

The Silence of Jesus

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Your friends, your TV, even your teachers say, “If Jesus never mentioned the sin of same-sex behavior, then it must be okay!” How can you respond in love?

Scripture teaches that sex (whether heterosexual or homosexual) outside of marriage is sinful. Genesis 1 and 2 tell us that God’s gift of sex is “very good” only between one man and one woman in marriage. This is why Scripture clearly teaches that all forms of same-sex behavior (even within a consensual, committed relationship) are condemned by God. (See Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:18–27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10.)

Scripture also teaches that we can confess our sin — including our sexual sin — and receive complete forgiveness because of Christ’s sacrifice for us (1 John 1:9; 2:1–2). But if we reject what Scripture says about our sin, we reject the forgiveness Christ won for that sin (1 John 1:8, 10).

One common argument used by people who want to dismiss what Scripture says about same-sex behavior is that the four Gospels don’t record one word from Jesus Himself about same-sex behavior. *If Jesus never mentioned the sin of same-sex behavior, much less condemned it, they say, then we are free to ignore what the rest of Scripture says about same-sex behavior.* How can we respond to this argument so that people may agree with what God says about their sin and then rejoice in the forgiveness and new life they can have through faith in Christ?

1. Jesus’ silence on same-sex behavior does not mean that He affirmed it. Jesus never mentions bestiality (Lev. 20:15–16), incest (Lev. 18:6–18) or the abuse of people with physical disabilities (Lev. 19:14). Does this mean that Jesus would tolerate or even affirm such behaviors? Hardly!
2. The Jewish culture of Jesus’ day condemned even consensual same-sex behavior between adults. Jesus didn’t need to address that sin issue within the Jewish culture. In addition, if Jesus had *affirmed* homosexual behavior, we should find evidence of Him condemning the views of His own people since He never hesitated rebuking and correcting them on other issues where He disagreed with them.

3. Jesus’ use of Genesis 1 and 2 in Matt. 19:1–12 shows He viewed the creation account as a commentary on God’s will for human sexuality. In Matt. 19:1–12, Jesus teaches that the only option to sex between one man and one woman in marriage is celibacy! (Some suggest that Jesus’ mention of eunuchs in Matt. 19:1–12 is an affirmation of homosexual behavior. But the Greek term *eunouchoi* refers to those who are celibate and not to those who engage in homosexual behavior.)
4. In Mark 7:21, Jesus speaks negatively of sexual immorality (*porneiai*) along with adultery. The Greek term *porneiai* was used among the Jews to speak of all the sexual prohibitions listed in Leviticus 18 and 20, and this included consensual same-sex behavior. When Jesus condemned the sin of *porneiai*, He was condemning all forms of same-sex behavior.
5. If Jesus had *affirmed* consensual same-sex behavior, we would have expected His Jewish enemies to use this to discredit Him because the Jewish culture of that day believed that same-sex behavior was clearly condemned by Scripture. But the Jews say nothing about Jesus’ *affirmation* of same-sex behavior.
6. Jesus’ love for sinners does not mean that He tolerated or affirmed their sin. Jesus calls us to turn away from the sins He has forgiven. There is no reason to believe that Jesus would make an exception for same-sex behavior when He clearly expected people to repent of all other sexual sins.
7. Jesus entrusted His teaching to His chosen apostles. (See John 17:16–20 and Acts 26:15–18.) When Paul shares Jesus’ teaching with the Gentiles (whose culture had many who did affirm same-sex behavior), he clearly addresses the issue and condemns even consensual same-sex behavior. Since the apostle Paul speaks for Jesus, we see that Jesus would have condemned same-sex behavior.

As Christians, our primary goal in refuting these kinds of arguments is to help people see the truth of God’s Word about their sin so that they may repent and receive forgiveness and new life through faith in Jesus, the forgiveness and new life that is sure and certain even as we continue to struggle with sinful desires and behaviors.