

FRIEND:

At the same time Jesse, I usually let this kind of thing go as everyone is entitled to an opinion, but when the Bible is used to support an opinion absent of historical, socioeconomic, or theological context I will step in. Even when it is Bible believers who do it.

Bear in mind, this is not a homophobic rant or a dismissal of your opinion, it is merely putting the sections of the Bible used into their proper context.

1. The Old Testament.

a. Eating restrictions were put into place because of the possibility of disease and infection possible with the eating of pork and shellfish. Shellfish were bottom dwellers who ate off of the carrion of the seas in the area and the water was stagnant enough to be a problem at those depths. Also food preparation was not as stringent as it is in current western culture and bacterial agents would have run rampant. Pork and cloven hooved animals were kept in filthy conditions and their hooves were more susceptible to organisms such as cryptosporidium which is a problem even in today's first world countries however today we have the means to fight them. Back then, they did not and an outbreak of this kind would have been devastating on a national level. Buying meat in public would have been more dangerous than it already was if pork had been allowed on the menu.

b. Clothing made from two different cloths. This was more of an ordinance than a law. At the time, people typically only had one change of clothes. The materials mentioned in Deuteronomy 22:11 were specifically wool and linen. These two materials would have shrunk, worn out, and failed at different rates thereby making the garment weaker and useless faster. This is no different than manufacturing standards of today that dictate that certain garments have to be made within a certain tolerance for sizing.

c. The New Testament mentions Homosexuality as well. Romans 1: 26-27 Specifically mentions same sex intercourse as "Shameful" and "Detestable". No mention of whether that was in committed relationships or not. Just same sex intercourse being wrong. Anytime there was a distinction between sex in marriage or not in marriage, it was pointed out specifically. Here there is no distinction, just the act itself was said to be wrong. In Leviticus 18:24 it specifically mentions a reason for it being banned in the Old Testament as well. It was used as a form of pagan worship among the peoples that were being cast out before the Hebrews and the separation from the pagan ways and the Jewish ways had to be complete. No allowances were made.

d. Should we live by the OT laws. You have to remember that some of them were human laws and some of them were God's laws. Just as we have a distinction now between ordinances governing what kind of addition you can put on your house and what crimes deserve more severe punishment. You have to keep in mind the historical and cultural context. Some are overlaying laws for all mankind and some are merely local structures for the Jewish people.

2. Paul's speaking out against women.

a. This commonly misunderstood, once again in part due to cultural separation. In the Middle East, especially in the ancient world, women were not given the educational and financial opportunities that are enjoyed in Western culture today. A woman of that time would not have had the knowledge or the real world experience needed to properly address matters of research, knowledgeable discernment of Biblical texts, or lead a church group with success on a regular basis. Though there are examples in the Bible of women rising above this station it was rare for a woman to have the skills and knowledge necessary to do so and so a safer course was simply putting them in a position of helpers to the church and not leaders of the church.

Bear in mind this did not give men a free hand to do as they pleased either. A careful reading of the Bible will bear out that men were to make the best effort they could to be well educated, live wisely, and be kind and loving to their wives as if their wives were parts of the man's own body and not lord their authority over the women they married. Ephesians 5: 22-25 and 28-29 give fantastic examples of this.

3. Biblical definitions of marriage.

a. If a man married a female prisoner of war it had to be with deference to her as a person first and not merely as a property. An example is given in Deuteronomy 21:10. Read in full context it calls the use of her as a slave or unwilling wife or sexual partner dishonorable and the man is commanded not to do such things.

b. Many wives or concubines was never given as a Biblical or acceptable definition of marriage. The most obvious examples given of concubines or many wives (Abraham, David, and Solomon) were given along with details of how these illicit relationships caused heartache, family schisms, and in some cases, war. These were not said to be acceptable, but rather, they were condemned by repeated example.

c. The rapist and his victim? If you look closer at Deuteronomy 22, if a man rapes a woman he is to be put to death. If she claims rape, but didn't try to seek help until it was discovered that she had sex with a man, she is considered to be lying about the rape and they are both guilty of sexual crimes. If he rapes her and she was engaged, the fiancé has the option of still marrying her, but if he decides for some reason not to marry her (the culture of the Middle East being what it was and is) then the rapist has to marry her and render all financial and social aid to her that the marriage would entail so that she would not be destitute and shunned for being a divorcee. With the limited opportunities for women of that area and time this would be asking the man to take responsibility for the woman he rendered "unclean" in the eyes of the society he lived in. He would be responsible for the proper and kind treatment of that woman as I pointed out earlier.

It would also be a cause for a potential rapist to stop and think about whether he really wanted to take the risk of execution or financial and social burden if he violates a woman for his petty desires.

These are the contexts ignored in the poster given. I have homosexual friends and family members that I love with all my heart. Just because I think the lifestyle is wrong does not mean I hate or judge them. I just disagree with them. I still love them and support them in any way I can short of supporting the acts that I view as wrong. As rational adults they can understand the difference between tolerance combined with love and a support of their actions. Hopefully you can see that as well and bear in mind my goal here which was not to condemn anyone, but to shed light on the misuse and misunderstanding of Biblical text.

ME:

Let's see, where to begin. First of all I appreciate the bit of context you attempted to give us man and I could not agree more with you that the Bible does not exist in a vacuum, and if it is used out of context it can be very, very dangerous. I think you're a great guy, a brother in Christ, and I appreciate your push back man. I'll do my best to address your points.

First off, the graphic I posted is actually attempting to communicate the very message you just sent believe it or not, i.e. don't quote the Bible out of context, specifically in this case, the "clobber passages" about homosexuality.

To your points:

1. a & b

No gripes here. Your descriptions seems fine with me. Like I said, we must appreciate and honor the historical, social and cultural context. I don't know how anyone can attempt to read the bible without knowing some ancient near eastern history. Again (see above), the point of the graphic is to warn people to not take the bible out of context ;)

1. c

What happened to the context man?!? You were doing so good! LOLZ!

Paul did not write in a vacuum either my friend. He wrote in the context of the Roman empire – both in reaction to and correction of. Central to the Roman code was something called the Pater familias. The 'dad' (land owner) in a Roman family basically 'owned' everyone else (including wife and kids) and could do whatever they wanted (including sexually) with them. There was also a practice of men going to war taking a young 'armor bearer' (or companion) who they could use sexually. What verses like Romans 1 are against is something that everyone – no matter where they are on our current issue – would still be against.

Second point:

Romans 1:26-27 is taken out of context every time by people claiming homosexuality is sinful. Any summarizing discussion of Romans 1 takes the passage out of context when there is no mention of Romans 2:1-4, which actually continues to verse 11. In Romans 2:1 Paul gives the “therefore” which explains the purpose for everything in the previous chapter. The word “therefore” tells you the reason Paul wrote everything that came before it. Everything leading up to Romans 2:1 is foundational to this main point.

Romans 2:1ff is what Paul wanted you to walk away with when you were finished. The first verse of Romans 2 is actually the conclusion of Romans 1.

Paul wrote Romans 1:18–2:1 to urge us to stop judging one another, but we manage to use it as the basis for judging people big time.. Here is Romans 2:1 NIV translation:

“Therefore, you have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” (NIV)

1. d.

Christians are not bound to the ‘law’ and follow almost none of the rules found in the Hebrew testament. Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law for all who believe and the Christian scriptures say that Christ abolished the law (Ephesians 2:15), fulfilled the law (Romans 10:4 & Matthew 5:17) and made it obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). We can’t quote any of the Old Testament ‘clobber’ passages on this issue. While the Old Testament is an inspired record containing the word of God, Christians have been set free and no longer live by that law (see the book of Acts 10-15).

2. a.

Paul speaking out against women is mainly being used as a rhetorical device here (as I’m sure you know). The point being that we don’t treat women like that anymore, regardless of what Paul instructed.

3. a. b. c.

See 2. a. - This again was meant to be rhetorical, but great background, thanks for sharing!

In all reality though, marriage is not uniquely Christian, it never was. In fact I, along with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, would like to see the Church out of the marriage game all together. Let the state handle the legal side of marriage and the Church handle the sacramental side.

[\(http://www.patheos.com/blogs/tonyjones/2011/09/06/there-are-two-marriages/\)](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/tonyjones/2011/09/06/there-are-two-marriages/)

Before this gets way too long and boring (I think it already has), I offer my final thoughts:

Since we all agree Jesus says nothing about homosexuality, I'd like to clear up Paul's writings for you a bit more, since you like context so much ;)

Homosexuality was a medical term invented in the 19th century. It was in contrast to heterosexuality (notice the binary). The Bible (the inspired written word of God) is not talking about homosexuality. It didn't exist. The Bible is not talking about the same thing we are debating. As I'm sure you would agree, we can't take our 21st century worldview lens and transpose it on to this ancient text. The Bible can no more be addressing homosexuality than it can be talking about Television. There was no such thing. Our contemporary talk about sexual identity and sexual orientation is not on the Bible's radar.

The term "arsenokoites" in Paul's writing and the term "homosexual" today don't really map to each other very well.

Arsenokoites was even used in reference to married, opposite-sex relationships in the early church (See John the Faster's "Many men commit the sin of arsenokoitia with their wives."). Arsenokoites would appear to mean "A man who takes sexual advantage of those under his authority, including male slaves (his own and those belonging to pagan temples), sons, pupils, and prisoners of war".

Whereas homosexual means a person, male or female, who is romantically, relationally, and sexually attracted primarily to those of his or her own sex or gender, and therefore is likely to seek romantic partnerships and sexual relationships with his or her own sex or gender (though one can be celibate and still be homosexual).

They don't map very well together. In Paul's world, sex was largely a matter of power relationships— a man acquired a wife, a slave, a prostitute, a child, etc. and could, as part of his authority gratify sexual desires with those under him.

Again, thanks for the push back FRIEND. I respect your opinions too man, and I think we can both agree that in the end, regardless of what we think the Bible says or doesn't say, we know in our hearts that we are to love unconditionally as Jesus did. Not judging, just loving.

FRIEND:

Since arguing theology in front of those less versed in scripture or weaker in their convictions is frowned upon in the Bible, I chose to respond privately and we can share conclusions with the public later if appropriate.

First we need to correct a few false assumptions and then we can continue.

1. When we are commanded not to judge it is always in the context of condemnation. We are to acknowledge sin and its consequences not ignore them, but not to seek punishment or think

ourselves better than the one who is sinning. More on that later.

2. You cannot discount the entire Old Testament. Jesus did not abolish the law in any way. He “fulfilled” it. Matthew 5:17. More on that later.

Now we may begin.

On original texts and their translations:

The term arsenokoitēs. There is no (solid) evidence that Paul was speaking only about a particular cultural group though we can assume he was from several inferences and go from there. On the other hand there is evidence that he may have been drawing from the Greek (Septuagint) translation of Leviticus 18:22: καὶ μετὰ ἄρσενος οὐ κοιμηθήσῃ κοίτην γυναικός• βδέλυγμα γάρ ἐστίν (kai meta arsenos ou koimēthēsē koitēn gunaikos. bdelugma gar estin "And you shall not have sexual intercourse with a male as with a female. For it is unclean."

If (arsenokoitēs) was used at times in the writings of later clergy that is neither here nor there. You are right in that it was used by some later clergy to mean forced sexual intercourse, but I have found that some used it to mean specifically anal sex of any kind even with a willing partner. But they didn't write the Bible so their usage doesn't get to factor in to what “arsenokoitēs” or “arsenos” means in the Bible. We are talking about the Bible and not the writings of later clergy. The fact is that even without the writings of Paul we have Leviticus 18:22 which very specifically makes a ruling AGAINST male/male sex. The definition of arsenokoites is a man who lies down (sexually) with another man. The same goes for the usage of arsenos in Lev. Any other translation is reaching and to ignore this passage is to willfully ignore the Bible in its full context. If we are going to talk about what the Bible teaches about homosexuality we cannot take it piecemeal because we don't like one of the verses.

Going back to the Hebrew writings we see that Leviticus 18:22 reads, V'ish asher yishkav et-zacha mishk'vei ishah to'evah asu shneihem mot yumatu d'meihem bam.

This translates literally (with English rules of grammar applied as per tried and true translation techniques) as, “And a man who will lie down with a male in a woman's bed, both of them have made an abomination; dying they will be put to death, their blood is on them.”

To “lie down with” is always used in a sexual context. To “lie with someone” is to have sex with them. “And you shall not have sexual intercourse with a male as with a female.” The only way to avoid these specific condemnations is by twisting scripture and obfuscating until the original text means something totally different from what it really says or removing parts of the Bible from our teachings completely. I have seen the studies stating that the Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality and time and again that is the tactic used. You have to really reach to get it to read any other way, even in the ancient texts.

Just because the medical term “homosexuality” wasn't around back then doesn't mean the Bible couldn't mention the topic. I can't tell a trout from a tuna when it's on my plate, but I still know it's

a fish. So let's call a fish a fish.

Notice also that every example given was on "active" homosexuality. To be tempted or have the urge to do something is not sin. To act on it is. Celibate people who want to have homosexual sex are not sinning. Practicing (sexually active) homosexuals are.

The OT still applies:

When taken in context, the OT still applies even to born again Christians unless certain restrictions were SPECIFICALLY lifted such as eating restrictions (Acts 10) and circumcision (1 Cor 7:19). "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17. The "end of the law" means fulfillment, not destruction. If there is no law there is therefore no need of salvation because there is no measuring rod against which to show sin. Acknowledgement of a sin is not a condemnation; it is merely a definition. If we are not to even acknowledge the Old Testament any more then why did Paul bother to write 2 Tim 3:16? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." ALL scripture. So that we may be complete. You cannot be complete with one half of a whole. He also spoke of "surely not!" abolishing the Law. The New Testament mentions the passing away of the old Law in the context of those Jewish people who were using the Law to hamper the development of the Gentile Christians. I'm sorry, but you have misunderstood the meaning of the "end of the law".

Shall we get rid of ALL OT Law? How about incest? Adultery? Murder? Lying? Shall Christians worship false idols? That's all OT and we still follow that. We do not get to pick and choose which of the non-culturally and non-historically binding laws we wish to follow. We do not get to disavow a particular part of the Bible just because it makes us uncomfortable. Also, the "end of the Law" is used to (sometimes) talk about those who were preaching that you needed the OT Law as well as Christ's blood for salvation which was obviously against the teachings of Christ. Heb 8:13 was speaking about how we are saved from the judgment (meaning punishment) of the Law by salvation through Christ. All sin is equally wrong and all sin is equally forgiven in Christ, but we do still have to acknowledge that sin is sin and not gloss it over.

On "Judging Others"

I understand the difficulty to "compartmentalize" one's feelings on this issue especially when it applies to homosexuality. I have gay friends and family. But just because I love them, would even die for them, does not mean I refuse to recognize sin when I see it. You say we are to follow Jesus' example of love. Yes, but He also gave us an example of discernment and wisdom. Jesus called sin "sin" wherever He saw it. He was merciful and kind about it in some cases and in others, usually when the spiritual leaders were abusing the populace, he was indignant and at times violent. To call a sin "sin" is not necessarily to judge another, but to acknowledge that an action fits a definition. The "judgment" you are thinking of is used in Biblical context as being more along the lines of "condemnation" or "punishment". Not "judging" doesn't

mean we lower our standards and make sin acceptable, it merely means we love those who sin in spite of their sins. That is the example Jesus, Paul, etc., demonstrated and preached. Repentance, not approval. Allowing a lowering of God's standards to make sin acceptable is the opposite of Christ's example. The verse you mentioned (Rom 1) was specifically bearing in mind that there were people who were casting aspersions on struggling Christians while living their lives sinfully themselves. Might I add Romans 6:15? We are under grace, but sin is still sin.

By your definition of "judging" others it would be wrong for me to acknowledge that a man stepping out in front of a speeding train is doing something dangerous. Whether I warn him or not, his actions will have consequences. Not my place to impose the consequences, you are right, but they will come nonetheless. I will love and care for my friends and family as best as I am able, but I will not choose to support and exalt their sinful choices. The smarter among them understand this and are fine with it even when we disagree. Some even respect me more for having the guts to hold my positions and still love them the way I do. They know I will not bend without good reason and will defend them just as powerfully even if I do not support their choices. Finding that balance is hard, but then who said following Christ was easy?

ME:

FRIEND,

This is fun. Again, I appreciate your pushback and your passion. I would also like to point out--and I'm sure you would agree here--that the very fact you and I have different opinions on this, and can both persuasively use Biblical references, to me, emphatically proves that the Bible is not and cannot be used as an encyclopedic news report where we go to find easy answers. The Bible is 80% narrative, story, which by nature is ambiguous and open to interpretation. So neither one of us can deny the other's interpretation is wrong completely, that would be disingenuous.

I think before we go any further I'd just like to point out the obvious here and address that fact you and I probably have different approaches to our faith, different starting points if you will, even different understandings of God's nature. You seem to be working within a reformed protestant framework, which obviously has its own theological way of understanding sin, atonement, salvation, God's nature and all that good stuff. I am not working in that framework. I most likely have a completely different understanding of most Christian doctrines than you do. This of course shades how we live in the world and dictates how we go about living out discipleship of Jesus. It also proves that, once again, Orthodoxy is a wide stream. Christianity never was a bland uniform faith, it has always had a rich and vibrant tradition of ideas and beliefs spread across many cultures.

That being said, I'd like to share how I think about the two ways one can go about holding truth (<http://jesseturri.com/wordpress/?p=3114>):

One way is with a closed fist, holding your truth tightly and securely so you don't lose it. There are a couple problems with this method. First, when you open your hand to try and give your truth to someone else, the truth is crumpled, sweaty and smelly, and ends up having your fingerprints all over it (yuck!). Second, if by chance the person you're attempting to give your truth to doesn't agree with you, well...your hand is already clenched in a fist, and it's too easy to just go ahead and punch them right in face for not agreeing! Not a good idea.

The other way to carry truth is with an open hand. There are a few reasons why this may be a good idea. First, starting with the notion that all truth is God's truth, it's then completely OK if your truth blows away (say for instance your truth proves to be an un-truth), because it was never yours to begin with. Second, it's a heck of a lot easier to give your truth away to someone else if it's carried in an open hand, a sign of friendship and comradery. Lastly, if truth is carried in an open hand it has plenty of sunlight and room to grow prosperously upward. This of course is not possible with a clenched fist.

Now I'll try to address some of your other comments directly.

OLD TESTAMENT

It seems like we're going around in circles here. Although you've wonderfully articulated the context of some of the laws and given some great historical insights, you haven't addressed the blatant contradictions of the OT. It seems like you're trying to say some of these levitical decrees still apply unless they have been "lifted" by Jesus' disciples? The fact remains, We don't own slaves and we don't treat women like property anymore. Times change, societies and cultures change. You're taking your 21st century understanding of the world and crowbarring it into this ancient text.

You say: "We do not get to pick and choose which of the non-culturally and non-historically binding laws we wish to follow." Well, that is exactly what you're doing with homosexuality.

LEVITICUS 18:22

You quote Leviticus 18:22. This was given to the children of Israel, in the cultural, historical and religious context of Lev 18:3, 21 and 27, to prepare them for entry into the Holy Land. The context is pagan religious practices, not lesbianism and not homosexuality.

God and Moses are prohibiting cultic sexual rites which worshiped Ashtoreth, the Canaanite fertility goddess. Ashtoreth was the fertility goddess consort of Molech, 18:21. Worshiping false gods and goddesses was so abominable to God that He promised to expel Israel from the land IF they did that.

Leviticus 20:13 was given in the cultural, historical and religious context of Lev 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 23. Again, the context is pagan religious practices in which Israel is forbidden to worship Molech and Ashtoreth, not lesbianism and not homosexuality.

Molech is mentioned so that the children of Israel (and we) will know that the issue is shrine prostitution which worships Ashtoreth, the fertility goddess consort of Molech. The Bible uses the rubric (an authoritative rule) of Molech worship to describe pagan sexual practices which included worship of Ashtoreth, 2 Kings 23:5-10.

END OF LAW

I don't think I've misunderstood the meaning of "end of the law" at all. You seem to be forgetting why the law was given in the first place. It was given to show us that we can NOT follow it. Jesus' ethic fulfills the law by putting the law of love above all else. No longer are we bound to the contractual, judgemental, legalistic way of living and viewing the world and those in it. We are free to live like we were always meant to live: in a loving covenant with God (not a contract: <http://jesseturri.com/wordpress/?p=1837>) walking in the cool of the day, naked, free to actualize the divine aim for our lives without hindrance.

ON "JUDGING OTHERS"

As I've hinted at in my preface, the real issue here is not homosexuality, it's who we think God is--the question that all theological reflection comes down to anyway.

A few confessions: I don't see God as judge, jury and executioner. I don't see God as vengeful, spiteful or arbitrary. I don't see God as the omnipotent Zeus in in the sky controlling everything--the platonic unmoved mover. Being a Christian, the ultimate expression of God, for me, is found in Jesus. To paraphrase CS Lewis, it is because I see Christ that I see everything else. That is to say, I read the Bible through a covenantal, radically loving, all accepting Jesus lens.

The Bible only makes two definitional propositions about God in scripture. One is "God is spirit," the other is "God is love." If I had to say one more thing about God I would say she is relational.

I'll give you an example of what I mean.

In your section "on Judging Others," you essentially appeal to the old adage Evangelical Christians are so fond of: "love the sinner, hate the sin." A Christian college professor I know would periodically ask his class if they think it is possible to "love the sinner but hate the sin." About 80% would raise their hands indicating that they think it is possible to make a clean separation between the person and the person's behaviors. However after further inquiry it is revealed that most of these people whom the students love but disagree with are either family or friends. In other words, people who were already part of their "in groups."

What this story is saying friend, is that relationships are imperative. We have no right to speak into other peoples lives unless we have already established a loving relationship with that person. Otherwise we're demanding purity and making boundaries, not being merciful.

Lets talk about Jesus a little bit.

"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'" Echoing Hosea, Jesus defends his embrace of the "unclean" in the Gospel of Matthew, seeming to privilege the prophetic call to justice over the Levitical pursuit of purity.

I see mercy and sacrifice as two impulses pulling in opposite directions and as intrinsically incompatible. One reaches outside the boundaries of human societies to be inclusive and welcoming. Mercy is inherently hospitable. The other, sacrifice, withdraws for the sake of maintaining its boundaries. Sacrifices, in the ancient sense, are made to purify the individual or the community making them, and purity can never be a fundamentally welcoming impulse. The implications of this divide are present in every Christian church and at every eucharistic table. Who is included? Who is excluded? What are the limits of mercy? What are the failings of sacrifice?

It's funny you quote Acts 10 in defense of some OT laws still being applicable, and some not (again this contractual paradigm you're using is evident--reformed theology at its best. Calvin was a lawyer you know ;)). I see Acts 10 as God acting decisively to dismantle the sociomoral disgust psychology of the church:

He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean."

Again, I can't emphasize this enough, you and I are working with different frameworks here. I bet any money you would hold to the typical protestant formula of Sin causing Death. The formula I hold to (for now) is similar to the Eastern Orthodox version: Death causing Sin. This may seem inconsequential but it actually has huge implications on one's theological proclivities. This is really another conversation (which I'd be happy to have of course) but I'll just say I'm Pauline in my thinking on this, i.e. death causes sin, not the other way around.

CLOSING

I'll close by just saying this, It sounds like you have some great gay friends whom you love, so my story above may not apply to you. Maybe you do have what Miraslav Volf calls the Christian "will to embrace," which precedes any "truth" about others and any construction of their "justice." This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into "good" and "evil."

Please don't get me wrong, of course we're going to disagree with people we love, you're right, that's part of life and part of the nitty gritty everyday part of being a relational, loving Christian. The fantasy of "let's hold hands and sing cause whatever you do is OK and whatever I do is OK" is completely off track. I'm not advocating for an anything goes hedonistic way of living life here.

You're also right in pointing out that I was using 'judging' and 'condemning' interchangeably and I shouldn't do that. I unequivocally do not deny that sin exists. I lament along with Paul that I know I do the things that I hate. Knowing that some things in the world are not the way they should be is more of a curse than a blessing oftentimes for us though. For me, the biggest problem that human beings have with sin is that we try understand it and define it.

Think about it.

What happens when we start thinking about sin (or right vs. wrong)? Well, we start to talk about it. Then, since we're talking about it, we need to define it in order to get a better handle on it. Before you know it, words like "sanctification," "purification," "holiness," and my favorite one "ransom," start getting thrown around. Maybe in non-religious circles, words like "virtue," "ethics," and "morality" might be mentioned. Since we have a nice neat definition to work with, we naturally become obsessed with evaluating, assessing, measuring and judging.

Instead of lovers, we've become law makers and punishers. Therefore, so have our gods.

It is no wonder that the term "Christian" has become synonymous with the word "hypocrite." I'm sure you agree that the church should never have been portrayed or conceived of as a place where perfect "sinless" and "saved" people congregate. It should instead look more like an AA meeting. A place free of judgement AND condemnation. A place of full acceptance, where people confess their shortcomings and addictions and recount their stories to each other in a hopeful attempt to find true healing.

If you'd like to go deeper on the real issues at hand here (e.g. who God is, sin, atonement, salvation) I'd love to. Again, thanks for the conversation and challenge.

grace and peace,
Jesse

FRIEND:

I agree with all of you points, but the real issue that started me into this conversation is the premise that homosexuality is not a sin. Our different framework will not cover a difference on that. When the term you gave me (arsenokoites or arsenos) is used exclusively in texts making mention of homosexual acts and when the word itself mean man/man sex, we can twist and turn and hem and haw, but it's right there in front of us.

FRIEND:

I give the same love the sinner and not the sin treatment to total strangers and family alike. It's a hard road, but when sin is sin I will not applaud it. Thanks for the talk, but nothing you have said removes the Bible's very specific stance on this issue. Maybe I'll see you this weekend when Matt's in. Hug the baby and the wife for me.

ME:

If one thing is taken away from this talk it's that the bible is not specific on this issue man. I've countered every one of your points and shown how your clobber verses can be translated differently, and just as authentically.

While I'm at it one more thought on the word "arsenokoitai" : It's obvious the word has been translated various ways over the years (you're probably reading the same sites I am), but one fact remains, the translation as homosexual does not appear until the last couple hundred years.

Yup, maybe see you soon.

Best,
Jesse

FRIEND:

The "term Homosexuality did not exist, but the definition is still there. A man who lays with another man. It doesn't get more specific than that. Sorry you can't see it, but it's there. I can deny the color of the sky because it's not what I like, or put on colored glasses to "contextualize" it's color as something different, but the sky is there for all to see if they want to. Some just don't want to. Sorry we disagree, but i still love you, brother.

ME:

Just saw your last comment. I love you too man :))

What I was saying is that the term Arsenokoitai has always been ambiguous, having many possible meanings including:

-Homosexual offenders (The NIV contains this phrase. Suppose for the moment that Paul had attacked "heterosexual offenders" or "heterosexual sexual offenders." We would not interpret this today as a general condemnation of homosexuality. It would be seen as an attack only on those heterosexuals who commit sexual offences.)

-Male prostitutes in Pagan temples

-Pimps

-Masturbators: At the time of Martin Luther, "arsenokoitai" was universally interpreted as masturbator.

-Abusive pedophiles

-Male prostitutes

-A boy sex slave

Only in the last couple hundred years has it been translated to our specific term "homosexuality" which means two people of the same sex in a committed loving relationship. How much more clear could I be? I'm not denying that anal sex didn't exist in antiquity, I'm saying the Bible is not talking about the issue we're talking about.

BTW, our different framework does play a huge role here. Your dismissive "sin is sin" comment proves this. We don't think about these issues the same way. To you it's black and white, to me it's not that easy. Again the Bible is not clear.

The reason the Levitical law is so adamant about describing specific sins is because it's about creating an identity for Israel. Creating in and out groups, differentiating, pointing out sins...that sort of stuff. Religious people are probably the best at doing this. Despite what you say about loving homosexuals and all, calling them sinful is a slap in the face and is the antithesis of love. Don't you see that? You're basically taking an easy way out by saying "love the sinner hate the sin." That's why I told the story of the professor, our first impulse must be to love and accept no matter what. Calling a group of people sinful is not loving them, especially if you don't know them.

In one of your comments about OT law you ask if Christians are allowed to murder if we're no longer bound to law? Believe it or not this isn't as black and white as you think man. Sometimes there is a good reason to murder someone right? (I'm being sarcastic. I'm betting you're not a pacifist like me). I mean what if someone is attacking your family? What about Hitler? (HA! It always comes back to him, and as a non-violent resister I always get these questions).

Paul gets into this identity stuff pretty heavily. For Paul fear of death causes sin. Jesus teaches that in order to live, you must suffer death, death of your sinful identity--Paul calls it sarx, or flesh. It's the part of us that is corruptible and susceptible to sin. Jesus didn't sin because he didn't base his identity in a reality of possession, because you will always fear the loss of that possession (dispossession), and fear will infuse your existence. Jesus based his identity in God, and therefore, was never dispossessed of his self because he did not own his self. He was free from the anxiety of having to keep possession of his own reality in order to be. Love that is free of self-interest and necessity fears nothing. In other words, "perfect love drives out all fear." -1 John 4:18

This is the Jesus way.

If you're interested in learning more about Paul and this identity stuff check out Richard Beck's blog series on this:

<http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2011/08/slavery-of-death-part-1-he-who-does-not.html>

FRIEND:

Sorry, but your points could be used to excuse incest, multiple partner marriages, and a host of other "detestable acts" because they are in the context of the same passages.

Loving the sinner and hating the sin is NOT an easy way out. It is one of the hardest things there is to do, especially when someone has sinned against you or someone you love is living in sin. Now, homosexuality hasn't been a sin against me, but I can still compartmentalize. I have had to fight my nature time and again, tooth and nail, to find love in my heart for those who have wronged me or to reconcile my love for a person with their sinful lifestyle. It's not a blanket to cover and excuse me from hard choices. Rather it is a thought process that forces me to act in a way that is more Christ-like than I would otherwise choose to be. It's MUCH easier to go along with the world's view of right and wrong and ignore God's word for the sake of making the people around you feel better. If that were a Godly option, I'd take it, but it's not.

Murder is sin, incest is sin, stealing is sin, idolatry is sin. I know you're going to play the "what if" game to find grey areas with some of these, but they are what they are. If I say that a murderer, incestuous couple, thief, or idolater have sinned, but I am still willing to actively love them and minister to their needs how is that a slap in the face? It's only a slap if they ignore my loving actions and hate me for my faithfulness to God's word. If someone I knew had a problem with me marrying my wife, but they were kind and loving to us in spite of their reservations and didn't barrage me with disparaging comments or actions, I wouldn't get all pissy over the objections they overcame in order to love me. I have thicker skin than to worry what every single person thinks of my relationship. If that same person was snide and made comments all the time about my marriage, I'd have nothing more to do with them and I STILL wouldn't care what they thought. I have actually gone through these circumstances so I speak from experience and I make a daily and hard CHOICE to actively love those I disagree with.

Now here's the kicker. I believe that CONSTITUTIONALLY homosexuals have the right to get married. There is no LEGAL reason to not allow homosexual marriage. See what I mean by compartmentalizing? On the other hand there is a HUGE reason to not want it to happen Biblically speaking. If someone doesn't want to see what the Bible says on the topic and make excuses for ACTIVE homosexuality, then that's their business.

According to you the meaning of the verse is so unclear that YOU could be wrong and I could be right. That's your business as well. I know what I believe is right according to the scriptures. If you disagree that's fine, but bearing in mind that you yourself have acknowledged that the meaning is unclear don't you think it would be best to tell people that you have no BIBLICAL stance on the matter, but you support homosexual marriage PERSONALLY? To take a Biblical stance on such an "unclear" issue means you should really have no ruling on it from a scriptural standpoint, sort of like the early church and men with long hair. Think of it this way; if I am wrong I have still actively loved those I thought lived in sin. If you are wrong you have still shown love

to those same people, but you did it by supporting and promoting their sin using the word of God. To remove the Bible from your support of homosexuality seems the only logical choice and it would avoid the need for "correction and reproof" that some see inherent in conversations like these. Makes sense, no?

ME:

I don't see how my points could be used to excuse incest, multiple partner marriages and so on...can you elaborate?

My only point throughout this whole discussion was to help you understand that the Bible doesn't talk about homosexuality the way you and I understand it, and that your interpretation of the Bible, your conservative/reformed hermeneutic, is not the only one around.

The 21st century definition of homosexuality is this: two people of the same gender in a loving, caring, monogamous relationship.

The Bible does not talk about that.

We went down point by point. For every "clobber passage" I have shown how those verses can be translated differently with just as much authenticity, providing historical and cultural context.

For me your biggest leverage, scripturally speaking, is Paul's verse in Romans. But as far as I can tell he's talking about sexual offenses, promiscuity and such...not sex in a loving relationship. There is nothing "unclear" about that to me. So yes I can hold a biblical stance on this issue with a clear conscious.

Switching gears, I can tell by the way you phrased one of your sentences in your last response that you probably think homosexuality is a lifestyle choice. I should have caught this sooner. If this is what you believe then there really is nothing more to talk about. I obviously don't believe that being gay is a choice (as science suggests), no more than being born African American or Chinese is a choice.

My only hope here man is that you take me seriously, and that you come to know that to own the truth is to lose it. The flow of truth is in this text the movement of the holy spirit in the world. Spirit and truth together name the fluidity of a process that we cannot possess, neither in propositions nor in practices, neither in creeds nor in prayers. We belong within it. It does not belong to us. This testimonial truth is a relation, not a possession.

FRIEND:

I think that having sex is a choice. Celibate homosexuals are not in sin. I stated that before. Your arguments on homosexuality being mentioned in the OT as merely a command to not act as those being driven out of the promised land means that the same thing would be true of all of the verses in that same chapter. There is a LONG list of sexually immoral practices that we

could just say were being used in worship of false gods and therefore if someone wanted to enter into a mutually committed relationship with say, their own father, then that would be ok because it doesn't really say anything about committed, loving, relationships, just pagan practices.

I didn't use Romans as leverage. That was all references to your assertion that the use of arsenoskoites was unclear there. So I referred to HIS referencing of Leviticus in the Greek AND Hebrew. Then I gave a direct translation for the words themselves. Once again you said the meaning of the term is uncertain. If that is true then you shouldn't teach that the Bible says it's ok to be actively homosexual because you really don't know. YOU believe it's ok, but you are not CERTAIN that the BIBLE says it's ok. The Bible also doesn't mention taking a leak off the top of the Empire State Building either. Somebody asks, "Hey, what's the Bible say about peeing off the Empire State Building?" I'd have to say, "Uh...nothing. It's still a bad idea." Or "Nothing, but I've gotta go too, so wait for me." I wouldn't say, "I haven't found a specific stance on this so there is no possible way it's wrong." What about coprophelia? Not mentioned in the Bible. Guy does it in his own house behind closed doors then what's the problem? He's not hurting anyone. He's just wired that way. Still a bad idea.

"It's unclear so I will use the Bible to support it" gets pretty flimsy when you dig a little deeper. It's just a way to oversimplify things so we can feel better about living in a sinful world and we can just squeeze our eyes shut and think of things like "right" and "wrong" and "sin" in broad ethereal terms and never have to deal with the reality of it in the daily lives of those around us. I've seen people use this approach before and it always leads to a subjective morality that leaves them incapable of separating right from wrong. It always turns into, "Do whatever you want, I'm cool with it. The Bible must be wrong, because I want to agree with my friends." Not saying that's who you are, just saying that has happened every other time I've run across it.

Call them "clobber Verses" if you like, but if I am not "clobbering" anyone with them and I am instead actively loving them by choice then there's no "clobbering" going on and that term is frankly offensive. You make it sound like I'm walking around screaming at people when in reality I allow people to know me as a person and if a topic comes up I tell them what I believe and if it happens to be different than what they believe we usually agree to disagree. In this case however you tell me that the Bible doesn't mention same sex, committed relationships, so therefore God must support homosexual relationships. Meanwhile you say that the verses I mentioned DO mention same sex relationships, just not in the way I understand them even though I have shown repeatedly that the translations are quite specific. If the meaning in these verses is uncertain to you and the Bible is not specific on the issue of same sex, committed relationships then you can't use the Bible to support same sex, committed relationships. On the other hand I see it as being VERY specific and therefore know that the Bible condemns the practice. And besides, since homosexual marriage is currently illegal (in spite of the constitution) in most states, then any unmarried, monogamous, gay couple that is sexually active is STILL committing sexual sin. And frankly, if you don't see sex outside of marriage as sinful then we really can't have this discussion.

If YOU as an INDIVIDUAL have a stance on something and the Bible is unclear on it, then more power to you. Just don't claim the bible agrees with you when you have admitted that you just can't be certain. According to you it's not even in the Bible. Therefore the Bible cannot agree or disagree with you on committed, homosexual relationships.

ME:

I still don't see how you make that jump man. As I said before, the Levitical law is about identity, not about which specific sex acts are right and wrong. You're setting up a fallacious slippery slope argument that just isn't there. Just because the Bible does not condemn gay sex in a committed loving relationship does not mean it condones promiscuity, rape, incest, sexual abuse or polygamy (oh wait it does support that last one).

The reason I point out that arsenokoites is unclear is because it is an ambiguous term, mainly associated with rape and prostitution, and was never translated to mean "homosexual" up until a couple hundred years ago--There were a number of ancient Greek and Latin words Paul could have used in 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10 and Romans if God intended to prohibit committed gay and lesbian partnerships. I can give you a list of them if you want.

I do have a personal opinion on homosexuality and the Bible is not conflict with it. Like I said, I have a clear conscience telling people that homosexuality is not a sin. Not that I do that much, i.e. I don't make it a habit of evaluating peoples sins, because to do so would imply that I am evaluating their lives which is none of my business. That's not my job, I've got my own plank to worry about. My job is to love people and seek justice, that's all. And right now homosexual minorities in this country are oppressed and justice is needed.

I know we all crave certainty and you think the Bible provides easy answers man--black and white--but that's not the world we live in. We all make choices everyday that could be seen as sinful or wrong by someone else, especially God. If you want a morality book then don't read the Bible. Try the Quran or something, because the Bible contains more questions than answers friend.

peace

FRIEND:

So Lev is about identity and not what sex acts are right or wrong? THAT'S how I make that jump you spoke of. If those rules were given in context of the identity of the Israelites and have nothing to do with us then a whole host of sexual stuff just got put on the table regardless of what our "modern society" says about it. Such as the coprophelia example.

If Biblical Law is just a bunch of suggestions with no absolutes then subjective morality is the course of the day and I can do pretty much whatever I want. Except the new Testament very specifically tells me that I am to do my best not to sin. So there must be absolute sins.

Subjective morality gives you no solid base on which to stand. Everything shifts and moves and making judgment calls on right or wrong in your own life becomes a guessing game of, "how do I feel today?" I don't stick my nose into other peoples lives either, but if asked my opinion I can tell them what the Bible says, not what I guess it doesn't say. Your way you just get to say, "I don't see it in there, so it's ok". That's fine, but don't say that because it's not in there it must be fine with God. I'm quoting His book, you're guessing at what He'd say.

There are very specific rules on right and wrong in the Bible. Just because we want to ignore the letter and follow our hearts doesn't mean it will always mesh. And you can't deny that you are the one who said the Bible doesn't mention our "modern view" of a committed homosexual relationship. The absence of evidence is not evidence in itself. You also didn't agree that a homosexual couple having sex outside of marriage is a sin. Or does that fall under the subjective morality as well?

ME:

Dude, I know I said this before. The OT does apply to our lives, I'm not saying it doesn't. What I am saying is that the Law was given to show us that we CANNOT FOLLOW IT. As Christians we're not bound to the law. I've showed you again and again that the OT is not talking about homosexuality as we know it (neither is the NT), i.e. committed same sex relationships. I AM NOT SAYING it doesn't condemn other sexual acts such as rape, incest etc...

Your slippery slope argument is fallacious (I hope you see that), it doesn't exist. Just because homosexual sex is permitted inside a committed relationship does not mean that other types of sexual immoralities are permitted. Rape is still rape and it's still wrong, regardless if it's a man doing it to a woman or a man to a boy.

Like it or not, morality is subjective friend. You can't be blind to that. And yes, all is permissible but not everything is good. I can actually do anything I like, that doesn't mean it's healthy or life-giving. I'm sorry to tell you this but your "solid base" epistemology is at least 300 hundred years old and its Cartesian, not biblical. Your "biblical hermeneutic" is compromised by thousands of years of European and Greek philosophy man. Open your eyes.

Your caricature of "subjective morality" is quite funny because that's what people said about Jesus in his day, eating with tax collectors, hanging with prostitutes and healing on the sabbath and all. Jesus would probably be considered "unclean" by anyone's standard, even ours today.

You ask if sex outside of marriage is a sin? I'm going to decline answering that and ask you this: Can you tell me why you're so hung up on defining certain sins, especially sexual ones? Why is that so important to you? The law is written on our heart now friend. Stop living in levitical times. Join Jesus and the prophetic tradition and live by grace alone.

Look, unless you want to start talking about the real issues here (who we think God is, what is sin, salvation, atonement) I'm done. It seems like we're going around in circles and nothing is

being accomplished.

At the end of the day I'm perfectly happy to admit that you may be right about all of this and I'm off my rocker, as long as you're willing to admit the same.

peace

FRIEND:

I didn't think you would be able to say sex outside of marriage is sin. That's what subjective morality does. Jesus Himself called sin "sin" and refused to condone it even when He was hanging with the sinners. Repentance and love was His command. You can't get around my examples without denying that there are certain things in this world that are sin no matter what. And then you try to pick and choose based on how you personally feel about them. I gave you the most disgusting example I could think of, coprophelia, and you wouldn't come out and say whether it's ok because you can't rectify that with the fact that you personally (I'm assuming) think it is disgusting. But neither can you say it is wrong because your morality is fluid with no solid base. I was sticking to examples of sexual sin because the entire conversation was based on whether or not a particular act (homosexual intercourse) was sinful. Should I go off on a tangent and start talking about stealing puppies?

You've got a lot of historical knowledge of the church of the middle ages, etc. and a creative way of thinking about the teachings of the Bible and so you feel you know where I am coming from, but think about something. You don't really know where I am coming from. You've said that the Bible is open to interpretation, we can't judge how anyone else lives their life, or make judgment calls about a person's heart. Great. But during the course of this conversation you proceeded to tell me what I believe, Why I believe it, how I treat people, my views on violence, where I learned my faith, and a host of other assumptions, only one of which was accurate. You seem perfectly comfortable telling me that my views on the Bible are wrong, the teachings I am basing my faith on are wrong, and how I treat people in response to those teachings is wrong. I very carefully avoided those kinds of assumptions or accusations. I only said that to say that God is ok with homosexual relationships when you only have a "lack" of evidence that he condemns it, was irresponsible. I am not the one who believes this is all subjective and I am also not the one telling someone that my subjective morality is better than theirs. I believe there is right and wrong and sometimes there are shades of grey, but when something is specifically wrong, it is just wrong. In this case, I believe it is wrong.

I see the evidence and know homosexual intercourse is wrong. You see a lack of evidence and know it is ok. We will never agree on this issue and I guess that's fine so maybe either one of us teaching either view is irresponsible if the subject is so unclear. I can call a sin a sin and still actively love the person committing the sin. I can separate the sinner and the sin. It is hard, but I do it. If you can't, then that's fine and I wish you luck.

Later, brother

FRIEND:

I realized how some of that message may have read and I just want to you to know, in spite of what I see as wrong views on the Bible and a slightly hypocritical judging of my faith walk, I still see you as a friend and brother in Christ. I am not upset nor have my feelings about you changed. Our disagreements here do not change these things.

ME:

I'm not arguing for anything goes wishy washy relativism here. I'm with you that sometimes things are just wrong. The shooting in the theatre in Colorado during batman, absolutely wrong--no shades there, we agree.

I consider myself to be a very disciplined and moral person man, probably more so than most people you know. I have my faith to thank for that. For me, drinking alcohol is a sin. In fact, I consider any recreational drug to be a sin--FOR ME! I'm also a pacifist. I consider any type of killing to be a sin, that includes war or capital punishment, and yes abortion too. I also follow strict dietary regiment that I wouldn't dream of imposing on other people.

That's the key here man, God has put these things on my heart alone. I am not to force my morality on someone else. I know for a fact you drink, probably have gotten drunk, I don't call you a sinner because of it. I have friends in the armed services who cary guns and have killed people in combat. I DO NOT think of them as sinners and have never called them sinners.

I do consider sex out of wedlock to be sinful, for me. I cannot speak for other people though man, it's not my place. That law has been written on MY HEART. I am to worry about the plank in my eye.

Keep in mind man that Jesus went around forgiving "sinners" whose sins had been pointed out by people who said things like "but a sin is a sin!"

To Jesus, sin is not a genetic stain passed on through the males semen like Augustine thought. Hatat is an archery term, it means to miss the mark. When you sin you're not actualizing the divine aim for your life. In other words, you're not being the person you were created to be. When Jesus points out that someone is sinning he's saying that they're not living to their fullest potential, not living a life of abundance (Zoe).

You say: "I see the evidence and know homosexual intercourse is wrong. You see a lack of evidence and know it is ok."

Your evidence has been legitimately disputed man, not just by me but by many recognized biblical scholars and academics within the capital "C" Church--don't just take my word for it.

As far as lack of evidence goes, it applies to you too man. Go back and read our

correspondence. If the evidence I provided is correct, i.e. the bible does not condemn homosexuality as we know it today (sure it speaks about sexual offenses a lot, both hetero type and homo type, but we would not interpret this today to be a general condemnation of either type of sexuality), then the case is closed.

The Bible doesn't say anything about owning slaves being sinful, in fact an argument could be made (and has been made in the American South for instance) that it endorses slavery. We don't own slaves dude.

My apologies to you if I seemed presumptuous in my responses or if I've offended you. You're right, I don't know your heart and I don't mean to insult you in any way. I've repeatedly asked for us to go deeper, to explore why we believe the things we do, why we read the bible the way we do, which hermeneutics we're employing. Otherwise we are forced to make assumptions because no one reads a text a vacuum. We all bring our prepacked assumptions and frameworks to the text, like or not.

peace

FRIEND:

It's great that your faith has formed who you are and I applaud that. But when you say that things like sex outside of marriage is sin for YOU because YOU view it that way or drunkenness is sin for YOU because YOU view it that way you discount the NT teachings on those two issues. It's the same in other places. Sex outside of marriage is sin for EVERYONE. Drunkenness is sin for EVERYONE. Drinking? No. Drunkenness? Yes

I was born a bastard child. I love my mom, but she sinned when she made me. I don't hold it against her. My father was a drug addict. He didn't see anything wrong with himself, but he sinned against my mother and me when he chose not to get clean until after he drove us away. I have gotten drunk. Didn't feel bad about it at the time, but the Bible says it was sinful so it was. Jesus DOES want us to live a life of abundance and sin is anything that pulls us away from that, but let's be honest. The examples I gave you of incest and coprophelia disgust you and you would say they are wrong. Because they are. Not just for YOU personally, but in general. It doesn't matter if it is a private, consensual, committed relationship now does it? It doesn't matter if they see it as sinless and pure. It's still wrong. That is what I mean when I say sin is sin. Identifying it according to the word of God doesn't make God some rigid unfeeling jerk. He is loving, but he is also just and calling people on their sins is also His job and was demonstrated by Jesus. Jesus went around forgiving people's sins and He does that for me every day, but He always acknowledged that they were sinners. We are ALL sinners, brother. It's not like I go around screaming, "SINNERS!" at everyone I meet, but I'm honest enough to admit when I see sin in myself as well as others. I don't judge them for it and most of the time (unless they are being a pain in my rear) I don't call them on it, but I can still recognize it. I don't try to push a behavioral lifestyle onto anyone. They are free to do as they please. That doesn't mean that if they can justify it in their heart they can break any Biblical law they want and God won't call

them on it someday regardless of whether they feel guilty about it or not. A man's conscience is a pretty inaccurate way to measure what's right and what's wrong.

And I'm sorry, but the "evidence" I have read in report after report on the issue of homosexuality not being sinful always used the same flimsy premise you used here. A twist of scripture here, a feel good excuse there and POOF! Not a sin. Just because we want to change the church's stance to please the world doesn't make it right. The way they dispute the meaning of the words in the Bible takes an awful lot of bending and twisting to make it work and that kind of theological yoga just doesn't fly with me. I've got my evidence and twisting it to fit your argument doesn't mean you're right.

I have heard rich men excuse greed because they knew in their heart that God wanted them to be filthy rich when the Bible says not to look to gold for comfort or step on the little guy. I have seen homes broken because a man couldn't see why pornography was wrong in spite of the Bible's teachings. It's not just that these things were non-beneficial, they were plainly and totally wrong. "It is wrong for me, but you can do it" only works in a scattered few instances in the Bible.

Look, we are getting nowhere. You plainly view the Bible as more open to interpretation than I do. The law is impracticable, sin is subjective, homosexual intercourse is fine. Whatever, brother. It's still irresponsible to teach others that an action is fine with God without His input, but you do what you've gotta do.

Later

ME:

Yes as Christians we are called to live lives that are deeper and more meaningful morally speaking, we're called to a higher path. But we're are to do it as examples in the world, as lights in the darkness. It's like St. Francis says, we're to preach the gospel always, and sometimes use words.

You're right again, we're all sinners man. We're all broken people living in a broken world. But calling a minority group of people "sinners" does not help fix the world, especially if you're a sinner yourself. It's hypocritical dude, can't you see that? It actually makes the world worse.

If someone I know does something I think is morally wrong (commits a "sin") I don't call them a sinner, it never crosses my mind. My heart has been changed. I've been shown grace in my life and I'm expected to show the same grace to others.

You've had quite a journey in life man, and I sympathize with you. I've also had a rough go of it. I did close to a year in state prison for stabbing someone. Before that I abused hard narcotics excessively, including cocaine and heroine. I also sold drugs and had tons of pre-marital sex. My life was pretty violent and messed up, so I know a thing or two about "sinning."

The "evidence" we're debating is legitimate. I can accuse you of twisting scripture as well, in fact more so (again the 200 year old RE-defining of arsenokoites).

You say "change the churches stance," you mean like how the church thought the Earth was flat, imprisoned Galileo, denied evolution, and supported slavery? Thankfully the Church is waking up to this issue and it's only a matter of time man. Gay marriage will be legalized, GLBT people will have equal rights and the Church will have to cope with it, one way or the other.

Jesus' way is the only thing that can win in the end man. To borrow Rob Bell's phrase, love wins. Love starts with acceptance, and is universally defined by psychologists as identifying with someone so much that you form a union with them, a fusion. When boundaries start to be erected, saints and sinners defined, in-groups and out-groups determined, love has failed.

If you want to keep labeling saints and sinners man more power to you. Like you said, you gotta do what you gotta do.

I'm done. Peace.