

Is Love Sufficient?

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February 20, 2015

“**T**here’s nowhere you can be that isn’t where you’re meant to be. It’s easy. All you need is love.”¹ These lyrics by John Lennon and Paul McCartney were sung in the world’s first live global television link in 1967. Initially watched by over 400 million people in 25 countries, the song “All You Need is Love” has become a global slogan and even a philosophy of life for many.² Combine this slogan with Walt Disney’s influential themes of “follow your heart” and “true love,” and the result is entire generations that have adopted a skewed understanding of love and its limitations. This is born out in the way people on both sides of the aisle have approached the issue of homosexuality. Many who oppose the lifestyle refuse to voice their concerns because it would surely be unloving to interfere in the love-life of another. After all, it really isn’t their business anyway. Others who have adopted the homosexual lifestyle challenge, “Isn’t the important thing that I love? Whose business is it anyway if I love this person?”

The simple answer to these questions is that anybody who cares about someone will necessarily care about who and what that person loves. This is an integral part of being in a relationship. In a relationship, when someone fears that the other person’s love may cause harm, there is concern. This is true whether that love is directed toward an inanimate object, an activity, or a person. When someone develops an unhealthy love—whether it be for junk food, online gaming, excessive shopping, addictive substances, or another person—those in relationship with that person will necessarily become concerned. Similarly, when the person’s love is believed to be healthy and beneficial, those in relationship with that person will be happy for him. It is ridiculous to believe that the people who care the most for a person should not care about what and whom he loves.

The same individual who questions whether his love is anyone else’s business would likely be offended if his relationship were treated with complete indifference by his family and friends. This is because he does not truly believe that others should not invest themselves into his relationship. Neither is this what he most wants. What he truly means is that those who disagree with his relationship should not express their disagreement, but this defies the nature of relationship, and it defies the nature of genuine love. According to [1 Corinthians 13:6](#), “[Love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.” True love can never rejoice in a decision which is believed to be immoral. Any effort to do so is not genuine love.

Likewise, the general public who is not in close relationship with the individual is entitled to make his relationship their business. This is because the homosexual community has made this a public issue. Once the appeal has been made to redefine marriage in order to accommodate this love, this relationship becomes everybody’s business. When marriage is redefined legally, those who disagree with it are codified as bigots. They are subject to punishment for disagreeing and speaking against this new definition of marriage and for refusing to facilitate or celebrate it. Not only are they subject

¹ “All You Need is Love Lyrics.”

² Wikipedia, “All You Need is Love.”

to punishment, but the punishment can be intensified because it can be classified as a hate crime. Already this has been foreshadowed by the city of Houston subpoenaing the sermons of pastors who opposed the city's equal rights ordinance,³ and by lawsuits such as the baker⁴ and the florist who refused to provide their services to a gay wedding.⁵

When marriage is redefined legally, it changes dozens of aspects of society. It affects legal codes, educational curriculum, religious institutions, etc. This has already been demonstrated in other countries. In Denmark clergy are now required to facilitate same-sex wedding ceremonies in their churches. Individual priests can refuse, but the local bishop must arrange a replacement for their church.⁶ In England pastors are being arrested and threatened with arrest for passing out literature opposed to homosexuality.⁷ And parents in Canada cannot opt their children out of same-sex education in the public schools.⁸ Moreover, those in Canada were told by a judge that they have no right even to know what a homosexual advocate taught their children in the classroom.⁹

Beyond this, it simply is not true that the love experienced between individuals is the only thing that matters. Every society establishes acceptable boundaries for sexual relationships. These are requirements in addition to love which must be met if the couple is to marry—or even to have sexual intercourse. To illustrate this, consider the case of incest. In Indiana, a 72-year-old grandmother fell madly in love with her 26-year-old grandson.¹⁰ Likewise, in Germany a brother and sister who were estranged at birth eventually met and fell in love. However, the law in both countries prohibits these couples from marrying one another. In fact, in Germany it is illegal for close relatives to have any sexual relationship. According to Professor Kunze in a *BBC News* article, “[T]he law is here for a good reason. Medical research has shown that there is a higher risk of genetic abnormalities when close relatives have a child together. When siblings have children, there is a 50% chance that the child will be disabled.”¹¹ This couple, which had lived together for six years and had given birth to four children, appears to have substantiated this claim as two of their children are disabled. Nevertheless, they claimed discrimination when the brother was jailed, and they presented many of the same heart-rending appeals as are frequently offered by homosexuals. At one point the sister said, “I just want to live with my family, and be left alone by the authorities and by the courts.”¹² Nevertheless, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Germany is entitled to ban incest. This is just one example of the many boundaries that society places around sexual relationships.

Another example is polygamy. Not only are polygamous marriages forbidden, but in many places a person can be imprisoned for such an arrangement.¹³ Still another example is that of under-age relationships. In many countries, it is a criminal offense to engage in sexual activity with an under-age child—even if that child desires the relationship. Outrage is a common reaction to stories such

³ Sanburn, “Houston’s Pastors Outraged after City Subpoenas Sermons over Transgender Bill.”

⁴ Fields, “Judge Orders Colorado Bakery to Cater for Same-sex Weddings.”

⁵ “Washington State Judge Rules Against Florist Who Refused Gay Wedding.”

⁶ Orange, “Gay Danish Couples Win Right to Marry in Church.”

⁷ Blake, “Christian Preacher Arrested for Saying Homosexuality is a Sin.”

⁸ Craine, “Toronto School Board: Parent’s Can’t Opt Kids Out of Pro-homosexual Curriculum.”

⁹ Baklinski, “Judge: Parents have No Right to Know what Homosexual Activist Taught Their Children in School.”

¹⁰ Nikkhah, “Grandmother and Grandson to have Child Together.”

¹¹ Moore, “Couple Stand by Forbidden Love.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Is Polygamy Illegal?”

as India's child brides as young as five years of age,¹⁴ or Britain's barrister who advocated lowering the legal age of consent to 13 in order to stop the "persecution of old men."¹⁵ This is because it is innately understood that when it comes to sexual relationships, there must be boundaries.

Governments and individuals alike draw lines at some point defining when love is no longer sufficient to condone a sexual relationship. Some of these lines are drawn because of moral reasons. Some are drawn because of genetic reasons. Others are drawn because of psychological reasons. Still other lines are drawn because of social reasons. Whatever the reason, anytime a line is drawn, it will necessarily make some people feel upset, misunderstood, and mistreated. However, this does not mean that it is unloving to draw such a line, and these are not sufficient reasons to remove these boundary lines. If the argument is accepted in the case of homosexuality that love alone is enough to excuse a sexual relationship, then there remains no consistent reason to uphold these other protective sexual boundary lines, and this would genuinely be an unloving act.

Already other sexual minority groups are using the reasoning and legal appeals of the homosexual community to secure legal protection and public acceptance. In Utah a provision of the law used to prosecute polygamy was struck down by a federal judge.¹⁶ Moreover, polyamorous relationships are now favorably portrayed in popular movies and television shows such as *Her*, *Savages*, *Sister Wives*, *Big Love*, *Utopia*, and *Wife Swap*. Even extreme sexual preferences such as bestiality is gaining public favor with *New York Magazine* publishing a 62,000 word interview with a bisexual man who is married to a woman but has regular sex with horses.¹⁷ If how a person feels toward another is sufficient to condone a sexual relationship, then there can be no consistent argument against these other practices.

Perhaps most significant of all is the fact that the Bible does not teach that God is unconcerned about whom a person loves, but simply that a person loves. [First Corinthians 5:1-5](#) condemns incest:

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It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

[First Corinthians 6:15-18](#) condemns prostitution, *“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!*

¹⁴ Daily Mail Reporter, “The Secret World of the Child Bride: Heartbreaking Pictures of the Girls as Young as FIVE Who are Married Off to Middle-aged Men.”

¹⁵ Meredith, “Age of Consent Should be Lowered to 13 to Stop Persecution of Old Men, Says Top Barrister.”

¹⁶ Wetzstein, “Judge Strikes Down Part of Anti-bigamy Law in Utah.”

¹⁷ Tsoulis-Reay, “What It's Like to Date a Horse.”

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body." And Galatians 5:19 condemns adultery, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, ..." (KJV).

God cares very much whom and how a person loves. Not all love is acceptable to God; therefore, we too should not be willing to accept all forms of love. Contrary to the words of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, it would appear that love is not all that we need, and it is possible to find ourselves in places God never intended us to be.

Continuing in the theme of "love conquers all," a common challenge presented by practicing homosexuals who claim the title "Christian" is, "I'm gay, and Jesus loves me, so what's wrong with that?" At the core of this challenge is the belief that Jesus' love is all we need. Jesus loves us because we are His creation whom He created to have a relationship with, but He didn't die for us so that we can remain in our sins. Our sin is what separates us from God and breaks that relationship. Romans 3:23 and 6:23 says, "[A]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ... [T]he wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is our Savior because He sets us free from our sin according to Matthew 1:21, "[Y]ou shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Jesus died to free us from our sins and to transform us into a new creation. Second Corinthians 5:15-17 says, "[H]e died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." No longer is the Christian identified by his fleshly passions. Jesus died in order that we might no longer live according to our sinful passions but according to the lifestyle that Jesus has called us to.

The first word in the gospel is "repent," which means "to change one's mind or purpose."¹⁸ This is seen in Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:7; Mark 1:15; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:3-5; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; and Acts 26:19-20. Salvation is conditioned upon our willingness to turn away from our sins and align our passions and actions with what the Bible says. Our salvation is not dependent upon how much God loves us. According to John 3:16, God loves everyone enough to have died for us in order to offer us a way of salvation, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Certainly, God has a passionate love for all men; however, not all men will be saved. Second Peter 3:9 teaches that if the decision of who should be saved were entirely up to how God feels, then everyone would be saved, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." Not all men receive salvation because God's love and desire to see all men saved is limited by His justice.

Certainly, Jesus loves us, but Scripture teaches that this is not sufficient to secure our salvation. Matthew 7:21-23 teaches that we must have a relationship with Jesus in order to receive salvation, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we

¹⁸ Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*, 525.

not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” The word “know” in this passage means more than “to be aware of.” Clearly an omniscient God is aware of these people. Instead, this is a word that can mean “to understand completely” and “implies an active relation between the one who ‘knows’ and the person or thing ‘known.’”¹⁹ Jesus says to these people that they may have thought that they loved Him, but there was no intimacy—there was no relationship. Because of this, they do not receive salvation.

It is not enough that Jesus loves us; we must also love Him. Jesus said in [John 14:15](#) that if we truly love Him, then we will keep His commandments, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* According to [John 15:10](#), it is through obeying Jesus’ commandments that we abide in His love, *“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”* Jesus was not so soft and sentimental that He had no standards. In [Matthew 7:21–23](#), Jesus said that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who *do* the will of God.

Certainly, this is an impossible task on our own, but [Ephesians 5:25–27](#) teaches that Jesus is actively sanctifying those who belong to Him, *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”* Additionally, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) teaches that God empowers His people to overcome temptation, *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*

Of course, some will challenge that Jesus never specifically forbid homosexuality. This perspective fails to recognize that Jesus’ commandments are contained in the entire Bible, not just the Gospels. [Second Peter 1:20–21](#) and [2 Timothy 3:16](#) teach that all of Scripture is the result of God’s inspiration. Moreover, the argument that Jesus did not consider homosexuality to be a sin because He never specifically addressed the issue of homosexuality is an argument from silence which is never a particularly strong argument. Jesus failed to specifically address many issues that we believe to be sin based upon the testimony of Scripture, or are we to believe that because Jesus never specifically addressed spousal abuse, substance abuse, bestiality, rape, or incest that these are somehow not important to Jesus and unmeriting of the title “sin?”

Jesus was called Rabbi because of His deep understanding of the Law of Moses and the acceptable application of that Law ([John 3:1–2](#)). During the time of Christ, homosexuality was commonly practiced within the Roman Empire, but the Jews considered it to be immoral, sinful, and against the Law of Moses. At the very least, Jesus would have been aware that the common interpretation of the Law of Moses was that homosexuality is a sin. The fact that He did not speak against this understanding should not lead a person to assume that He disagreed with it. Rather, the assumption should be made that Jesus accepted this interpretation of the Law unless evidence can be presented to the contrary. Jesus taught in [Matthew 15:18–19](#) that sexual immorality defiles a man, *“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”* Given that it

¹⁹ Ibid, 347.

was generally understood among the Jews at that time that homosexuality should be included under the title “sexual immorality,” and given that Jesus did not offer homosexuality as an exception to this sexual immorality, it is reasonable to believe that Jesus had no varying views on the issue of homosexuality from the other religious leaders of His time.

Furthermore, this argument that Jesus did not consider homosexuality to be a sin because He never specifically addressed it assumes that Jesus never presented a principle that applies to the specific question of homosexuality. However, in [Matthew 19:4–6](#), Jesus answered a question about divorce by affirming that God’s pattern for marriage has always been the union of a man and a woman, *“He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.’”*

This principle answered the question of divorce which was asked in Jesus’ time, and this principle answers the question of homosexuality which is being asked in our time. In this sense, Jesus did address the issue of homosexuality, indirectly.

Keep in mind that Jesus Himself declared in [Matthew 5:17](#) that He came not to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. The Old Testament Law consisted of redemption laws and moral laws. Jesus fulfilled the redemption laws—the dietary matters, rituals, cleansings, sacrifices, and priestly duties—by dying on the cross. As for the moral laws, Jesus raised the standard ([Matthew 5:21–22 and 27–28](#)). Never did Jesus teach against or remove any of the moral laws in the Old Testament. Rather, He affirmed them by referring to such sins as murder and sexual immorality which were defined as sinful in the Old Testament Law. None of the moral laws were removed in Christ’s advent. Instead, they are reaffirmed throughout the New Testament.

Those who truly love Jesus will follow His commandments to reject the practice of homosexuality in [Leviticus chapters 18 and 20](#); [Romans chapter one](#); [1 Corinthians chapter 6](#); [1 Timothy chapter one](#); and [Jude chapter one](#). Certainly, Jesus loves homosexuals, but Jesus does not save homosexuals—just as Jesus does not save thieves, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, and anyone else whose identity continues to rest in an act that God has declared to be sinful. Instead, Jesus saves people who have repented of these actions and have assumed their identity as a child of God through Jesus Christ. Certainly, this includes individuals who continue to struggle with the temptation of same-sex attraction, just as there are children of God who continue to struggle with the temptation of drunkenness, adultery, and idolatry, but their identity rests in God, and they strive to submit themselves to His commandments.

It would appear that John Lennon and Paul McCartney over-simplified with their slogan “all you need is love,” and Walt Disney’s theme “follow your heart” is suitable only for fairy tales. “Isn’t the important thing that I love?” is a challenge that falls desperately short of truth, and “Jesus loves me, and I’m gay, so it must be OK” reveals an ignorance of the true gospel. Yet this ignorance is not unique to homosexuals. Far too often we ourselves depend upon this very same excuse for any number of other sins. We convince ourselves that God will overlook our sinful behavior because He loves us. Subconsciously, we ourselves declare, “Jesus loves me and I’m a liar, proud, greedy, spiteful, unreliable, a gossip, or any number of other sins; but it must be OK.” Somehow we convince ourselves that Jesus loves us, and we are flawed creatures; therefore, Jesus must accept us just the

way we are. Certainly, Jesus loves each and every one of us, but Jesus is not content to overlook our sin. Just as it was before we were saved, our sin breaks our intimacy with God. It drives a wedge of separation between us and God. [Isaiah 59:2](#) says, “[Y]our iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” Fortunately, [1 John 1:9](#) teaches, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The good news of the gospel is that we can be freed from our sins and experience an intimacy with God if we will place our trust in Him and simply give up our sinful habits, choosing instead to obey God’s commandments.

Not every sin is as obvious, risky, or influential as that of practicing homosexuality. Nevertheless, every sin is rooted in the very same mistake: the refusal to submit ourselves to God’s commandments. Fortunately, we have a God who loves us enough to refuse to ignore our rebellion. We have a God who stands ready to rescue us from any sin in which we find ourselves ensnared and to bestow upon us a new identity: child of God.

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