathy

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for those conditions that leave women most vulnerable: widowhood, childlessness, pregnancy, famine, and atrocities in times of war. It is the very breadth of these supportive passages that started many of us on the journey to understand the limited number of scriptural selections that appear restrictive of women and their ministry.

Respected theologian Cornelius Van Til once taught me that if one finds apparent contradictions in scripture, then it is important to study far more deeply, to ask the hard questions, to examine both text and context with the confidence that God’s word can stand the test. I became convinced that the Bible provides a consistent, though multi-faceted, unity built of many disparate parts. There is harmonization that may not at first be evident, and it is the Christian’s duty to seek it out.

It was necessary to weigh Bushnell’s hundred-odd passages of affirmation with the putatively negative texts that could be counted on the fingers of one hand. I do not think that Dr. Van Til would necessarily approve of the direction in which my quest took me, but he was one of the important influences in my growing conviction that the scriptures are essentially life giving and lifesaving, empowering and supportive of women.

I have been asked to explain why the conviction that the Bible affirms the equality of men and women does not logically lead to an endorsement of homosexual practice. My first response is that although the Bible contains a handful of references to same-sex eroticism, nowhere is there given any sign of approval to homosexual behavior. Rather, there is loving sympathy for the individual but condemnation of the conduct. Therefore, an examination of the subject must be based upon the wider consideration of biblical teaching on human sexuality, as well as on gender interdependence.

My second response is that the very statements in scripture that women find to support their claims of equality are also ones that call for a close association with men. Women who espouse biblical equality do not seek exclusively their own kind in their most intimate relationships—rather they acknowledge the creational purposes of a shared reflection of God’s image, a shared mandate to fill and subdue the earth, and a shared mission to declare Jesus Christ and his love in every dimension of life. They ask to share their gifts and talents, their endeavors, and godly aspirations with the whole body of Christ. They wish to be part of the decision-making processes of the church. Within marriage, they ask to bring all that they are to the union, to be like Adam and Eve naked and unashamed, with no need for a woman to hide her abilities, her mental acumen, or her potential for leadership. For this there is ample warrant within the pages of scripture.

Elaine Storkey maintains that there are in the Bible four aspects in male-female relationships: difference, sameness, complementarity, and union. She writes, “Correlation, reciprocity, symmetry are all built into the way male and female echo each other. Complementarity does not imply hierarchy, therefore, as many have taken it to imply. It is premised on the reciprocation and completion of female by male, and male by female.”<sup>1</sup>

Male and female are indeed different and need each other to reflect the image of God and to bring one another fulfillment. The message of the Bible is not that of separatism or exclusivism on the part of either gender, but rather it presents a unifying principle in Christ. This principle allows for no subjugation or degradation of one gender by the other. Animosity is subsumed in the unifying power of God’s grace.

### **The Creation Narrative**

Within the deceptive simplicity of the Genesis account are responses to many of life’s most critical questions. Is there a supreme intelligence controlling the universe? Is there a deliberately structured design? Are there absolutes—both moral and physical—in the world? Who or what made me and why? Can I actually make contact with the divine Creator? How can I explain my relationship to the world of nature? What are my responsibilities in caring for the earth?

Who am I as a sexual being? How can I understand myself and the other? Is there a plan to meet the needs of my soul at a human level? How can I express the love and longings I have within me? With whom can I share all the experiences of intimacy and tenderness? How shall I find the one who is right for me, the one who can make me complete, the one to whom I can impart joy and fulfillment?

In the opening words of Genesis, male and female were made equally in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27), equally the recipients of God’s care and affirmation. The point is emphasized in Genesis 5:1-3. “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he THEM and blessed THEM and called THEIR name

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Adam (i.e., humankind) in the day when THEY were created.”

The name “Adam” or “human” applied to both men and women, and they were related in design. The account in Genesis 2 tells of the aching loneliness of Adam without a soul mate. The story is markedly different from other early histories of creation where women may appear as actors in the drama, but where the aspect of deeply meaningful attachment is missing. The Hebrew narrative highlights Adam’s need for a companion.

Although he has fellowship with God and daily visits from his Creator, they do not fill the void. Neither does his association with the animals and other creatures satisfy his need for a companion, though he studies them carefully. Both God and Adam conclude that there is a far deeper need to be met.

God’s purpose is to make a “help of his like”, a fit companion. She is neither subordinate nor superior, but she stands beside the man as a fully responsive and responsible human being. Woman is taken from the very same substance as man, capable of the same thoughts and emotions and aspirations. She is able to share with man a full-orbed life, with its adventures and challenges and perceptions.

The creation of woman is described as a deliberate act of God, specifically designed to deliver man from loneliness, to strike a chord in the depth of his being. Woman was carefully crafted so that each sex could meet the need of the other, and each could be filled with wonder at the other who was so dissimilar and yet so desirous of being made one.

The depth of Adam’s longing is revealed in his love song, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 3:23). This is the one for whom he has been waiting, the one who was needed to make him complete. Together they reflect the image of God. They are naked before each other in both body and soul, delighting in one another, experiencing union at a profoundly satisfying level. As the conclusion notes, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Paradise contains a bliss shared by a man and woman, open to God and to each other.

### **Marriage and Monogamy**

Truly remarkable is the freedom of sexual expression that is the brides in the Song of Solomon. She is as capable of erotic advances as is the bridegroom. She is valued as a person in her own right; her wishes, needs, concerns, and vicissitudes are respected. She displays not meek submission but passionate participation in the lovemaking.

The biblical view of wives is, with some notable exceptions, essentially positive. They are valued for their excellent virtues and prized as persons. Wise women build strong homes (Prov. 14:1). Whoever gets a wife from the Lord gets a good gift (Prov. 18:22), one of noble character is the crown of her husband (Prov. 12:4), to be forever cherished (Prov. 5:16-19), admired for her industry, initiative, and godly influence (Prov. 31:10-31). Of Ruth it was said that all the townsfolk esteemed her as a woman of noble character (Ruth 3:11).

### **The motif of strong wife continues in other Hebrew writings:**

A woman’s beauty makes a man happy,  
and there is nothing he desires more.  
If she has a kind and gentle tongue,  
then her husband is luckier than most men.  
The man who wins a wife has the beginnings of a fortune,  
a helper to match his needs and a pillar to support him.

Where there is no hedge, property is plundered; and where there is no wife, the wanderer sighs for a home. (Ecclesiasticus 36:22-25, NEB).

Here we find affirmation of the wife as full person in a meaningful relationship. There is also the direction given by a member of the Qumran: “Walk together with the helpmeet of your flesh according to the statute engraved by God that man should leave his father and his mother . . . and that they should become one flesh.”<sup>2</sup>

A distinctive of the sexual mandates of the Bible is their fiercely protective nature. All that might tear at the fabric of

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Eden’s paradigm is roundly condemned—adultery, fornication, incest, bestiality, or any other form of sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage. In the Levitical formulation of covenant we read, “You shall not make yourself unclean in any of these ways; for in these ways the heathen, whom I am driving out before you, made themselves unclean. You, unlike them, shall keep my laws and my rules: none of you, whether natives or aliens settled among you, shall do any of these abominable things” (Lev. 18:24-26, NEB).

Even the promised gift of land was based upon a holiness code. The expectation of and commitment to sexual purity set Israel apart from surrounding nations. Members of the covenant were called to embrace patterns of conduct based upon fidelity, both to God and to one another.

You shall keep all my rules and my laws and carry them out, that the land into which I am bringing you to live may not spew you out. You shall not conform to the institutions of the nations whom I am driving out before you: they did all these things and I abhorred them, and I told you that you should occupy their land, and I would give you possession of it, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the Lord your God: I have made a clear separation between you and the nations. You shall be holy to me because I the Lord am holy. I have made a clear separation between you and the heathen, that you may belong to me. (Lev. 20:22-26, NEB)

“Everybody’s doing it” was simply not part of the sexual ethic. Building close relationships with people of the same sex is not forbidden, but overt homosexual conduct is twice censured (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). Sexual congress is intended only for marriage, and all other unions are forbidden. The covenant is not only one of sacred trust between husband and wife, but also within the wider faith community. To violate the mandated sexual standards was to breach the covenant and to exclude oneself from its fellowship (Lev. 18:29).<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, the Apostle Paul also viewed private sexual conduct as profoundly affecting the entire faith community.

### **Sex and the Savior**

Some have observed that Jesus says nothing directly about homosexuality. This is quite true, but he makes the strongest statement about heterosexual marriage that is to be found within the pages of scripture. To a theological question propounded by the Pharisees (Matthew 19 and Mark 10), Christ’s answer was based on the foundational concepts of Genesis 1 and 2. Among rabbinic scholars of the early first century there was considerable debate about defining the legitimate grounds to divorce a wife. Rabbi Shammai declared that only infidelity might be considered, while the school of Rabbi Hillel would accept almost any pretext as legitimate grounds, “even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, ‘Because he has found in her indecency in anything’” (Deut. 24:1; m. Git 9-10).

Later writers would expand the list to include burning the husband’s dinner or spoiling the meal, having one breast larger than the other, a dog bite that would not heal, unkempt hair, or the husband simply having found another woman who pleased him more (m. Ketub 7:6). Jewish males were permitted more than one wife,<sup>4</sup> but a more economical solution was simply to discard the unwanted wife.

A further debate centered on the conditions that were necessary for a husband not to return the wife’s dowry at the time of a divorce. While the legalists might see this as a legitimate field for intellectual gymnastics, the lives and welfare of real women were at stake. A woman could be divorced at the whim of her husband and find herself in desperate straits. The Mishnah declared “A woman is divorced irrespective of her will, a man divorces of his own accord” (m. Yebam. 14:1).<sup>5</sup>

From the wording of the question, it appears that the Pharisees are asking whether Jesus concurs with Hillel’s assertion that a man may divorce “for any cause.”<sup>6</sup> Jesus avoids the legalisms of both Shammai and Hillel as he affirms God’s original intention for marriage (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:1-12). Man and woman are given to enhance one another and together to reflect the image of God. Christ begins not with the statement about one flesh but about God’s creation of both male and female. Their destiny is to be made one flesh, complete in one another and forsaking all others. Both the Matthean and Marcan account note that “they shall be no longer two but one flesh.” The union is not only physical but also psychological, emotional, and spiritual. The man and woman are intended for one another in a profound and permanent relationship. To rend the two asunder is to demolish God’s work.

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**St. Paul on Gender Hostility**

Like his Master, the apostle Paul directs his main thrust toward the affirmation of heterosexual marriage in particular and of male-female relations in general (1 Cor. 11:2-16). He, too, returns to the Genesis 1 and 2 account. Man is the source (head) of woman as Christ is the source of every man, and God is the source of Christ. The idea that “head” here indicates source or point of origin is indicated by the twofold statement that woman was drawn out of man (vv. 8,12). Thus, woman is of the very same substance as man, a divine gift of blessing, made to be his colleague and confidante (v. 9). In an effort to deflect hostility directed toward women, Paul declares woman to be the glory of man.

This is far from the Greek view that woman was essentially of an inferior substance, with a mindset that endangered the welfare of men, created by the gods as a stratagem to work the downfall of the human race. An enormous volume of Greek misogynistic literature reveals the hatred and fear with which women were often regarded. Some scholars have argued that it was precisely this repugnance that drove males to find meaningful relationships only with those of their own gender.<sup>7</sup>

An ancient pagan argument for homoeroticism as superior to heterosexual relationships was that women simply lacked the nobility of character to be a man’s soul mate. Virtue must be sought only in men’s domain and never in the women’s quarters.<sup>8</sup> The inferiority of feminine nature was demonstrated by myths describing the creation of women from the sow, the proud mare, the bitch, and the unstable waves of the sea, while man was made from the substance of the gods. By contrast Paul depicts woman as drawn from man, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, of the same substance and spirituality (1 Cor. 11:8).

Hesiod and others told of the creation of woman as a trick of the gods to ensnare man, while Paul wrote of woman as called forth to ministry “for the sake of man” (1 Cor. 11:9). He teaches that woman was given to man as a special gift in order that he might be complete. Women as well as men are necessary to reflect the image of God and to do the will of their Maker upon the earth. Both men and women make up the church of Jesus Christ, and they are called as equals into fellowship and ministry. To a society where it was an embarrassment to take a wife out of the house to a dinner party, Paul describes woman as the glory of man. (1 Cor. 11:7)

This was a revolutionary viewpoint in a culture that sometimes considered it a disgrace for a woman to be seen at all, especially bareheaded. The apostle Paul argued for the full right of women to prophesy and to pray, but to do so with respect for the sensitivities of others. He called for both men and women to retain the distinctives of gender-specific dress and hairstyle: This allowed them to understand who they were vis-à-vis the other; their dress was an outward manifestation of the idea that together they comprised the full body of Christ’s church.

Especially in the eastern Mediterranean world, men and women often lived segregated lives—a practice sometimes conducive of homosexuality. Men spent most of their waking hours outside the house where the wife was confined. Males and females did not eat or sleep together, and often there was little conversation between husband and wife. Women, with the exception of brilliant prostitutes known as hetairai, were considered incapable of reasonable conversation.<sup>9</sup> Even Paul’s directive that wives ask their husbands about the sermon at home would serve as a corrective to the desperate social isolation endured by women (1 Cor. 14:35). The apostle’s teaching could do much to heal the attitudes that had created a virulent hostility between the sexes. His insistence on removing the barriers of sex segregation (Galatians 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:11-12) constitutes an imperative that the church still needs to heed today.

**The Apostle Paul’s Views on Sexual Union**

Deeply entrenched in Greek mentality was a fear of women’s sexual anatomy. Greek literature is filled with expressions of this hatred, even denying genuine humanity to women. They were said to be closer in nature to animals than to men. Their sexuality constituted a special threat. They were married as prepubescents so that they still had a boyish appearance; rear-entry intercourse was widely practiced in order that men would not have to view the sex characteristics of women.<sup>10</sup> The vagina was especially dreaded, probably leading to the belief that three of the great gods (Aphrodite, Athena, and Artemis) were born without passing through the birth canals of their mothers. Paul deals with this repugnance when he writes that woman had issued forth from man, and now men came forth from women, in an interdependent cycle. “Neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman. For just as woman was drawn out of man, so too the man is from the woman; and all things are of God” (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

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Paul accords to women complete equality in a couple's sexual life. His most direct statement on marriage begins with an insistence that the sexual needs of both wife and husband be met (1 Cor. 7:3). All too often husbands resorted to concubines, courtesans, and young boys. Neglect of wives and the attendant low birthrate were so pronounced in golden age Athens that Solon had decreed that a husband must visit his wife's couch at least three times a month. Patterns had not necessarily accorded wives even this much sexual satisfaction by the first century of the Common Era.

As Paul calls for husband and wife not to defraud each other (1 Cor. 7:3), he begins with a concern for the wife, although sadly this text is sometimes used abusively to demand acts repugnant to an unwilling wife. Then follows a remarkable observation: the wife does not have power over her own body but the husband's; the husband does not have power over his own body but the wife's (1 Cor. 7:4).

Here there is equality in the bedroom, a mutuality born of respect for the other as a full-orbed person whose needs and wishes are to be honored. Sexual expression is part of the marital bond that is ordinarily expected of human beings.

Paul is, however, concerned about the damage caused by improper uses of sex. He maintains that sexual sin wounds the human body and spirit more deeply than other sorts of sin (1 Cor. 6:18), and that it has repercussions for the entire faith community. Believers belong to one another as members of the body of Christ, and copulation by a believer with an inappropriate partner binds the whole church to that partner (1 Cor. 6:15-16). Sexual purity is essential for healthy congregational life (1 Cor. 5:1-8), and overtly homosexual conduct has no place in the covenant community (1 Cor. 6:9-10). To gain their inheritance as members of the kingdom of God, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, extortioners, the verbally abusive, and rapists must experience the transforming grace of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Contemporary women who claim scriptural warrant for their full integration into the body of Christ seek to bring wholeness rather than harm to the covenant community. Women are full members of the body of Christ and must enjoy full privileges.

### **Sexual Specifics**

Homosexual practice is condemned in the New Testament in vice lists that contain other aspects of attitude and conduct, such as greed, grumbling, and gossiping. The Greek word *arsenkoitai*, designating males who assume the active role in homoerotic relationships, appears at 1 Timothy 1:10, along with *pornoi*, fornicators. The vocabulary used in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is specific for both active (*arsenkoitai*) and passive (*malakoi*) partners in a homosexual relationship and occurs along with the mention of fornicators and adulterers as persons whose sexual conduct is unacceptable. In this discussion, the apostle Paul goes on to sound a positive note, “And such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are made holy, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Paul believed in the transforming power of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. These same Corinthians, now made new in Christ, are called saints “who come behind in no good gift and wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will confirm you until the end, beyond reproach in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7-8). The concern is not to brand people for their sexual sins but to point them to a glorious hope.

In writing to the Romans, he reverts again to the themes of the creation story when he comes to the subject of human sin. God's power and grandeur are amply visible for all to recognize, but humanity has perversely turned aside. Creation has been worshipped more than the creator, and adoration is given to objects made with human hands. If there has been a disregard for God, it has extended as well to the dishonoring of the human body in ways contrary to the original mandate (Rom. 1:24). The Greek text speaks of the cheapening or dishonoring (*atimazein*) of one another's bodies and of the passions of dishonor or devaluation (*atimia*—v. 26) that have led both men and women to tragic liaisons. The heathen were “dishonoring their bodies within themselves” (v. 24); women were given over to “degrading passions (v. 26); and “men within men working shame” were degrading their bodies (v. 27). They had given their bodies to less than God's best for them.

As the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians demonstrates, there is no place in Paul's thought for a disembodied soul. The body is an integral part of the whole person, and frequently Paul uses the term to indicate the entire being. Believers are called to glorify God with their bodies, to respect their bodies as God's instruments. This respect entails proper nutrition, exercise, rest, and other healthful measures. To violate the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, incurs the wrath of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Though other sins occur outside the body, sexual impurity violates the total person (1 Cor. 6:18).

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Humanity has been given free choice (Rom 1:24, 26, 28) but must live with the consequences of each choice (v. 27). Although in this passage lesbian and homosexual activity comes first, the text goes on to list numerous other behaviors that also incur God’s wrath. The passage ends with a condemnation not only of those who engage in such conduct but also of those who give their approval to these acts (vs. 32).

**Marriage and Singleness**

Paul’s use of the word “nature” again looks back at the creation story in which God commanded man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it (Rom. 1:26-27; Gen. 1:26-27). The gift of human sexuality is essentially for the mutual support and joy of a man and woman, but procreation is also an important element. Marriage in itself is a covenant (Mal. 2:14) and the lawful coition of believers a covenantal act that can yield progeny for the family of faith. We are told that the Lord seeks a godly seed (Mal. 2:15)<sup>11</sup> and the covenants are replete with promises that extend to future generations of those who trust in God. Intended for covenant purposes, our sexuality is a sacred trust that should not be misplaced. Children are a heritage from the Lord, and issue not only of our bodies but also of the nurture in which we raise them (Ps. 127:3-5; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor 7:14). The New Testament describes the Christian *familia* as composed of mother, father, and children and all who dwell within the household.

But what of those who do not feel drawn to union with persons of the opposite sex, or those who simply never find a mate? Isaiah 56:4-5 promises a special covenant blessing to eunuchs who are faithful to God. Although they are denied sexual expression, there will be other kinds of fulfillment. There are those who choose celibacy as liberating them from the demands of family and home life, to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the concerns of Christ. Both the single and the married state are gifts from God (1 Cor. 7:7), and each has its blessings and benefits.

The apostle Paul maintained that he found it expedient to sacrifice conjugal companionship in his ministry, though he accorded this right to others. Jesus spoke of those who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Throughout the church’s history, women in particular have often had to sacrifice sexual activity in order to share the good news of God’s love with others.

Within the early church, there were orders of women who served in active ministry. Several such orders are mentioned in the Bible: female deacons (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Tim 3:11), widows, and perhaps elders and virgins. In the patristic era these women were considered clergy and during Communion sat at the front of the church with the male elders and deacons. The ordination service for deaconesses is still preserved in the Apostolic Constitutions.

The very terms “widow” and “virgin” show that celibacy was an integral part of the behavioral code for such women. The First Epistle to Timothy warns not to accept too many young widows into the order lest they become susceptible to the lures of matrimony (5:11-15). Paul commends virgins whose hearts are given to God rather than to husband-pleasing (1 Cor. 7:34).

For much of the church’s history, women found in celibacy an opportunity for Christian ministry, and therefore forfeited marriage and childbearing. In the modern missionary movement, it was overwhelmingly the single women who gave themselves to the task of world evangelization. Gladys Aylward, Mary Slessor of Calabar, Mildred Cable and Francesca French in the Gobi Desert, Lottie Moon and many others carried the gospel where men dared not go. They renounced the opportunity for marriage and family to follow a higher call, to bring Jesus Christ where he was not known.

Although the apostle Paul called upon the Christian community as the body of Christ to repudiate all unchaste behavior—whether incest, rape, adultery, fornication, sexual exploitation, or homosexual activity (1 Cor. 5:11)—he spent more time calling for commitment to Christ and to one another in a spirit of love and reassurance. The standard set for chastity is a high one and difficult to maintain for all of us, regardless of sexual preference. Yet the New Testament calls for many sacrifices, sometimes including that of an active sex life. (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:25-35) Jesus promises that those who forsake lands or houses or loved ones for his sake shall have abundant reward. (Matt. 19:29) For our sakes he gave his all.

Today’s call to discipleship is still fraught with challenge and personal sacrifice. There is still a call for the renunciation of one’s own desires and yearnings. Homosexual persons who experience God’s call to ministry may perceive Christ’s claim on their lives; and they may wrestle, as did St. Augustine, with the demands of their sexual nature. He understood

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that he could not yield to both, and he made a difficult choice.<sup>12</sup>

### Getting Back to the Question

Some argue that if our church ordains women despite the few passages seeming to restrict women, then it ought also to ordain homosexuals. But this is to mix apples and oranges. First and foremost, women maintain that they are spiritual beings, made in the image of God. As bone of man's bone and flesh of his flesh, they share his nature destined to glorify God and to walk in obedience to God's decrees.

Christian women define themselves not in terms of their sexuality but of their spirituality. They are persons redeemed by Jesus Christ and empowered to serve him. In contrast, some homosexuals maintain that their sexuality defines their very essence. This cannot be the primary definition of the servant of God. Paul declared that “henceforth we do not know anyone according to the flesh. If we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet we now no longer know him so” (2 Cor. 5:16). In a note on this verse, Aida Besançon Spencer observes: “If the flesh is ‘dead’ [5:15], then it is no longer a means by which to know anyone. Knowing someone ‘according to the flesh’ (‘a human point of view’) means to miss the reflecting glory that is hidden behind a life of difficulties and mortality.”<sup>13</sup>

Our homosexual brothers and sisters are called into the same freedom as women, freedom to move beyond the limitations of the flesh to the liberty of God. Each of us is called to a life of sexual renunciation and purity. Together we struggle with lusts, urges and desires.

As we return to the original question, “Does a belief in biblical equality lead to an acceptance of homosexuality?”, we must query further, “Why should such an allegation be made in the first place?” Why should belief and acceptance of the authority and inspiration of scripture lead to such a question?

The answer is in part that some who argue for the full acceptance of women within the church do indeed hold such a view.<sup>14</sup> The difference lies in one's view of scripture. For those who find the ultimate authority for interpretation within the experience of women, rather than within the text, this may be a conclusion. Others seek to subvert the text and thereby to recover a layer of reality lying beneath that of the writer.<sup>15</sup> But for the person who seeks to understand the purpose of the writer, the message that would have been understood by the original audience, and the appropriate application for us in today's world, the conclusion will usually be different.<sup>16</sup>

1. Elaine Storkey, *Origins Of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), p. 130.
2. 4Q416 2 iii 21-iv 1. As cited by Joseph J. Collins, “Marriage, Divorce and Family in Second Temple Judaism” in Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, Carol Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel*. (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster, John Knox, 1977), p. 127.
3. For further consideration, Donald Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality and the Bible in the Ancient Near East*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 137-148.
4. Josephus *Antiquities* 17.14; *Jewish Wars* 1.477. Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho* 141. m. Ketub 10:5; m. Ker. 3:7; m. Sanh 2:4; Naphtali Lewis, *Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period*. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society: 1989), pp. 22-26. S. Lowy, “The Extent of Jewish Polygamy in Tannaitic Times” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1985): pp. 115-38.
5. As Quoted in John J. Collins, “Marriage, Divorce and Family in Second Temple Judaism” in Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, Carol Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel*. (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster, John Knox, 1997), p. 120.
6. On this point see David Instone-Brewer “1 Corinthians 7, in the Light of Jewish Greek and Aramic Marriage and Divorce Papyri” *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.2 (2001): p. 235, n.38.
7. e.g., Phillip Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
8. Achilles Tatius, *Celithophon and Leucippe* 23138. Plutarch *Amores* 750C. See also Lucian, *Erotics* 51, 39-40 *Anthologia Palatina* XII, 245.
9. Euripides Hippolytus 636-649. Lucian, *Dialogues of Courtesans*. Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York, Harper and Row, 1985), passim.
10. pseudo-Lucian, *The Loves*, 17. Keuls, op.cit. p.176-179, 276-277.
11. See Gordon Hugenberger. *Marriage As a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

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12. See Augustine, *Confessions* 8.17-30.
13. *Study Bible for Women: New Testament* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1995), p. 367.
14. e.g. Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Victor Paul Furshish, "Homosexuality" in *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, 52-83, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), pp 52-83.
15. Cheryl Exum, *Framed Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993).
16. e.g. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2001).

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**Iron Sharpening Iron**  
**New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)**  
**As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.**

**In regard to: Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage**  
**Article by Laura Lee**  
**Comments by Dwight Fleming (Orville, California)**

Another great newsletter for the brethren to enjoy. I don't know how you and your husband manage to keep cranking these newsletters out every week. But I am very thankful for your efforts.

I was curious about how you two got into doing the newsletter, so I looked at a few of your early issues for background. I was blown away by your personal story. Also, your article, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" in issue #3, May-June 2021, was right on. Too often, scripture is used to control and keep women trapped in relationships that are so destructive that divorce may be the only answer. One person can't do it all. And if there is physical or mental abuse involved, then divorce may be the only option.

You mentioned that God does not like divorce which is found in Malachi 2:16. I have heard this scripture mentioned many times by ministers to condemn anyone who would consider divorce as an option. Never mind that God, Himself, used that option. I knew a person in the church that despite church teaching, did divorce her husband. But then she was haunted by this scripture in Malachi and felt that God was not pleased with her. This motivated me to study the few verses in Malachi where God is addressing someone who would "deal treacherously" with the wife of his youth. For it covers one's garment with "**violence**."

It is good sometimes to read several translations to get different insights of what God is trying to tell us. We may look up the original Hebrew or Greek words and their definitions from Strong's or another lexicon. Yet, in the end, it requires the Holy Spirit to help us to fully understand God's Word. Any translation may come up short of conveying to us what is conveyed by the original language. But then the Holy Spirit may give us the understanding and answer that we seek.

Now, whenever someone, usually a woman who was a victim and went through a divorce, is troubled by the oft quoted phrase from Malachi, "But God hates divorce," I reply, "No, God hates what causes divorce!" This answer helps them to realize the truth of the matter and to be free of any stigma that others may try to put upon them with their "holier-than-thou" attitudes. Divorce is a very personal decision that each person must carefully weigh out without the fear of social or church repercussions.

You also talked about the responsibility that men have toward their families. This is related to that responsibility but may or may not make sense to you. Years ago, in 1977, I lived with an older church couple in Salem, Oregon for the

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summer. They were great but had some very strict WCG thinking since they had been in the church since Moses. Just kidding!

Anyway, one Friday afternoon, this young couple with the church stopped by for a few minutes before heading over to the coast to spend the Sabbath day enjoying God's creation. Sounded like a good plan to me. However, after they left, he said something to the effect that they were breaking the Sabbath by having some fun. I didn't say anything, but I was stunned that he actually thought that way.

According to some hardliners, we don't do our own pleasure on the Sabbath according to Isaiah 58:13. No movies or TV. No going to a ballgame or other sport activity. Or engaging in any activity that would be considered "your own pleasure." We will leave it at that. I guess eating food or having dessert would be okay. Still waiting to receive my updated list of Sabbath do's and don'ts from the World Council of Pharisees, Scribes, Essenes, and other super righteous fanatics wanting to control my life. Soon to be replaced by the Mark of the Beast!

So, when the kids ask, "Can we go to some theme park or a movie or whatever on a Saturday," a thunder bolt comes down from heaven and everyone runs for cover. The Sabbath is a reminder that God is our Creator. We certainly need to honor Him not just on the Sabbath but every day. God ended or finished His work on the sixth day and then instituted the Sabbath. God set the example. He wanted a family. As you well pointed out in your article, relationships need time spent with those who you want to be in a relationship with.

If the husband or the dad is always away at work or busy playing golf or fishing with his buddies rather than spending time with his family, what kind of relationship will he have with his wife or his kids? In effect, he is telling them that they are not very important to him. That his job is more important than they are. Or that pursuing his own interests or pleasure is more important to him. In other words, he does "his own thing." Or, you could say, "he does his own pleasure."

So, when God said, "Don't do your own pleasure," whom did He have primarily in mind? At that time, did God mean the menfolk who were the heads of their households? Did God mean that we can't have pleasure on the Sabbath? Or rather that a man should not just do his own thing on the Sabbath and then neglect his family? Would this understanding make the Sabbath day a delight or cause problems for some? Anything can be carried too far. Each person or family needs to decide what glorifies God and brings them closer as a family.

**Editor's Note:**

The article "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage" first showed up in Issue #3 in 2001, but it was re-printed in Issue #9 in 2021.

Thank you for your compliments in regard to the newsletter. If it were not for God's Holy Spirit, there would be no newsletter, so we are thankful for God and all those who contribute to this newsletter.

If you are in an abusive marriage and can safely get out, do so as soon as possible. A marriage is not a marriage if you are being continually abused. Laura Lee

## **In regard to: A Little Here and A Little There**

**Article by Laura Lee**

**Comments by Darwin Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)**

### **Ezekiel 28 Satan (Response to Mike Hillyard)**

**Ezekiel 28:12-19 (KJV)** Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy

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mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou *wast* created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore, will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

1. You (Lucifer) were in the garden of Eden. King Tyrus was not there.
2. Lucifer (later became known as Satan) was created in perfection, perfect in beauty, sealed up the sum of full wisdom. This can't be Tyrus, Solomon was the most gifted in wisdom. **1 Kings 10:23 (KJV)** So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.
3. He was an anointed cherub. Tyrus was not a cherub.
- 3-A. Thus, rules out Ezekiel 28 likened unto a parable. Tyrus (a man) cannot be likened unto a cherub. The two are on opposite ends of a spectrum.
4. Cherubim have wings, king Tyrus didn't. **Exodus 25:20 (KJV)** And the cherubim's shall stretch forth *their* wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces *shall look* one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim's be.
5. Lucifer, was in the actual mountain of God. Tyrus, a man (no man) was ever in heaven.
6. God says, "you *wast* perfect in the day you *wast* created, till iniquity *wast* found in thee".
- 6-A. Tyrus was never perfect in the day he was created (formed) in his mother's womb.
7. God said, "therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground".
8. God said, "and I will destroy thee.... and never *shalt* thou *be* any more".
- 8-A. **Isaiah 14:12-14 (KJV)** How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
- 8-B. The above scripture testifies to Ezekiel 28 that God is referring to Lucifer for he (Lucifer) was indeed in heaven-the mountain of God. Your quote, "As far as Satan being an angel who rebelled against God. It would make God fallible and surprised at His failure". Thus, your opinion.
- 9-A. Just because "scholars" debunked certain ideas, doesn't prove anything. Scripture-not scholars is the final source of all truth.
10. And yes, God can destroy what he makes. **Mark 1:23-24 (KJV)** And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? **art thou come to destroy us?** I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
11. You write, "without God's knowledge". Again, your opinion. God is aware of all things and Lucifer could not hide his

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attitude from an all-knowing God. That is how God "found iniquity in him" (Lucifer), in the first place.

12. You argue, "free will". In as much as you choose to break the law, you do have free will. When has God stopped you from committing a sin? God did not stop Lucifer from sinning in his perfect sinless state and Lucifer freely chose to do so. God says we are to choose righteousness and that my dear friend is "free will".

13. God doesn't force you to do righteousness any more than He was about to force Lucifer to do righteousness.

14. God is not making robots out of man and that includes all the Angeles.

15. God said, "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness". God choses to do righteousness. No outside force of some kind is forcing Him to do righteousness, therefore we could not be like Him if he forced us to do righteousness. Therefore, once again, that amounts to "free will", no matter the "disputing of words".

16. Jesus came and spoke to them in parables. If you want to make Ezekiel 28 a parable, then I can make much of the Old Testament prophecies into parables when it comes to future prophies of like, "the lion shall dwell with the lamb" into a parable and not really literal as many so called "scholars will claim that those prophecies are just "allegories of a better time", where, in heaven? My ultimate confidence comes from scripture, not "scholars"!

17. **Ezekiel 28 is not a parable. Parables are described as this**, parable  
( 'pærəbəl) 1. a short story that uses familiar events to illustrate a religious or ethical point.

17-A. There is nothing familiar of the events of Ezekiel 28. God talks plainly of what He is saying about Lucifer of who, what, where he (Lucifer) was all about.

17-B. God "in plain English", is speaking of events that we would not have any familiarity with.

17-C. Parables were meant to hide (be secrets) to those who were following God and not for the general populace. Luke 8:10: And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

17-D. Ezekiel 28 was not intended to hide who Lucifer was and now is. God wants the world to know what Satan (once Lucifer) is all about, so all could be aware of their (our) adversary the Devil and how he deceived all. Nothing there about hiding Satan's "secrets"!

18. If you want to believe that Tyrus is the object in Ezekiel, then believe on and perhaps you also believe Lucifer never had free will to sin against God and God made him, do it?

## **In regard to: A Little Here and A Little There**

**Article by Laura Lee**  
**Comments by Mike Hillyard (San Andres, California)**  
**and Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)**

Thank you for your reply to my reply regarding, "A Little Here and A Little There " article. Does Jesus have "free will"? "truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do, these also doeth the Son likewise". John 5:19 (John 6:38) and "I am the vine, you are the branches....without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5-7) " No one can come to Me Unless the Father draws (drags) them to Me" (John 6:44) "Man makes his plans, but the Lord directs his steps" (Pro. 16:9) and Romans 9:18, "God has mercy on whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens". In Deuteronomy 30, God set before them life and death, blessings, and cursing's. (The tree of the knowledge of good and evil) Turn to God with all your heart, all your strength, all your soul. Notice it is all that was in them as old natural, carnal minded Adam. God knew exactly what was "IN" them. They did not have such a heart that they would or

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could do the will of God. (Deut 5:29) This is why the old Adam, sinful, carnal minded, self-centered arrogant, easily fooled or deceived, vain old Adam, which we all in our own time, must die. (1 Cor 15:22) Jesus knew what was IN man. (John 5:41) Gal 5:16-21 tells us what the heart of man is until God destroys that heart and replaces it with the New heart of Christ, the New Man, Christ in you the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27) The point is, man does make choices, have a will, but it is anything but "free" or sovereign. That would place man on God's throne in his own estimation of his self-worth. (2 Thes 2:3-10) That is what man does and until Christ comes and knocks man off his "high horse". Man thinks much too highly of himself. Of course, "free will" has been debated by theologians, scholars, and philosophers for thousands of years. So, take this as a lowly man's understanding of a deep subject, but scripture is from the Most High.

As far as Satan being an angel who rebelled against God. It would make God fallible and surprised at His failure. He created something perfect in beauty and then that being, without God's knowledge, betrayed Almighty God? Who is this prophecy directed to? The King of Tyre. Did Jesus Christ ever speak in parables, (Luke 10;15) similes, metaphors, and such? (Matt 4:34 and Matt 13:34) "I change not" (Malachi 3:6) Can Satan be burnt or harmed by fire and turned to ashes? Chapter 27 is telling of the high mindedness of Tyre, " Ezekial 27:3...thus saith the Lord God, oh Tyrus thou hast said "I am of perfect beauty" It is a man who is exalting himself above God, very much like King Nebuchadnezzar whom God had to humble by making him like unto a beast. As far as the crooked (fleeing or fugitive) serpent of Job 26, compare it with Isa 54:16. Also in Genesis 3:4 the serpent must eat dust all the days of his life, so is this not a parable? Who does Satan dine on? Mankind...turn such a one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor 5:5) The flesh of course is the hostile God hating mind of the natural carnal first Adam, which we all are until we are changed by the power of God.

I am amazed at how for decades one can read the scriptures and then, as you pointed out, you one day actually "see it". Such is the word of God.

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**Mike asks: Does Jesus have "free will"?**

**Laura answers: "Yes"**

**Mike asks: Who is this prophecy directed to? The King of Tyre.**

**Laura answers: Ezekiel 28:11-19 is talking about the King of Tyre and Satan. This is a dual prophecy.**

**Mike asks: Did Jesus Christ ever speak in parables, (Luke 10;15) similes, metaphors, and such? (Matt 4:34 and Matt 13:34)**

**Laura answers: Yes, Jesus spoke in parables all the time, but Ezekiel 28-11-19 is not a parable. It is a dual prophecy. Apparently, the King of Tyre and Satan have a lot in common with each other.**

**Mike asks: Can Satan be burnt or harmed by fire and turned to ashes?**

**Laura answers: Certainly, Tyrus can be burned or harmed by fire and turned to ashes, and whatever God has created, God can destroy whether by fire, water, or some other form.**

**Mike asks: Also in Genesis 3:4 the serpent must eat dust all the days of his life, so is this not a parable?**

**Laura answers: No Genesis 3:4 is not a parable.**

**Mike asks: Who does Satan dine on?**

**Laura answers: Satan dines on you and all other sinners.**

**I am amazed that you do not understand your own Bible more than you do and that you seem to have no idea what a parable is. Perhaps God is hiding something from you, and He hasn't presented you with the parable yet. You quote scriptures that do not prove your points and some scriptures you use are not the ones you should have used. For example, Genesis 3:4. Laura Lee**

**Holy Days 2022**

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Passover – April 16, 2022 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)  
Unleavened Bread – April 16-22, 2022  
Pentecost – June 5, 2022  
Trumpets - September 26, 2022  
Atonement – October 5, 2022  
Tabernacles – October 10-16, 2022  
Last Great Day – October 17, 2022