

# THE BIBLE AND SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

## *Fictions and Facts*



### **Fiction #1**

**Homosexuality is a major topic of concern in the Bible.**

**Fact:**

The Bible contains only three or four clear references to male same-sex love and only one possible reference to female same-sex love. Moreover, “homosexuality” itself is a modern term, coined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and represents forms of same-sex love not present in the cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean world from which the Bible comes.

### **Fiction #2**

**The Bible’s allusions to same-sex relationships are all negative.**

**Fact:**

The Bible depicts several very positive same-sex relationships, including the probably erotic relationship of Jonathan and David and that of the Centurion and his “boy-lover” in the Gospel of Matthew (see below). In addition, the words of Ruth to her mother-in-law Naomi, two women, are so representative of modern understandings of intimate relationships that they are most often found in marriage ceremonies (Ruth 1: 16-17).

### **Fiction #3**

**The Bible views homosexuality as a sin and indeed as a greater sin than all others.**

**Fact:**

The Bible rarely mentions same-sex love. It is not prohibited in the Ten Commandments, as adultery is, and it is not prohibited by Jesus, as divorce is. There are simply no biblical grounds for arguing that homosexuality is a greater sin than adultery or divorce; indeed, just the opposite is the case.

#### **Fiction #4**

**Jesus preached against homosexuality.**

#### **Fact:**

In the New Testament gospels, Jesus says absolutely nothing about homosexuality or same-sex relationships. In fact, it is possible that Jesus actually commends a man who is in a same-sex relationship in Matthew 8:5-13 (the Roman centurion and his “boy,” a common pederastic relationship in Roman antiquity).

#### **Fiction #5**

**The story of Sodom is about homosexuality.**

#### **Fact:**

In the story of Sodom in Genesis 19, all the men of Sodom attempt to gang rape the foreign visitors staying at the house of that other foreigner, Lot. As in rape cases today, this act is not about sexuality but about violence, power, and the hatred of strangers. All the references to this story in the rest of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) confirm that the “sin” of Sodom was hatred of foreigners, pride, and abuse of the poor. No sexual “sin” is mentioned in any of these later references to the story of Sodom’s destruction.

#### **Fiction #6**

**The Bible supports monogamous heterosexual marriage.**

#### **Truth:**

The primary form of marriage in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is polygamy, with the prize going to King Solomon, who was said to have 700 wives and 300 concubines. In the New Testament, the sexual path of life most strongly recommended by Jesus and Paul was chastity. This is not surprising since Jesus and Paul themselves were both unmarried adult men. In the Bible, marriage between one man and only one woman is explicitly required only for bishops (1 Timothy 3:2)!

#### **Fiction #7**

**The creation stories in Genesis 1-3 condemn any form of same-sex relationships.**

#### **Truth:**

The creation stories in Genesis 1-3 never mention same-sex relationships of any kind. The purpose of these stories is to show that God is the creator of everything that exists, and in the modern period this would certainly include those people who have a sexual orientation towards others of the same sex. Moreover, in the creation story in Genesis 2, the explicit purpose of creating sexual partners in the man and woman is not procreation but instead the relief of loneliness. Same-sex relationships fulfill that purpose of creation just as well as opposite-sex relationships do.