

What Old Testament Scripture Verses Address Same-Sex Behavior?

- 1) Six principal verses in the Bible that pertain to Same-Sex Relationships: 3 verses in Old Testament and 3 in New Testament. These are referred to as proof-texts (or clobber passages).
 - a. Genesis 19:1-11 (Sodom, Lot & the 2 Angels story) (parallel story – Judges 19:1-30)
 - b. Leviticus 18:22
 - c. Leviticus 20:13
- 2) Briefly review *hermeneutics* from last week.
- 3) Introduce Walter Brueggemann’s insights on how to read scripture.
 - a. Scripture offers a compelling alternative world view - with God in the Center of it.
 - b. Two trajectories in reading the Bible:
 - i. Holiness Reading (Leviticus) for purity of the church; leans against gays & divorce.
 - ii. Justice Reading (Deuteronomistic) looks for more fairness of church; inclusion
 - c. Walter Brueggemann encourages Christians to use what he terms the Bible’s “main theme” as their compass. Brueggemann says the Bible’s main theme is ***“the conviction that the God who creates the world in love, redeems the world in suffering, and will consummate the world in joyous well-being.”***
- 4) **Ideology**: It is important to guard against ideology creeping into our reading of scripture. This is human nature. Brueggemann says, ***“Ideology is the self-deceiving practice of taking a part for the whole, of taking ‘my truth’ for the truth.”*** Especially with regard to social issues, all sides have a tendency first to decide what they want the truth to be and then to seek evidence to support that truth in scripture.

Anglican Approach to our faith – Scripture, Tradition & Reason. People read/hear scripture differently - Why?

<u>Literal</u>	<u>Historical-Critical</u>
“Gouge out eye” “God is my rock” Problem : leads to ‘pick & choose’	Considers cultural context i.e.: today we say “out in right field” Matt 19:24 – “eye of needle” Problem – Sermon on Mount not literal enough
Book of Moral Absolutes Rule book Dispenses moral rules Problem : judgmental, doesn’t take into consideration cultural shifts; <u>New realities</u> : <i>space exploration, surrogate mothers; bio-genetics</i>	Not a Book of Rules <u>Main purpose</u> to show how much God loves us. Lots of laws – therefore no way for man to get all right. Jesus commands us to love God & love one another. Problem : can justify behavior
Leviticus → ‘Purist’ ‘Holiness’ (Walter Brueggemann – OT scholar)	Deuteronomy → ‘Justice’ Both voices are there!

5) **Let's look at the 3 verses:** read aloud – share first thoughts – & look at scholarship.

Genesis 19:1-11 (The Depravity of Sodom) (Judges 19:1-30)

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, 'Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.' They said, 'No; we will spend the night in the square. 'But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them. 'Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, 'I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof. 'But they replied, 'Stand back!' And they said, 'This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.' Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

Notes:

Study Notes:

This is a portion of the story of Sodom. It is the account of a mob of men demanding that Lot turn over the male guests in his home (who turn out to be angels) to them so that the mob may have sex with the guests. In context, Victor Paul Furnish (Methodist theologian) says this story is clearly about a particularly perverse form of sex—namely, forced sex, rape—rather than a commentary on homosexual practice generally.

- Ancient Near Eastern World – **values different** than ours today.
- Central idea of passage – sacred obligation of hospitality for travelers. (In a desert country to remain outside at night, exposed to elements & danger, could mean death.
- In the ancient world (even Middle East today) the male rape (especially male on male) was a traditional way for victors to accentuate the subjection of captive enemies.
 - In that culture – the most humiliating experience for a man was to be treated like a woman.

- Dale B. Martin, Duke University's Professor of Religion says: *"To be penetrated was to be inferior because women were inferior."*
- The hosts do not think of the attackers as homosexuals, or they would not offer the women for them to abuse.
- The best available scholarship says that this has nothing to do with homosexuality – but the sin of Sodom is mentioned several times in the scriptures elsewhere...
 - Rather - the sin of Sodom in general - is → greed, injustice, inhospitality, suspicion, excess wealth, indifference to the poor and general wickedness.
 - IN Luke 10:12 & Matt 10:15 – Jesus refers to the sin of Sodom, as he was passing judgement on cities that refused hospitality to his traveling disciples.

Leviticus 18:22

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Notes:

Study Notes:

- 1) Leviticus includes a collection of laws known as the **Holiness Code**.
 - a. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Lev 19:2
 - b. Two text explicitly prohibit male-on-male sexual acts: 18:22 and 20:13.
- 2) These two passages are part of the **"Holiness Code,"** which explicitly seek to render the practices of the **ancient Israelites** (who had just come from being slaves in Egypt) distinct from those of their **Canaanite** and **Egyptian** neighbors, for reasons of preserving the health and identity of Israel.
 - a. (see Lev. 18:3).
 "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes." (Lev. 18:3)
- 3) Failure to form a tightknit community could threaten their long-term survival. **The Holiness Code** offered them a code for living in a foreign land.
 - a. Its underlying theme was that they must be separate, distinct; different from the **Egyptians** whom they escaped and unmixed with the **Canaanites** into whose land they had now come.
 - b. No mixing of people or of adopting alien customs. They must remain pure.
 - i. So, NO intermarriage – and really → taken as NO mixing of any kind!
 - ii. The Holiness Code forbids sowing a field of **"two different kinds of seed"** and wearing a garment **"made of two different materials."** (Lev 19:19)

- c. Chapter 18 of Leviticus focuses on sexual holiness.
 - i. Ritual purity was necessary to distinguish Israelites from pagan neighbors.
- d. Male gender superiority had to be maintained. We find in Leviticus that actions undermining male gender superiority incur the death penalty.
 - i. Engaging in homosexual acts was punishable by death because a man took a passive role assigned to a woman.
 - ii. In effect mixing genders, was to cross a boundary, and not tolerated.
- e. The Hebrew word “toevah”, translated as “abomination”, refers to something that makes a person ritually unclean, i.e.:
 - i. Intercourse with a woman while menstruating. (also an abomination)
 - ii. Eating shellfish is also referred to as an abomination (Lev. 11:11).
- f. Other portions of the Holiness Code focus on other activities, including prohibitions against tattoos (Lev. 19:28) and rounded haircuts (which resembled those worn in pagan funeral rites, Lev. 19:27).

4) Jesus was concerned with purity of the heart – Matt 15.

- a. “*Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person – but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles. (...but from the heart comes → evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander...)*” (Matt. 15:10-20)
- b. For Jesus → the true moral test was not to conform to an ancient, culturally conditioned code that was no longer applicable in their circumstances – but to the overriding principle of loving God and loving neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40)