

## The Bible Tells Me So

*As the college of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), Calvin holds to the position of the CRC on human sexuality, articulated in 1973 and 2002. We believe that homosexual orientation is not a sin, and we strive to love our gay, lesbian, and bisexual students as ourselves, as God expects of us. We also affirm that physical sexual intimacy has its proper place in the context of heterosexual marriage.*

*\*Sexual behavior is chosen; sexual orientation is not.*

*\*Being attracted to persons of the same sex is not culpable or sinful.*

-LGBT Students & Homosexuality FAQ

This is Calvin College's stance on homosexuality that has been adopted from the Christian Reformed Church. The church's views on this controversial matter have laid the foundations for Calvin College's toleration of several different lifestyles today. This stance is a compromise between two extreme and opposing views: the conservative Christian view that homosexuality—both as a thought and an action—is a sin condemned by God and should not be tolerated, and the liberal Christian view that homosexuality is not a sin, but is a way of life that a person should be able to practice freely. This position raises a problem for students here at Calvin who, like me, find themselves disagreeing with Calvin's acceptance of this lifestyle, but are afraid to voice their opinions because of the welcoming, open community stressed at Calvin or the possibility of offending someone and sparking passionate, heated responses to such seemingly "hateful" opinions. Many who share my conservative viewpoint on this issue also have trouble explaining exactly why they think the way they think about homosexuality; however, I understand exactly why I believe the way I do, and humbly wish to offer an explanation. The Christian Reformed Church justifies its stance on homosexuality using flawed and anti-biblical reasoning; therefore, this position should not be advocated so vehemently here at Calvin College.

As the times are changing, Christians and churches are finding themselves challenged by new, prominent issues. Many now insist that because this change is inevitable, the

church's stance on homosexuality must change as well. No longer should the church be holding firm to its original, conservative views that have condemned homosexuality. Now it should open its arms and embrace the people with the identity it has once condemned. This change is blatantly obvious here at Calvin College, a Christian college that "seeks to be a community where lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons are treated with respect, justice, grace, and understanding in the Spirit of Christ" (LGBT Students & Homosexuality FAQ). The church has never been so accepting and even—dare I say—loving towards those who identify themselves as homosexual. Yet we must remember that "I the Lord do not change," as Malachi 3:6 says. If God does not change, his laws and his expectations for his people certainly do not. God's commands in the Bible have not changed, but have remained the same since he commanded them. Only man's interpretations of what God has decreed and man's attitude towards these decrees are different. However, just because the times are changing and our society today is calling for tolerance and acceptance of many sins does not mean that the church should now stray from its previous, biblically set principles. Yet this movement toward change in the church seems for the most part unstoppable.

One must also be aware that in the church today, an emphasis on emotions has been placed over biblical rationality in its stance on homosexuality; this has carried over to Calvin College as well. In an argument at this college—a Christian college that helps students to "evaluate different points of view in light of Scripture" (LGBT Students & Homosexuality FAQ) "how these people feel" often carries more weight than what God actually says in scripture. In our society today, one must take great care not to hurt anyone's feelings; if one's opinions or belief system does offend someone, he is considered a "hater" and guilty of "hate speech." Our society also plays on the emotions by making it seem as if those offended are "victims" and we should "feel bad for them." All of this has created an overbearing aura of openness and acceptance of all kinds of lifestyles in American society today, and this aura has carried over to this college. Yet one needs to remember: although feelings are important,

they should not cloud rational thinking. And even though emotions play such a heavy role in the way everyone thinks, they cannot and should never be the basis for an argument, especially one about such a controversial matter as this. A Christian must keep in mind the wise words of Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, minister at Grace Protestant Reformed Christian Church: “Feelings are real, but they are not the source of truth.” The truth about the issue of homosexuality must be found only in the infallible word of God.

The main argument of people here at Calvin College is that God does not actually condemn homosexuality in the word of God, and so there is nothing on which to base a stance against it. This is false, however, and God does in fact condemn this sin in several places. But before explaining further, a common misconception I have heard must be addressed and countered. Many say that because Jesus Christ does not speak about—and therefore does not condemn—homosexuality anywhere in the Bible, it must not be a sin. Yes, it is unfortunate that Christ never specifically addresses homosexuality. However, he does give us Matthew 19:4–5, mentioning the creation order of Genesis 2: “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’” (NIV). Throughout his ministry, Christ defends the purity of God’s ordinance of marriage between man and woman. This implies his position on the issue of homosexuality, even though these verses do not directly mention it. However, it is understandable that confusion and arguments about his stance on the issue may still exist, and that is where the writings of the apostle Paul come in, offering clarification where Matthew and the other gospels do not. Paul was an apostle of Christ, so he had the necessary authority to say such things about homosexuality in the name of the Lord, and he did, as I will explain shortly.

Now that that issue is out of the way, let’s begin with the most obvious (and most controversial) passage in the Bible that condemns sins including homosexuality: the seventh

commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Most if not all Christians agree that this commandment forbids things like cheating on a spouse and engaging in sex before marriage. However, this commandment has a much deeper meaning than that. Jesus Christ says in Matthew 5:27–28, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (NIV). The Lord says very plainly that even the lust that one has toward another—not just the action—breaks this commandment. This clarification is also shown in the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Day 41: the seventh commandment forbids “all unchaste acts, gestures, words, *thoughts, desires.*” But how does this connect with homosexuality?

In order to answer this question, one needs to look at the main passage in Scripture where homosexuality is mentioned. This can be found in the apostle Paul’s letter to the church of Rome in Romans 1:21–32:

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened... Therefore God gave them over in the sinful **desires** of their hearts to **sexual impurity** for the degrading of their bodies with one another...God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their **women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error...**Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things **deserve death**, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them (NIV).*

These verses show that both men and women were guilty of practicing homosexuality in those days, and Paul condemns them both for these actions. He says plainly that these men and women are punished by God: they “received in themselves the due penalty for their error” and “deserve death.” In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul also mentions this sin: “Or do you not know that *wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?* Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor *men who have sex with men*” [“nor

effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind” in the KJV]; again, 1 Timothy 1:10 says, “We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful...for the sexually immoral, *for those practicing homosexuality*” [“for them that defile themselves with mankind” in the KJV]. Those who live the homosexual life will not “inherit the kingdom of God,” as 1 Corinthians says, and are “lawbreakers and rebels,” “ungodly and sinful,” as 1 Timothy says. In all of these passages, Paul shows that homosexuality is a sin, and therefore it must be punished by God.

But one would argue that these passages only condemn the *action* of homosexuality. These people “committed shameful acts” (as Romans 1 says); it does not mention or condemn the thought/desire that may or may not be controllable. Therefore, the feelings and desires a homosexual has towards another of the same sex cannot be wrong—as long as they are not acted on—as Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church believe. Right? Wrong. These people had “sinful *desires* of their hearts,” and were “*inflamed with lust* for one another”; these lusts and desires are feelings that every homosexual person has—not necessarily actions. Yet Paul condemns them just the same as he does actions. Also, remember what Christ said about the seventh commandment, how even the lustful thought or desire for another (outside of marriage) is a sin. What Christ teaches also applies here. Even if people do not act on these homosexual urges or lusts, they are still sinning in their hearts.

But does all of that really condemn the homosexual orientation? Although feelings often include lust, one might argue that these don’t necessarily go hand-in-hand. In order to answer this, I would like to point out Genesis 2, where God created Adam and Eve. Here we see that the nature of man as God created him—even before Adam sinned and became corrupted—proves that the homosexual orientation is a sin, because this orientation goes against this God-given nature. God created Adam and Eve, a man and a woman, opposite genders, with the man to hold dominion over the woman. He also instituted marriage when he created them. As Christ quoted in Matthew 19, God created man to be “united to his wife”

(Genesis 2:24). Through holy matrimony, God also gave a man and wife the ability to conceive children through the intimacy of sexual intercourse. In a same-sex relationship or marriage, the couple seeks to mimic this God-given relationship. Yet they cannot truly experience how marriage is supposed to be, because they are going against the very nature of which God has designed them to have. A same-sex couple defies the very purpose of relationship—to glorify God by picturing the perfect relationship that Christ (the bridegroom) has with the church (his bride). A homosexual couple is also unable to have children as God had instituted to be one of the results of marriage. Since these relationships are not rooted in God’s principles for holy and acceptable marriage, and are certainly not natural God-ordained relationships, they are a sin. Again, even the desires for this kind of relationship are sinful, because the desires themselves are unnatural, contrary to the ones God has ordained as natural. Going against the very nature that God has bestowed every human being with by even having a “homosexual orientation” is a sin.

I would also like to review briefly the Reformed doctrine of total depravity as a way to answer those who support the homosexual orientation. Reformed Christians understand and believe that “surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me,” as Psalm 51:5 says. We were born with a sinful nature (an “old man of sin” as it is called in Romans 6:6) because of our forefather Adam’s sin in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve fell, the whole of creation fell with them. Because of this fall, all of mankind now has a sinful nature and an all-consuming desire to sin against the commands of God. This desire to sin is therefore a sin itself.

The supposed “homosexual orientation” and the resulting feelings can now be included here. When men and women declare themselves to be of a homosexual orientation, they are “exchanging” (as Paul says) their natural God-given orientation and instead giving in to their old man of sin and the “sinful desires of their hearts,” as Romans 1 says. These feelings, these desires, these attractions are toward something that God’s word blatantly

teaches against, as shown earlier. Even being attracted to someone of the opposite sex is unnatural and thus sinful. Therefore the homosexual “identity” itself is a sin, and so Calvin’s stance that “being attracted to persons of the same sex is not culpable or sinful” goes against what scripture and Reformed doctrine teach.

Yet the Christian Reformed Church and Calvin College hold to that stance, accepting this sin. The mentality found everywhere, both in society today and now at Calvin College, is to applaud when someone “comes out of the closet” and accepts their homosexuality as an identity. Look at Chaplain Mary Hulst’s tweet in 2013, in response to a student’s article in Calvin’s newspaper called “LGBT Feature: Ryan’s Story.” This is a heart-wrenching and emotionally-charged article about how he came out to the world that he is gay, and he now unashamedly accepts his new sexuality (Calvin College Chimes LGBT Feature). “*Crazy proud of @ryanstruyk,*” she tweets from her @PastorMary2U account. Many students also supported and cheered on this “coming-out” by Ryan. This is proof that Calvin College does not treat homosexuality as a sin that, just like any other, must be fought against. Instead the chaplain, Calvin’s religious leader and representative head, “proudly” supports this sin.

These feelings and thoughts can and must be fought against, because the Lord commands them to be. Although according to total depravity, the sinful nature we are born with is in a sense unavoidable because we are all inevitably born with it, this old man of sin must be fought against continually. “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” as 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says. “Flee fornication,” as 1 Corinthians 6:18 says. “Mortify it,” as Rev. VanOverloop says. Yes, fighting against this, and any other sin, is definitely not easy. I know firsthand that it’s not, since one of my very good friends is struggling with overcoming this sin at this moment. But she will keep fighting this long and tiring battle because that is what God commands of his beloved children. 1 Corinthians 10:13 should be kept in mind here: “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” If my friend, or any of

God's children, gives up on this battle and accepts these homosexual tendencies as part of who she is, this would pave the way for her fall into more of that sin. Calvin College should be counseling its students who are fighting this sin, helping them deal with it and overcome it, which is what the Bible calls us to do.

I don't want to condemn anyone—really, I don't, nor do I intend to do so. Take notice that throughout everything I have explained, I am condemning just the sin, not the person. Only God can and will judge the heart. But I, as well as all Christians and Christian institutions, must follow the law of God. God's word condemns homosexuality as a sin, no matter what form it takes, and his church must as well. Because the Bible calls us not to tolerate sin, the CRC church and Calvin College must not be so accepting of it either. As Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil." So vehemently to advocate the tolerance of this sin within the ranks of Calvin College is to go against the infallible word of God, the seemingly highest authority at this college.

## Works Cited

- "Calvin College Chimes LGBT Feature." November 2013. *Storify.com*. Web. November 2014.
- "LGBT Students & Homosexuality FAQ." 2014. *calvin.edu*. Web. 14 October 2014.
- VanOverloop, Rev. Ron. *God's Call to Purity and Faithfulness* : Grace Protestant Reformed Christian Church. 12 October 2014.