



"The Bible is Out Of Touch on Sex!"

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How can the Bible be relevant for 21st century life?

This is the outline of a talk given at the European Leadership Forum.

§ We should probably start by looking at what the Bible actually says about sex before we decide whether or not this is out of date. God thought of sex – he gave us this wonderful expression of love for another.

§ There is a whole book of the Old Testament which is devoted to extolling the beauty of sex and showing God's delight in what he has made pleasurable and good. (*Song of Songs*)

Homosexuality

§ The prominence of disagreement within the church on the issue of homosexuality has led to this question being increasingly important.

§ Screaming headlines in our newspapers berate the church for being "outdated" or "homophobic" bishops are even quoted as calling traditionalists "Nazis" and other such pejorative terms.

§ Catch up? The assumption behind this argument is that the Bible was written in a moral context equivalent to the Victorian era in Britain when any sexual activity outside of marriage was frowned upon. However this is simply not the case. Homosexuality was widely practised in the Roman Empire as well as the preceding Greek civilisation.

§ Texts: New Testament biblical texts about homosexuality are particularly contentious and debated over the air waves. The texts in question are Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10.

§ We also see Jesus' statements about sexual

purity. In Matthew 15:19 and Mark 7:21 Jesus condemns *porneia* meaning "fornication" or "sexual immorality" this is a catch all term which covers all kinds of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Jesus speaking as a Jew to his own people about sexual morality would certainly have had the moral teaching of the Old Testament including its teaching about homosexuality in mind.

§ It is also important to draw a distinction between "homophobia" – an "irrational hatred or hostility towards homosexual people and a disapproval of homosexual practice for confessing Christians on biblical grounds. The Evangelical Alliance write: "We cannot however accept that to disapprove of homosexual practice on biblical grounds is in itself irrational, hateful or hostile." The tendency of the gay lobby to brand any one who disagrees with their position "homophobic" is regrettable because it fails to consider the nuances of biblical interpretation and the consciences of Christian believers.

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