

GENESIS 18 & 19

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Break into small groups of four to six people.

2. The First Testament Reading

As the text is read, highlight or underline any passages that “jump out at you” for any reason.

3. Take turns reading aloud the statements (commentary) found in the right hand column. Again, highlight or underline any statement that “Jumps out at you for any reason.

4. Choose one of the scripture passages or one of the statements that you highlighted or underlined and share with the other members of your group why you think it “jumped out at you.”

5. At what point in the narrative does God decide to destroy Sodom? Why might that be significant?

6. When “the church and individuals use this passage to condemn homosexuals, what evidence do they cite? To what extent is this tradition truly founded in scripture?

7. What grounds are there for the persistent belief that the inhabitants of the city were addicted to male homosexual practices and were punished accordingly? (McNeill, 42)

8. What evidence is there that homosexuality was not the sin of Sodom? And if not, what then do you think it was? Why?

The word *homosexuality* is never used in scripture. In fact the word didn't even exist until late in the nineteenth century. [John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 42]

“Nothing is said about homosexual *orientation* as understood through modern science, nor is anything said about the loving relationship of two same-sex persons who have covenanted to be life partners.” (Myers and Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together?*, 85)

Genesis 18

1 The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." 6And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." 7Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." 10Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. 11Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" 13The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' 14Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." 15But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

16Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. 17The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

20Then the LORD said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin!

God and two angels appear to Abraham as three men.

The Lord decides to share with Abraham, who is the father of a great and mighty nation, the divine plan for that city (John Shelby Spong, *The Sins of Scripture*, 128).

The Lord has heard that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are sinful.

<p>²¹I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.”</p>	<p>The Lord sends emissaries to seek verification. Is this an all-knowing deity? (Spong, 129)</p>
<p>²²So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.</p>	<p>During the absence of the emissaries, the Lord will fill Abraham in on the details for destroying the entire city, should the reports by the messengers justify such a response (Spong, 129).</p>
<p>²³Then Abraham came near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?”</p>	<p>Abraham haggles with the Lord.</p>
<p>²⁵Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” ²⁶And the LORD said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.” ²⁷Abraham answered, “Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?” And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” ²⁹Again he spoke to him, “Suppose forty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of forty I will not do it.” ³⁰Then he said, “Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.” ³¹He said, “Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.”</p>	<p>Abraham reminds God of the divine character.</p> <p>Jesus and five OT prophets speak of the sins that led to the destruction of Sodom – and not one of them mentions homosexuality (Mel White, <i>Soulforce</i>, 9).</p> <p>Ezekiel 16:48-49 – “this is the sin of Sodom; she and her suburbs had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not help or encourage the poor and the needy. They were arrogant and this was abominable in God’s eyes.”</p>
<p>³²Then he said, “Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.” ³³And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.</p>	<p>Ten is the final agreed-upon number for the city to get a reprieve.</p>
<p>Genesis 19</p> <p>19The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom.</p>	<p>The two angels go to Sodom in search of ten righteous individuals.</p> <p>“Visitors to a city had no rights and no protection unless hospitality was offered and accorded to them by one who was a citizen of the city.” (Spong, 130)</p>

	Lot is Abraham's nephew.
<p>When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." ³But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.</p>	<p>Lot extends hospitality and thwarts any plans fellow citizens might have had for a night of debauchery. (Spong, 130)</p>
<p>⁴But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; ⁵and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them."</p>	<p>"If that hospitality was not offered, then the strangers became fair game for abuse, which usually took the form of ribald play in which the manhood of the strangers was compromised." (Spong, 130)</p> <p>"It was common for soldiers, thieves, and bullies to rape a fallen enemy, asserting their victory by dehumanizing and demeaning the vanquished. This act of raping an enemy is about power and revenge, not about homosexuality..." (White, 10).</p> <p>"How we understand the rest of the story hinges on the meaning of the word <i>know</i> in verse 5. Is it a euphemism for sexual relations, or might it mean something else?" (Myers and Scanzoni, 86)</p> <p>"Don Blosser, a Mennonite New Testament scholar, points out that "know" is a translation of a Hebrew word that occurs more than a thousand times in the Old Testament. But it serves as a euphemism for sexual intercourse no more than eleven times. Scholars debate whether this is one of those times." (Myers and Scanzoni, 86)"</p>

	<p>“With the possible exception of this text, (the word) always refers to heterosexual coitus.” (John J. McNeill, <i>The Church and the Homosexual</i>, 43)</p> <p>“The phrase might mean that the men of Sodom wanted to check out Lot’s guests perhaps because they were “suspicious that these strangers might be hostile spies threatening their homeland security... (they) may have been declaring in no uncertain terms that they wanted to investigate the visitors as possible illegal aliens up to no good.” (Myers and Scanzoni, 86)</p> <p>“Even if one continues to hold that there is a suggestion of the presence of this sexual element, it does not constitute the essence of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.” (McNeill, 49)</p>
<p>⁶Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, ⁷and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.</p>	<p>If Lot were to turn them over, he would violate the “hospitality code of the region. Once the protection of a home had been offered, the honor of the whole household was at stake if that protection was compromised.” (Spong, 130)</p> <p>“In the mind of the Yahwist author of the narrative the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was primarily one of inhospitality.” (McNeill, 44)</p> <p>“If this interpretation of the true sin of Sodom is correct, then we are dealing here with one of the supremely ironic paradoxes of history. For thousands of years in the Christian west homosexuals have been the victim of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by the Church, they have been the victim of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of the crime of Sodom</p>

	<p>and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day.” (McNeill, 50)</p>
<p>⁸Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” ⁹But they replied, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. ¹⁰But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.</p>	<p>“Lot offers his daughters to be gang raped for the evening’s entertainment. Yet God and the author of the story consider him righteous and deserving of divine protection.” (Spong, 132)</p> <p>“Lot’s offer of his two virgin daughters to the mob may suggest a sexual element. But this offer says nothing about homosexuality as an orientation. It only shows a low regard for women. Furthermore, if every male in the city was acting out of an erotic desire for <i>men</i>, Lot’s offer of two women wouldn’t likely be regarded as a substitute. (Myers and Scanzoni, 86-87)</p> <p>The mob may have been aroused by the thought of using sex as a “weapon... Rape of any sort is an act of violence. Male rape, as a show of power and domination has a long history.” (Myers and Scanzoni, 87)</p> <p>National Center for Victims of Crime: “the rape of a defeated male enemy was considered the special right of the victorious soldier in some societies and was a signal of the totality of the defeat.” (Myers and Scanzoni, 87)</p> <p>New York Times: the victims of prison rape “are usually heterosexuals who are forced into a passive sexual role... Such same-sex prison rapes are about power, control, humiliation – a way of supposedly proving ones manhood by robbing another of his through forcing him into what is considered the inferior, female role.” (Myers and Scanzoni, 87)</p>

<p>¹²Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city—bring them out of the place.</p>	
<p>¹³For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” ¹⁴So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.</p>	<p>Ten righteous persons have not been found. The Lord is primed to destroy Sodom.</p>
<p>¹⁵When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city.” ¹⁶But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷When they had brought them outside, they said, “Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed.” ¹⁸And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords; ¹⁹your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. ²⁰Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one? —and my life will be saved!” ²¹He said to him, “Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²²Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.” Therefore the city was called Zoar. ²³The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.</p> <p>²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.</p> <p>²⁶But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.</p>	<p>Lot, his wife and daughters are the only righteous persons to be found and are allowed to escape.</p>
<p>²⁷Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; ²⁸and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled.</p>	

<p>³⁰Now Lot went up out of Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; so he lived in a cave with his two daughters.</p>	<p>“Only Lot and his two daughters are spared. This man who has offered his virgin daughters for gang rape is nonetheless judged by God to be righteous and worthy of deliverance!” (Spong, 131)</p>
<p>³¹And the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the world. ³²Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father.” ³³So they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. ³⁴On the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, “Look, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father.” ³⁵So they made their father drink wine that night also; and the younger rose, and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. ³⁶Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸The younger also bore a son and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.</p>	<p>“A narrative that depicts scheming daughters, a drunken father and dual acts of incest has been turned by the prejudices of later interpreters into an anti-homosexual biblical text that feeds the basest side of our humanity.” (Spong, 132)</p>

DEUTERONOMY 23:17-18 & LEVITICUS 18:19-22 & 20:13, 18

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Break into small groups of four to six people.
2. The First Testament Readings
 - a. As the texts are read, highlight or underline any passages that “jump out at you” for any reason.
3. Take turns reading aloud the statements (commentary) found in the right hand column. Again, highlight or underline any statement that “Jumps out at you for any reason.
4. Choose one of the scripture passages or one of the statements that you highlighted or underlined and share with the other members of your group why you think it “jumped out at you.”
5. Why is it so important to notice the context in which the Leviticus passages appear?
6. What are some of the behaviors to which the word *abomination* is applied in Scripture? (See attached) Have you ever heard anyone apply the word to any of these behaviors? Why do you think that people are so quick to apply the word only to same-sex sexual acts and not to anything else?
7. What does the Bible say was the reason that God gave the holiness code to ancient Israel?

	<p>The word <i>homosexuality</i> is never used in scripture. In fact the word didn't even exist until late in the nineteenth century. [John Boswell, <i>Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality</i> (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 42]</p> <p>“Nothing is said about homosexual <i>orientation</i> as understood through modern science, nor is anything said about the loving relationship of two same-sex persons who have covenanted to be life partners.” (Myers and Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i>, 85)</p>
	<p>“Leviticus is a holiness code written 3,000 years ago (during the Babylonian Exile). This code includes many of the outdated sexual laws we mentioned earlier (see Soulforce, page 6) and a lot more. It also includes prohibitions against round haircuts, tattoos, working on the Sabbath, wearing garments of mixed fabrics, eating pork or shellfish, getting your fortune told, and even playing with the skin of a pig.” (Soulforce, 10-11).</p>
	<p>“In the heart of the book of Leviticus is a section now known as ‘the holiness code.’ It was written to assist the captive Jews to achieve their</p>

	<p>objective of keeping themselves apart from the people among whom they were forced to live. Such separation was the key to their survival in history. It was incumbent upon the Jews as exiles to define themselves as both holy and different.” (John Shelby Spong, <i>The Sins of Scripture</i>, 122.)</p>
	<p>The Jews defined themselves by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... establishing the Sabbath ... adopting kosher dietary laws ... identity by circumcision ... repudiating the sexual practices of their captors.
	<p>After Christians added what they called the New Testament to the Hebrew scriptures, the Bible began to be called the “Word of God.” Like all other people, the writers of Leviticus “could escape neither their limitations in knowledge nor their place in history. Because of the advance in scientific learning, however, the attitudes, prejudices and ignorances of the past tend to die out as new ideas challenge old practices. This very normal and constant process is much more difficult to accomplish, however, if a cultural assumption is made along the way that the words in this particular book cannot be wrong because God is their author. So the limitations and the uninformed ignorance of ancient biblical authors have been quoted to perpetuate, throughout the history of those who call these writings sacred, the prejudices of antiquity.” (Spong, 123)</p>
	<p>“We are living in a time when a new consciousness is arising in which there is a growing recognition that for homosexual people their only “sin” seems to be that they were born with a sexual orientation different from that of the majority.” (Spong, 125).</p>
<p>Deuteronomy 23:17-18</p> <p>17None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. 18You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.</p>	<p>“Homosexual activity was definitely connected in Jewish consciousness with idolatry... It was a practice among some of Israel’s neighbors to use both sexes as part of the fertility rites in temple services. Since the gods were understood as sexual, they were to be worshiped in overt sexual acts. Whenever homosexual activity is mentioned in the Old Testament, the author usually has in mind the use male worshipers made of male prostitutes provided by the temple authorities.” (John J. McNeill, <i>The Church and the Homosexual</i>, 56-57)</p>

<p>Leviticus 18:19-22</p> <p>¹⁹You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. ²⁰You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife, and defile yourself with her. ²¹You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.</p> <p>²²You shall not lie with a male as with a woman;</p> <p>It is an abomination.</p>	<p>"The Holiness Code originally established the connection between idolatry and homosexual activity. The Code specifically warns the Israelites against accepting the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites." (McNeill, 57)</p> <p>"Biblical and ancient Near Eastern culture was not familiar with homosexuality in the sense of a defined sexual orientation or lifestyle. It acknowledges only the occasional act of male anal intercourse, usually as an act of force associated with humiliation, revenge, or subjection." (Myers & Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i>, 88.)</p> <p>"Still another contextual factor has to do with the common use in biblical times of the act of sodomy as an expression of domination, contempt, and scorn... Calling attention then to the common practice, especially of the Egyptians, of inflicting sodomy as a punishment upon a defeated male enemy as a symbol of domination, Brun (J. Edgar Brun, "Old Testament History and the Development of a Sexual Ethic") suggests that the principal reason the Israelites regarded homosexual practices as an abomination was that they too viewed sodomy as an expression of scorn (in which) ... the dignity of the male is dishonored." (McNeill, 58-59)</p> <p>"The word translated as "abomination" (TO'EBAH) is used often in Scripture to condemn lying, unjust business practices, pride, and stirring up dissension. It is regrettable that in some religious circles, the world <i>abomination</i> is cruelly and self-righteously hurled at homosexual persons while the message of Proverbs 16:5 ("All those who are arrogant are an abomination to the Lord" is ignored." (Myers and Scanzoni, 88-89)</p> <p>"For Jewish writers of Scripture, a man sleeping with another man was an abomination. But it was also an abomination (and one worthy of death) to masturbate or even to interrupt coitus (to halt sex with your</p>
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²³You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion.

²⁴Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. ²⁵Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you ²⁷(for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); ²⁸otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people. ³⁰So keep my charge not to commit any of these abominations that were done before you, and not to

spouse before ejaculation as an act of birth control).”

These were considered abominations “because the Hebrew pre-scientific understanding was that the male semen contained the whole of life. With no knowledge of eggs and ovulation, it was assumed that the man’s sperm contained the whole child and that the woman provided only the incubation space. Therefore, the spilling of semen without possibility of having a child was considered murder.” (Soulforce, 12).

“Leviticus says nothing about Lesbian relationships.” (Spong, p. 124)

<p>defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.</p>	
<p>Leviticus 20:13 and 18</p> <p>¹³If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.</p> <p>¹⁸If a man lies with a woman having her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from their people.</p>	<p>“Sexual intercourse during a woman’s menstrual period was considered an abomination no less than a male’s lying with another male as with a woman. Both prohibitions were listed... as violations of purity, and therefore they were considered defiling. Such behaviors were associated with the nations that had served other gods and that had to be driven out because they had ‘defiled the land’ with their detestable practices (See Lev. 18:24-30 above).” (Myers and Scanzoni, 90)</p>
	<p>“Jesus and Paul both said the holiness code in Leviticus does not pertain to Christian Believers. Nevertheless, there are still people who pull the two verses about men sleeping together from this ancient holiness code to say that the Bible seems to condemn homosexuality.” (Soulfource, 11)</p>
	<p>“Sexual orientation is not a moral choice. It is something to which people awaken. It is therefore not morally culpable. The texts in Leviticus 18 and 20 are simply wrong. They are morally incompetent because they are based on ignorance. They should be viewed, as should so much else in Leviticus and the rest of the Torah, as stages in human development that we have outgrown, that we have been educated beyond and have therefore abandoned.” (Spong, 125-126).</p>
	<p>“It is also no longer a morally defensible argument for hierarchical figures to protect the destructive homophobia of some leaders and church members in order “to preserve the unity of the church.” A church unified in prejudice cannot possibly be the Body of Christ.” (Spong, 126)</p>

ROMANS 1:26-27

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Break into small groups of four to six people.
2. Read Romans 1:26-27
 - a. As the text is read, highlight or underline any passage that “jumps out at you” for any reason.
3. Take turns reading aloud the statements (commentary) found in the right hand column. Again, highlight or underline any statement that “jumps out at you” for any reason.
4. Choose one of the scripture passages or one of the statements that you highlighted or underlined and share with the other members of your group why you think it “jumped out at you.”
5. “Assuming that the passage is talking about same-sex sexual acts between women as well as men in a context of unbridled lust, idolatry, and promiscuity, does it say anything about homosexual orientation as it is now understood?” (Myers and Scanzoni, page 98)
6. “Does verse 28, reading ‘and since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done,’ speak at all to two gay man or two lesbians who *do* acknowledge God?” (Myers and Scanzoni, page 99)
7. “What does the passage have to do with two same-sex persons who have never turned to other gods and who love and serve their Creator wholeheartedly, but who yet desire a faithful, committed relationship” with one another? (Myers and Scanzoni, page 99)

	<p>The word <i>homosexuality</i> is never used in scripture. In fact the word didn't even exist until late in the nineteenth century. [John Boswell, <i>Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality</i> (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 42]</p> <p>“Nothing is said about homosexual <i>orientation</i> as understood through modern science, nor is anything said about the loving relationship of two same-sex persons who have covenanted to be life partners.” (Myers and Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i>, 85)</p>
<p>Romans 1:26-27</p> <p>²⁶For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions.</p>	<p>“This passage, perhaps more than any other, is frequently quoted as proof of God's displeasure with homosexual acts.” (Myers and Scanzoni, page 98)</p> <p>“The people Paul had in mind refused to acknowledge and worship God, and for this reason were abandoned by God. And being abandoned by God, they sank into sexual depravity.” (Smedes, <i>There's a Wideness in</i></p>

<p>Their women</p> <p>exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural,</p> <p>²⁷and in the same way also the men,</p> <p>giving up natural intercourse with women,</p>	<p><i>God's Mercy</i>, video)</p> <p>"The homosexuals I know have not rejected God at all; they love God and they thank God for his grace and his gifts. How, then, could they have been abandoned to homosexuality as a punishment for refusing to acknowledge God?" (Smedes, <i>There's a Wideness in God's Mercy</i>, video)</p> <p>"Paul sees women having sex with women and men having sex with men, and he condemns that practice." (Soulforce, page 13)</p> <p>"This is the only place in the entire Bible where women are mentioned in this connection." (Myers and Scanzoni, page 98)</p> <p>The normal English translation for "unnatural" has been "against nature." (<i>para physin</i>) "Once again it is difficult to ascertain what this phrase meant for Paul. The same phrase in Romans 4:18 is used to express the idea that God himself is acting <i>para physin</i> (against nature) in grafting a wild olive branch (the Gentiles) onto a cultivated tree (the inheritance of the Jews). This usage makes it clear that the phrase itself does not necessarily imply a moral judgment on the action as wrong. (McNeill, page 55)</p> <p>It is important to understand the context of this passage: "Paul is writing this letter to Rome after his missionary tour of the Mediterranean. On his journey Paul had seen great temples built to honor Aphrodite, Diana, and other fertility gods and goddesses of sex and passion instead of the one true God the apostle honors. Apparently these priests and priestesses engaged in some odd sexual behaviors – including castrating themselves, carrying on drunken sexual orgies, and even having sex with young temple prostitutes (male and female) all to honor the gods of sex and pleasure. (Soulforce, page 13)</p> <p>"Paul apparently refers only to homosexual acts indulged in by those he considered to be otherwise heterosexually inclined; acts which represent a voluntary choice to act contrary to their ordinary sexual appetite." (McNeill, <i>The Church and the Homosexual</i>, page 55)</p> <p>"Nor have the homosexuals that I know given up heterosexual passions for homosexual lusts. They have been homosexual from the moment of their earliest sexual stirrings. They did not change from one orientation to another; they just discovered that they were homosexual. It would be unnatural for most homosexuals to have heterosexual sex." (Smedes, <i>There's a Wideness in God's Mercy</i>, video)</p>
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<p>were consumed with passion for one another.</p> <p>Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.</p>	<p>“And the homosexual people I know do not lust after each other any more than heterosexual people do... their love for one another is likely to be just as spiritual and personal as any heterosexual love can be.” (Smedes, <i>There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy</i>, video)</p> <p>“The Pauline epistles do not explicitly treat the problem of homosexual activity between persons who share the homosexual condition, and as such cannot be read as explicitly condemning such behavior.” (McNeill, page 56).</p> <p>“You’ll also note that Romans 2 begins with ‘therefore, (referring to Romans 1), you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself...’ even after he describes the disturbing practices he has seen, Paul warns us that judging others is God’s business, not ours.” (Soulforce, page 14)</p>
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1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 & TIMOTHY 1:8-10

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Break into small groups of four to six people.
2. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Timothy 1:8-10**
 - a. As the text is read, highlight or underline any passage that “jumps out at you” for any reason.
3. Take turns reading aloud the statements (commentary) found in the right hand column. Again, highlight or underline any statement that “jumps out at you” for any reason.
4. Choose one of the scripture passages or one of the statements that you highlighted or underlined and share with the other members of your group why you think it “jumped out at you.”
5. How much influence does a translator have on our understanding of scripture?
6. What considerations must be taken into account when seriously studying a passage or book of the Bible? What questions need to be asked? Why is it problematic to simply open the Bible to any passage and take it at face value?

	<p>The word <i>homosexuality</i> is never used in scripture. In fact the word didn't even exist until late in the nineteenth century. [John Boswell, <i>Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality</i> (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 42]</p> <p>“Nothing is said about homosexual <i>orientation</i> as understood through modern science, nor is anything said about the loving relationship of two same-sex persons who have covenanted to be life partners.” (Myers and Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i>, 85)</p>
<p>1 Corinthians 6:9-10</p> <p>⁹Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, ¹⁰thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>The author of both these passages is Paul. They can be discussed together because they are similar.</p> <p>“There are other lists of vices in the New Testament, but these are the only ones that apparently refer to some form of same-sex sexual behavior.” (Myers and Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i>, page 93)</p> <p>“The Jewish law was created by God to help regulate human behavior. To remind the churches in Corinth and Ephesus how God wants us to treat one another, Paul recites examples from the Jewish law first. Don't kill one another. Don't sleep with a person who is married to someone else. Don't lie or cheat or steal. The list goes on to include admonitions against fornication, idolatry, whoremongering, perjury, drunkenness,</p>

1 Timothy 1:8-10

⁸Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately.

⁹This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, ¹⁰fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching ¹¹that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

revelry, and extortion. He also includes “*malokois*” and “*arsenokoitai*.” (Soulforce, page 15)

“After quoting from the Jewish law, Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth that they are under a new law: the law of Jesus, a law of love that requires us to do more than just avoid murder, adultery, lying, cheating, and stealing. Paul tells them what God wants is not strict adherence to a list of laws, but a pure heart, a good conscience, and a faith that isn’t phony... God doesn’t want us squabbling over who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out.’ God wants us to love one another. It’s God’s task to judge us. It is NOT our task to judge one another.” (Soulforce, page 15)

“Greek scholars say that in first century the Greek word *malaokois* probably meant ‘effeminate call boys.’ The NRSV says “male prostitutes.” (Soulforce, page 15)

According to Myers and Scanzoni, “In the Greek, it simply meant ‘soft’ and was sometimes used to describe lazy, self-indulgent, decadent living.” (Myers and Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together?*, page 93)

“As for *arsenokoitai*, Greek scholars don’t know exactly what it means... some scholars believe Paul was coining a name to refer to the customers of ‘the effeminate call boys.’ We might call them ‘dirty old men.’ Others translate the word as ‘sodomites,’ but never explain what it means.” (Soulforce, page 16)

“In 1958, for the first time in history, a person translating that mysterious Greek word into English decided it meant *homosexuals*, even though there is, in fact, no such word in Greek or Hebrew.” (Soulforce, page 16)

Regarding context, White believes, “Paul is condemning the married men who hired hairless young boys (*malakois*) for sexual pleasure just as they hired smooth-skinned young girls for that purpose.” (Soulforce, page 16)

“Scholars who want to translate the Bible for today’s culture have been faced with a problem: how to present these complex ideas to a modern audience while using an economy of words. Some translators simply decided to combine the two Greek words and render them as one, the English word *homosexual*. They thereby created a host of new problems. Such a translation gave readers the impression that the Bible condemns all homosexual persons, even though homosexual orientation was not being discussed and was not even understood in the modern sense. There were other problems with such translations. The word *homosexual* would imply that women were being discussed, too, even though women were not included in what is described in these original

	texts. The practices described concerned only males.” (Myers and Scanzoni, <i>What God Has Joined Together?</i> , page 95)
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