

How Should the Church Respond to the Homosexual?

by Michael Durham

Michael Durham addresses the church's response to homosexuality, emphasizing love, truth, and the authority of Scripture amidst cultural confusion.

Scripture: Romans 1:21

Topics: "Biblical Morality", "Loving Discipline"

Description

Michael Durham preaches on the importance of courageously speaking the truth in love, addressing the confusion and moral decline in society. He emphasizes the need to stand firm on biblical principles despite societal pressures and the normalization of sinful behaviors like homosexuality. Durham highlights the consequences of rejecting God's truth, leading to idolatry, unnatural behaviors, and a debased mind. He urges believers to respond with love, acceptance, and respect towards sinners while not compromising on the truth of God's Word.

Transcript

Romans 1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their

knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

It is not an overstatement to say that we are living in a time of great confusion. Where do we turn? What's happening? Where do we go from here? These are the questions most people are asking.

A man visited a psychiatrist with a self-identity problem. Lying on the doctor's couch he complained that he didn't know who he was. The psychiatrist asked him how he got into this situation. He got the following reply.

"Well, it all started when I got married and I guess I should never have done it. I married a widow with a grown daughter who, of course, became my stepdaughter.

My dad came to visit us, fell in love with my stepdaughter and married her. So my stepdaughter is now my stepmother. Soon after, my wife and I had a baby boy who is clearly now my daddy's brother-in-law since my son is the half-brother of my stepdaughter, who's also my stepmother.

And, since my new son is brother to my stepmother, that makes him my uncle. And if that wasn't bad enough, my wife is now my step-grandmother since she is my stepmother's mother, which I think that means that since my wife is my step-mother's mother, I am my wife's grandson.

But it's worse than that, since I'm married to my step-grandmother, I am not only the wife's grandson, but because I am her husband, I'm also my own grandfather. Now can you understand how I got to this place?"

With a dizzy look on his face, the psychiatrist replied: "Move over! I'm so confused, I don't know who to send my bill to."

Western culture has lost its identity and its way. We don't know who we are anymore. We have compromised and compromised human worth until we do not recognize that we are the image of God who made us.

Whether we realize it or not, those who are my age and older have witnessed the complete turning of a nation's moral compass, perhaps even the rejection of that compass. These times in which we live are 180° opposite of when I was a boy. Right and wrong has been so reversed that people don't know why their immoral choices should bring the unpleasant consequences that they do, if they even recognize the consequences are a result of their immorality.

We proven through education, media and entertainment that the only wrong is to say something is wrong. We have changed definitions and the wordsmiths have played with words until people are bewildered. I'm not sure that we even know what it means to be human. We are certainly not acting like human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

We have removed God from human existence and thus we think we came from monkeys and all that exists is the product of chance. A random happening, that's all we are according to the scientist and the

anthropologist. When you reduce life to that kind of probability, you remove human dignity and worth. We are no longer the creation of a holy and divine Creator, made in His image, who is of infinite worth. Thus a man can snip the spine of a full term born baby and kill that child, not inside the mother but outside, and think he did nothing wrong. Human life means nothing anymore. All that matters is "me." But what we don't understand is this, everyone else is thinking the same, that all that matters is them and therefore no one has any respect for anyone else's life.

But that's the contradiction of it all, the hypocrisy if you please. Every group is demanding their rights. But how can any group be entitled to rights? Who determines those rights? If there is no creator and we are all a product of time, matter and space colliding by luck at odds so astronomical to be believable, how can we assert the dignity of human life, much less that human beings are entitled to certain rights?

Yet today, everyone or every movement wants to ride the back of the civil rights movement. This is the big argument of the homosexual movement that they are suffering discrimination, as were African-Americans during segregation and Jim Crow. In 1989 two men pushing for the normalization of homosexuality in America wrote a book that would change the agenda of that radical movement. In their book, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen laid out the case that homosexuals should cease to discuss their sexuality but start speaking out that they were a discriminated minority and demand their constitutional civil rights. According to their blueprint, homosexuality was not a matter of morality but civil liberties. In the ensuing 24 years their plan has worked. More and more lawmakers have switched their views, whether out of political expediency or as a matter of conscience, and have come out in favor of guarantying an immoral sexual preference the same civil rights and protection of the law as it gives race or gender.

Whatever political resistance keeping same-sex marriage from becoming a constitutional right will soon crumble, and the law of the land will sanction a perversion to be morally right as heterosexual marriage.

How then do we as God's people respond to a culture and a nation that legalizes same-sex marriage, grants civil rights to the practice of homosexuality, and will make laws to criminalize any different or alternative view on homosexuality?

My short answer is that we are to treat any homosexual as we would any sinner: with love, acceptance, and respect without communicating any approval of the sin.

In this message and next week I would like to unpack that answer and give a more definitive explanation of our response to a society that says this sin is not a sin and will persecute those who maintain it is, and perhaps more important, I want to give a strategy of how we are to minister to those engaged in this sin. This is not a message I relish to give you. But the times in which we live have thrust this duty upon me. I would do more harm by my silence, than by delivering this word. I know you all did not come to hear about this great moral crisis of our day. You came hoping to hear from heaven a good word to excite, elevate, and empower your spirit. I am saddened that I cannot bring you such a word. But I must be faithful to our Master and so must you. To me is given the task of sharing the burden of the Lord, and to you is the task of hearing and obeying it. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

I. With Courage We Must Speak the Truth in Love

The Intimidation Factor

The gay-rights movement has successfully turned the tables on evangelical Christianity, as well as society at large. Instead of the conversation being about the evil of the sin of homosexuality, they have masterfully made the discussion about the evil of hatred, bigotry, and homophobic attitudes. It's one of the oldest tricks of manipulation--shame others into agreement. If I can make your intolerance of my behavior appear shameful, then I will win. I will look like the victim and you will look like the villain. That's what the pro-gay movement has done.

No one who makes it their business to treat all people with respect and hate no one, especially the Christian, wants to be seen as a person of hate. We hate being thought of as a hater. Therefore, out of fear of being considered bigoted or a hater or homophobic we either say nothing, or worse, concede defeat and compromise the truth. And many evangelical churches are doing that very thing, even today.

How do we answer this manipulative argument? By once again stating the truth with courage and with love. For example:

The Truth About Value Systems.

Children and youth, college age and younger, daily assaulted with an avalanche of propaganda that says value systems are unreliable, especially those of religion, and the worse is the value system of the Christian faith. They are being taught in a classroom, they're being taught by social media, they're being taught by entertainment that there really are no true, reliable value systems except the one you adopt for yourself. In other words, you're your own god that can determine right and wrong for you. Our children are being attacked with this on a daily basis. It's one of the reasons why 90 percent of the youth once they reach college age leave the church.

I want to be very careful. I do not hate anyone. I'm not angry or hateful toward anyone who claims to be homosexual so that is on the record, whether you believe me or not. I just want to speak the truth with courage and with love.

The radical homosexual movement is trying to have it both ways. Pro-gay rights advocates are saying that our value system of right and wrong as taught by Scripture is immoral, it is what's wrong with America. They champion that their lifestyle is not wrong, but rather it is the Bible's value system, that forbids their homosexual behavior, that is wrong. It's wrong because it belongs to an antiquated and bigoted culture and that today our culture is more sophisticated. These same proponents of homosexual behavior teach that we have progressed to understand that moral absolutes are not valid and that it is morally wrong to impose our beliefs on another.

There are young people in this room that believe that. They believe it's wrong to impose your moral values, what you believe mom and dad, grandma and grandpa and anyone else, especially your moral values about religion and Christianity.

Here's my question. Who told you that it was morally wrong to impose your value system on another? Who is to say that is wrong? Who has the authority to say that? And aren't you doing the exact same thing when you tell me it's wrong to impose my beliefs? By your own admission, you are stating there is clearly right and wrong. The question is which set of moral values is right and who determines they are right? If you tell me it's wrong to get up here and talk about homosexuality being a sin, you've already conceded that there is a right and wrong.

If we say there is a right and wrong side to the issue of sexuality, whether it be homosexuality or marriage between a man and a woman, we automatically concede a divine moral lawgiver.

If there is no God whose holy and perfect character is the basis of moral law, then you're right, anything goes. A person would be right to say that a person's morality is his alone and he cannot impose it on others. Unless there is lawgiver with greater authority than man, then only men by brute force can impose their morality on others, which is the law of the evolutionists, the law of the survival of the fittest. Man is reduced to the level of animals, the strongest imposing their will on the weakest. Intrinsic evil is gone. Morality is merely a dream, an illusion. Without a divine moral lawgiver who created mankind and established moral law, there is no moral law.

So what does that mean? If you toss aside right and wrong, you have to toss out God and you cannot insist on fairness, rightness and decry anything as wrong. However, if you insist that there is some kind of understanding of right and wrong, then you have to admit to a God who establishes what is right and what is wrong.

If you say that there are actions that violate civil rights you acknowledge morality. You cannot march, protest and lobby for civil rights without God who establishes those rights. You cannot say it is wrong to discriminate against gay people if there is no right and wrong. To say homosexuality is not wrong or to say anything goes can only be true if there is no god. But when the homosexual says that America is treating him or her unfairly, then such an admission demands the existence of God. You cannot have it both ways.

Morality or truth is not about personal preference. It is not like color preferences. Someone may like yellow and another person dislike it. Neither are wrong, it's a matter of preference. Many in our culture, including the gay-rights movement want us to believe that's what truth is--a matter of preference. I like spinach and you don't like it. No big deal.

Nazi Germany tried to exterminate homosexuals as well as Jews. They didn't like either group. We rightly say that was wrong. But why was it wrong? If morality is nothing more than a matter of preference, why would hatred of Jews and homosexuals be wrong? The only answer that can withstand all arguments is because God says it is wrong. Let's suppose Hitler and his allies would have won WWII and brainwashed the world to believe that killing homosexuals and Jews was right and it was preferable to do so, would that make it right? No, a thousand times no! Why? Because a higher law giver has stated that murder is wrong and not right.

So, if there is a God, and that God has revealed His law, then we must hear and apply what God has said about everything, including our subject today.

This is what we need to do, we need to stand up and courageously explain these things to the younger generation today because they are the target of this movement and others.

II. The Truth About Homosexuality

The Bible is the Authority.

The Bible has to be our authority because we have already proven that God establishes right and wrong and He has revealed it in the Bible. The homosexual does not want to discuss what the Bible says because of what it says. But then we shouldn't be surprised, neither does the adulterer or the liar or the thief, or the self-righteous want to hear what the Bible says about their sin.

Many in our society say that the Bible is not accurate or even right when it discusses the issue of homosexuality because it frames the entire discussion as a moral choice. The Bible says it's a moral choice and if you choose it, it is sin. They assert that science proves that a person with an inclination toward the same sex is a result of genetics and not voluntary choice. Therefore, because someone is born gay it cannot be sin because the person had no choice in the matter.

But science is not the final authority for the Christian. You must not give in to that trick of the enemy. I see so many Christian leaders today trembling at the altars of science. If science said it then it must be so. Not when it contradicts God! Science is not God, God created true science and His laws of science do not contradict. Christians do not bow at the altar of science. That does not mean Christians are anti-science. Quite the opposite is true. Empirical science has its place, especially in the field of medicine. But not everything that is true can be proven empirically, that is in the science lab and morality is one of the things that cannot be tested in a test tube. The law of gravity is empirical science. If I drop this watch it's going to fall and that can be empirically tested. But not everything that is true can be proven empirically, in a test tube, in a science lab. God is higher than science and we must never cower to its intimidation. Morality is one thing you cannot put in a test tube and measure it in a science lab. Furthermore, as of now, the scientific community has debunked the theory that one is genetically disposed to be a homosexual. Scientists overwhelmingly said there is not a homosexual gene.

But let us suppose that geneticists do prove that homosexuality is linked to one's DNA. Does that make it no longer a matter of morality? Or can you rationalize that God made you that way and that makes it right?

God has in the Bible forewarned and forbidden men to give into their bodily lusts. The question is not why you are tempted by homosexual thoughts and desires but what do you do with them? The Bible is clear that we were all born in sin. There is something tied to human nature--sin. It doesn't matter if it's fornication between a woman or a man or somebody of the same sex. The question is not why you're tempted by homosexual desires and thoughts but what you do with them and the Bible is clear that we are all sinners and that we all must resist our bodily inclinations and desires that are contrary to God's commandments.

If researchers prove conclusively that there is an alcoholic gene, would that make it right for a man or woman to drink and become an alcoholic? Would we say, "Drink as much as you want because that's the way you're made!" Of course we wouldn't. If it were true that a gene increased the potential for a man to become an alcoholic, it would be an excellent argument for a man to never drink at all. It would not make his alcoholism right. If a person is born with a clubfoot his or her parents would do all they could do to correct it, wouldn't they? If a person is born with a hole in their heart or a defective heart valve, does that make those conditions normal? Not at all, and because they were genetically disposed to have these abnormalities would be the reason we try to correct them.

Recently, we heard of a very well-known movie actress who was told that she had a rare gene that made it 87 percent likely for her to have breast cancer. She did not give into her genetics but took a very drastic action to fight her genetics.

If five years down the road science says there is a homosexual gene it will not make it morally right.

For the same reason public opinion does not make something right. For years, slavery by public opinion was legal. By public opinion Down's Syndrome children were institutionalized. Today, by the consent of the governed most Down's Syndrome children are aborted and it's legal. But that doesn't make it right. Again,

we must be courageous to stand for what we believe and oppose what God says is evil, even if we must suffer for it.

What the Bible Says About Homosexuality.

1. It declares it a sin.

In fact, it is one of many sins that God says is an abomination to Him.

Leviticus 18:22 --"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."

It's sad today that there are "churches" that believe so many of the things we believe and claim to be evangelical Christians but their pastors are saying that verse is not the inspired word of God. You see, the problem really comes down to whether you believe the Bible is the word of God. That's what the whole issue is really all about. We believe it is because we believe there is a God and if there is a God, then He has revealed Himself to His creation and that revelation is in Jesus Christ ultimately as recorded in the Bible. It declares that homosexuality, lesbianism and all forms thereof are sin.

2. Its root lies in willful unbelief.

Romans 1:18-20 --"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,"

All sin. This is not discriminatory against just one sin. God's Word is very clear--God hates all matters and forms of iniquity, homosexuality being just one of them. What Paul is going to do here is trace the evolution to that sin. How did men get to that condition? It began with willful unbelief.

"who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"

There's the willful disobedience. Paul is not just talking about us today but he's going all the way back into history and showing how sin evolved in mankind . It began when men took the truth they knew about God and they chose not to believe it.

"19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

It's not that you don't know, rather it's willful rejection of what you do know.

3. It's an act of idolatry.

The sin of homosexuality, as with every other sin, is really a matter of who you worship.

Romans 1:21-23 --"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."

Paul is pulling back the curtain and showing us that when men willfully refuse to believe the truth about God, there are consequences. Paul tells us what the consequences are. Man's worship changes and it predominantly becomes inward focused. Instead of worshipping the God who made him, he worships

himself. But the perversion doesn't stop there. He will go so low that he will begin to worship created nature. Animals, birds and it will get so bad he will worship a bug. Sin is so irrational, so sickening; it doesn't make sense to disobey God because it takes you further from reason and sensibility. A man worshipping a bug? Creeping things? Because men would not worship God, something happened to their thinking. They become "futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened." God says, Okay, you will not pursue Me as your greatest good, therefore I'm going to let you receive the works and the rewards of what you are seeking other than Me. To worship something other than holy God depraves the mind. It takes the mind further away from sensibility and the reason for truth. Isn't it amazing that people professing to be wise become fools?

Some of the most intelligent people can be the most foolish. I've heard some of the most brilliant people say they sometimes wonder if they even exist. "Professing to be wise they became fools." So homosexuality and every other sin is a matter of who you're going to worship. Will you worship God or do you worship something less than God? That's what idolatry is--to seek something as more valuable than God.

4. It is against natural order.

The homosexual movement wants us to believe that their lifestyle, as they like to call it, is normal or natural to them. This cannot be proven by natural order. The natural order is male and female. The two sexes are complementary. If you have something and add something of the same to it, all you've have is something of the same. There is nothing different. When it comes to the sexes, unity, that is wholeness, comes through diversity. If you take something and place it with something different, then you have completeness, which leads to wholeness. There is nothing physically natural about homosexuality, and its consequences are certainly not. The human anatomy was made for complementariness not sameness.

Romans 1:24-28 --"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie,"

Paul says it again--it's willful disobedience. They do this purposefully. They know what they're doing and they take the will of God and they believe the lie.

"and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions."

God doesn't make homosexuals. You cannot say God made you that way. It was your willful choice and mankind has willfully rebelled and this is the consequence--God gives people up to their own choices as His judgment.

For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

Whenever you sin, no matter what the sin, you incur upon yourself the penalties of that sin. That's why God said don't do it in the first place. He's trying to protect you from those consequences and penalties. Presently the rule about God's judgment is not God saying, Okay, you broke My law, and then sends a thunderbolt. There is coming a day when God in holy vengeance will dispense judicial punishment. But now God is saying, Don't go that way because if you do you aren't going to like what's going to happen to

you. I'm trying to protect you because I love you. Sin has its own penalties or devastating consequences. God's prohibition is to keep you from experiencing the penalty that sin will bring you. You see, my homosexual friend, it's not because we hate you it's because we love you that we're willing to tell you the truth. Oh that you would believe me! We want to spare you, God wants to spare you! This is against nature.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting."

Today, there are many "evangelical" churches that have in their bylaws and constitutions statements that accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle and without sin. They claim to be Christians but there is absolutely no way you can practice a lifestyle that is contrary to the will of God and you be right with God. It matters not the sin.

5. It is one of many sins.

I want you to hear this. The church sometimes treats homosexuals in a way in which is well, sinful. We'll talk more about that next week. But this is not the unpardonable sin. I want to tell you, again, we are to speak courageously the truth but in love. This is not the worst of all sins but one of many sins. We read the list earlier, verses 29 through 32. The one that stands out to me seems so innocent. It seems quite natural, every kid does it, we've all done it, disobey our parents and yet it's in that list along with homosexuality. It's one of many sins. There are many in these "evangelical Christian" circles that accept homosexuality and practice it claiming to be Christians who say my interpretation of this text in Romans is completely wrong. But it is they and not us who wrangle the text with amazing twistings. Someone said it's like watching a circus contortionist the way they try to twist this text to mean what it doesn't say. Friends, you cannot read this the way you do the rest of the Bible and not come to the conclusion that homosexuality is a sin and is one of many.

6. Jesus taught us to go back to creation precedence.

The "Christian" homosexuality crowd, and I hate to even put that in that kind of terminology but that's what they are claiming, say in defense of their lifestyle that Jesus never mentioned homosexuality. Well, friends, He never mentioned torture or bestiality. There are a lot of things He didn't mention. You can't prove it by the argument of silence. If that's all you've got then you've got nothing. It's as silent and as empty as the air we're breathing. But I think Jesus did address it when He said,

"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4, 5)

You've got to have complementary differences in order to have oneness and completion. And, by the way, what Jesus is citing is Genesis one and two where the Bible says God made man in His own image.

Genesis 1:27 --"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

God made them male and female. Interesting, He said He made man and then explains what that means--"male and female." There are some things about God that, as a man, I do not reflect because only a woman can reflect those things. There are some things about God that women cannot reflect and only

men and their masculinity can. It takes both to get anywhere of a semblance of an idea of what God is like--male and female.

When the Bible says God took out of Adam's side a rib and Adam named her as someone said, not Steve but Eve, this is establishing precedence, so I say that homosexuality is not in the natural order but it is taking you further and further away from God's created natural order. That's the danger of sin. Period. The more you sin the further you go into sin and the further away from God you end up. That's the nature of sin. Paul is not trying to single out homosexuality as the worst of all sins but showing what happens when men no longer believe God and worship Him. They get further and further away from God's created order. Jesus established that marriage is between a man and a woman.

How are we to respond to the arguments for homosexuality and its normalization in America? With courage.

I realize this message will be recorded and it will be kept on Real Truth Matters as long as there is a Real Truth Matters to keep it on. And that means that someday somebody could find that and come to me and say, "On May 26, 2013 you said and spoke this way against the civil rights of a group of people, do you still feel that way?" I will have to say yes and they will say, "Based on what you have said you have broken the law." I have to say it nonetheless. Not because I am so courageous but because I fear God. You see, sometimes we don't see ourselves so courageous, we do things with fear and trembling, but because we fear God more we are courageous. That's all courage is--to fear God more than you do man. It means to do something even when you're afraid to do it.

We must never cower to the beliefs of others who are not in accord with the Word of God. We must do all to stand with the Bible, the most hated book of all time and the most loved. We love the Word of God because it reveals to us the God that loves us enough to warn us of evil and lead us to good. The Bible is a "lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The words of our Lord, "More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

And therefore, with courage, we as God's representatives declare the truth, even when that truth is not vogue. We can never deliver the truth without sharing it in the same spirit in which the Lord gave it to us. We can undermine the truth and do more harm than the liberal or unbeliever when we share God's word without love. We should never be a militant people, meaning mean-spirited, hateful, rude or violent. For the Word of God has come to us in the greatest demonstration of love ever witnessed--"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of love, we are to courageously share the truth. Amen.

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