

Sense over Sexuality (The LGBT Debate)

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng

As the debate on sexual orientation and gender identity rages on in the public sphere, the Christian circle, especially those engaged in pastoral ministry, should be cognizant that many arguments and assertions made over this issue lately have grown rather inconsistent with what the Bible teaches.

For the uninitiated, LGBT or in its latest form “LGBTQ”, is the acronym representing those who sexually identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer / questioning.

First used in the 1990s, LGBT is still evolving as an umbrella term to include many new groups springing up in the “rainbow community.”

Wikipedia acknowledges that “LGBT history dates back to the first recorded instances of same-sex love and sexuality of ancient civilizations, involving the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) peoples and cultures around the world.”¹ To the Church, this fact certainly corresponds with the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as recorded in the book of Genesis.

Untangling a Knotty Subject

Authorities, whether government or institutional, have largely struggled in handling LGBT as it involves wading into moral, legal and constitutional waters.

In Malaysia, the legal and constitutional provisions are founded on the stand of the majority faith through the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 as well as the Penal Code.²

¹ Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_history

² The general position is that Malaysia does not have laws against homosexuality, but it does criminalise unnatural sex under the Penal Code (PC).

Relevant sections of the PC:

S.377A: Carnal intercourse against the order of nature.

S.377B: Punishment for committing carnal intercourse against the order of nature. (imprisonment for a term which may extend to 20 years, and shall also be punished with whipping)

S.377C: Committing carnal intercourse against the order of nature without consent, etc. (imprisonment for a term of not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years, and shall also be punished with whipping)

Further, s.25 and s.26 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 provide the punishment for Muslim males (s.25) and females (s.26) who commit sexual relations between two individuals of the same sex. The respective states would have their equivalent in the respective state enactments.

Although contemporary voices have called for the law on sodomy to be repealed in the name of human rights, some Christians believe this acrimonious law should be retained to prevent normalizing of same-sex relationships.

Then there are those who hold the view that the state should not discriminate against persons with same-sex attraction by criminalizing their sexual activity, but does not mete out similar penalties on heterosexual couples who commit sexual improprieties like premarital sex or adultery.

The Church's Plumb Line

To conservative, Scripture-based believers, the LGBT moral stand clearly contravenes God's intentions and admonitions on sexual relationships.

The Church considers the union of man and woman as part of the order of creation. God Himself is the Author of marriage. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself was unequivocal in saying that to understand marriage and sexual union, we must go back to the beginning and see how God created humanity and to what end (see Matthew 19³ and Mark 10⁴). Jesus holds up the creation story in Genesis as authoritative, reminding us that God created each of us male and female, each for the other. And the sexual union He ordained for husband and wife is a physical union where two become one flesh.

Marriage was intended for Adam and Eve; never Adam and Steve (pun intended). Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, exclaimed, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22 - NKJV). Not he who finds a good man, nor "she who finds a good woman."

The Bible says sex is for procreation, although not solely. Children have a right to fathers and mothers because every individual can trace his or her conception from the union of a male and female. This will not be the case in the context of a homosexual relationship.

Homosexuality, according to the apostle Paul, is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:9-11).

³ Matthew 19:4-6 (NKJV) 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,' 5 and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."

⁴ Mark 10:6-9 (NKJV) 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.' 7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

In 1 Timothy 1:9-11, he said, "...knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, *for sodomites*, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is *contrary to sound doctrine* (anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching – NLT), according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (NKJV).

To the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul said that those who indulge in carnal expression will suffer God's judgment, "Do you not know that *the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God*? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, *nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites*, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10).

Clearly, all *heterosexuals and homosexuals alike*, who do not observe propriety in sexual and moral matters are soundly admonished. The Church has never stood against homosexuality alone. Apostle Paul wants us to understand that homosexual desire and its bodily expression are a negative aspect of human experience and, if indulged, will expose us to final judgment, just like the other improprieties and sins mentioned.

The Imminent Dangers

As Scriptures cannot be compromised, the present challenges before the Church are clear.

The Church risks succumbing to the popular sentiments of the day when it does not contend against permeating uncleanness in so many of our believers' lives. The same old trick of the devil in the garden of Eden is being played out in today's Church: "Did God really say?"⁵ This danger of re-interpreting Scriptures and re-defining sin is ever-present.

The unwillingness to live out God's will. Paul reminds the Church at Thessalonica that "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NKJV).

The passion to live a lifestyle of holiness is missing in our congregations. The gospel's offer of freedom to change comes with the challenge to become slaves of righteousness instead of being enslaved to sin (1 Cor 6:11, 18-20). Like

⁵ Genesis 3:1 NLT

an iceberg, many of us may be perching only at the tip of righteousness, while deep rot and uncleanness have set unseen beneath.

More and more are sadly dithering. In the days of Isaiah, God's people were found "calling evil, good."⁶ When the rainbow flag first appeared on Facebook, many were quick to press "like" in support. In the effort to be perceived as inclusive, Christians sometimes are reluctant to call "sin" a "sin". Sadly, others choose to maintain their *elegant silence* in the face of uncleanness.

When confronted by the onslaught of sexual sin, God's people seem paralyzed akin to the silent response Elijah received when challenging the Israelites to make a stand on Mount Carmel.

The Church does not Discriminate

It is pertinent to state the Church regards everyone with equal respect, regardless of his or her sexual orientation.

All are worthy of God's love and mercy. The Church feels for and empathizes with those who struggle with homosexual inclinations. These individuals are equally unique and of infinite worth; loved by God as His children and in need of redemption like any other people.

The Church should not discriminate against the homosexual person. However, this does not mean that the Church consequently condones homosexual acts.

Although the Church is increasingly pressured to accept homosexuality in secular society, rewriting God's rules is never an option. One of the marks of a Christian is his or her desire to be obedient to Christ's teaching. Christianity is a demanding faith. The Scriptures define and change us, and not the other way around. A biblical sexual ethic does not, indeed cannot, change with the times.

I began by stating that homosexuality can be traced back to ancient times when the notoriously sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God. Since then, nothing has changed — God is still God, and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is still sin.

Nevertheless, just as God sent angels and Abraham to Sodom and Gomorrah to offer sinners redemption, the Church today must similarly preach

⁶ Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV) Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

the message of forgiveness, redemption and holiness so that everyone can live a truly sanctified and transformed life.