

Q. What are your thoughts on Jennifer Knapp's disclosure that she is living a gay lifestyle?

A. Jennifer Knapp is a Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) singer who has disclosed that she is living in a lesbian relationship (see *Christianity Today*, "Jennifer Knapp Comes Out" <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/music/interviews/2010/jenniferknapp-apr10.html>). The bottom line of Knapp's announcement seems to contain the triple ideas that the only Scriptures against homosexuality are in the Old Testament, that there is a spirit that "overrides" the question of whether homosexuals should be allowed in the church, and that living a gay lifestyle and being a Christian are not at odds.

Concerning the first of these, Knapp has been quoted as saying, "The Bible has literally saved my life. I find myself between a rock and a hard place—between the conservative evangelical who uses what most people refer to as the 'clobber verses' to refer to this loving relationship as an abomination, while they're eating shellfish and wearing clothes of five different fabrics, and various other Scriptures we could argue about."

Not Just the Old Testament

Knapp's references to eating shellfish and wearing clothes of different fabrics are references to laws of the Old Testament (see, for example, Leviticus 11:12 and 19:19). If it were true that the only biblical arguments against homosexuality are in the Old Testament (such as Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13), then her implied accusation of hypocrisy against those who use "clobber verses" against homosexuality might be valid. Old Testament laws do not apply to Christians, and Christians who try to use them in their arguments against homosexuality are only confusing the issue and showing their ignorance of the Bible they are supposed to be following.

But the truth is that the New Testament has much to say about homosexuality. In the context of answering the Pharisees' question about divorce, Jesus Christ describes the God-ordained setting for a

sexual relationship: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). In these verses, Jesus Christ Himself tells us that God's intent for a sexual relationship is between a male (Greek *arsen*) and a female (Greek *thēlu*) in a lasting relationship (i.e. marriage) that man was not to put asunder (in divorce).

In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul, starting with nearly identical language, tells us that marriage is between a male and a female because it is an earthly picture of the relationship between Christ and the church: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife [Greek *gunaika*—woman] see that she reverence her husband [Greek *andra*—man (as being male)]" (Ephesians 5:31-33). It is through the marital relationship between a man and a woman and its endurance through life that God wants us to understand the beautiful, eternal relationship between Christ and the church. Any other sexual relationship distorts this picture from which God wants us to learn.

In Revelation 19:7, we see this same picture: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Revelation 21:2 and 9-10 show us this in an allegorical figure: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride [Greek *numphēn*—a veiled woman, a bride] adorned for her husband [Greek *andri*—man (as being male)]... And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

A sexual relationship that is not between a husband and his wife is a perversion of this picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. This is why homosexuality is correctly referred to as a perversion. We should not be surprised to learn, therefore, that the New Testament Scriptures specifically label homosexuality as an

abomination. Well into the time of the New Covenant, the church age in which we are still living today, the apostle Paul wrote, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind" (1 Corinthians 6:9). The Greek word translated "fornicators" is *pornoi*. These are people who commit *porneia*, which refers to any sexual sin (sex outside marriage). (These words are related to our modern English word, "pornography.") The word "adulterers" is from the Greek word *moichoi*. This word refers to a sexual relationship between two people, at least one of whom is married to someone else. "Effeminate" is translated from *malakoi*, which literally refers to a man who wears soft, feminine clothing. It also refers to a catamite.

The last Greek word in the list in verse 9 above is *arsenokoitai*. This is the word that is translated "abusers of themselves with mankind." It means a male having sexual relations with a male. So, here we see a list of people who commit various sexual sins, with homosexuals (at least male homosexuals) specifically mentioned. The list continues in verse 10 with other types of sinners mentioned and concludes with the same point as in verse 9 that these people will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is clear New Testament evidence that practicing homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now notice verse 11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This pulls the rug out from under all who claim to be Christians while continuing to practice a homosexual lifestyle. The past tense in this verse is clear. Some of the people to whom Paul was writing *were* these things. But, now that they are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, they are no longer. If, after reading these verses, we say that a Christian can continue to practice homosexuality, we must also say that a Christian can continue to be a thief or an extortionist (verse 10). It is completely absurd!

Lesbianism Specified

Up to this point, Ms. Knapp might say that lesbianism is not specifically mentioned. But notice in Romans 1:18-32 toward whom the wrath of God is directed:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the

truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: **for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another;** men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

(emphasis added to help with reference)

This, in fact, helps us to understand what is really behind what Knapp means when she says that there is a spirit that overrides "the theological argument as to whether or not we should or shouldn't allow homosexuals within our church." Knapp says, "There's a spirit that overrides that for me, and (that is) what I've been gravitating to in

Christ and why I became a Christian in the first place.” Plainly, Knapp is not gravitating to the Holy Spirit. Jennifer Knapp is a prime example of someone who has been deceived into believing her feelings override the clear teachings of the Word of God. The spirit she speaks of is the spirit of a reprobate mind in rebellion against God.

In the section I have given emphasis to above, we read of women changing “the natural use into that which is against nature.” This might seem unclear to modern readers until we read the context that immediately follows: “And likewise also the men...burned in their lust one toward another.” Without any doubt, this latter statement is a reference to male homosexuality, and it makes plain that the previous statement is about female homosexuality, or lesbianism. These things are called “vile affections” practiced by those who do not “like to retain God in their knowledge” and whom God has given over to a “reprobate mind.”

There are many other Scriptures in the New Testament that mention sexual impurity as a sin. But I want to specifically point out two of them. Revelation 21:8 speaks of “whoremongers” [*pornois*—people who practice sex outside of a marriage between a man and a woman] as having “their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” Revelation 22:15 speaks of those who are left outside the city of God. Once again, these people include “whoremongers” [*pornois*].

The Bible unmistakably teaches that a homosexual lifestyle and Christianity are at odds. But it also teaches that there is cleansing and justification and sanctification to those who *were* homosexuals, just as there is for all sinners.

Homosexuality—A Sin Like All Others

And this brings out an important point that must be said. In the Scriptures we examined, homosexual sins were listed right along with many others (and there are a number of other Scriptures with similar lists). The Bible does not single out homosexual practices as more sinful than any other sin. Yet this is the impression you might get listening to many Christian and conservative commentators. When we see homosexuality as a grosser or more revolting sin than other sins, we are showing a deficiency in ourselves. God sees *all sin* as so revolting that He must remain separate from it. This is the way we Christians should see it.

But, you might ask, what about Sodom and Gomorrah? Surely God destroyed them because of their homosexuality, proving it to be worse than other sins. Don't be so sure. Yes, homosexuality seems to have been rampant in Sodom and Gomorrah. But they had more problems than homosexuality, and God does not even list homosexuality among Sodom's sins in Ezekiel 16:49: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Look again at that list! We may be stunned to find fullness of bread and idleness listed among the sins of Sodom. We might begin to understand, however, when we see how these can be connected with the last sin listed—not helping the poor and needy. Apparently, many of the people had more than they needed and even had extra time on their hands, but did nothing to help the poor. I think we would be better off examining ourselves for these sins rather than condemning the "Sodomy" of others.

I think these rallying cries against homosexuality are spurred, not by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but by a self-righteousness that rears its head because homosexuality is a sin that does not tempt the majority of people. Not being tempted by it, we can feel self righteous by standing up and decrying it. I was once in a men's prayer meeting when one of the men said that we Christians should get bombs and blow up all of the "queers" at gay parades. How sad that this man did not see what kind of spirit he was of (see Luke 9:55-56).

In 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, Paul writes, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." God has not set Christians up as the accusers of the world. Yet, condemnation of non-Christians has become so common among Christians that most Christians apparently think the Bible commands it. It seems that many non-Christians also think of the stereotypical Christian as standing with a pointing finger crying "sin"! But the Bible tells us to cry "forgiveness and freedom from sin to those who believe on Jesus Christ."

Getting the Gospel All Wrong

In the same *Christianity Today* article cited above, Knapp says, "If God expects me, in order to be a Christian, to be able to theologically

justify every move that I make, I'm sorry. I'm going to be a miserable failure." Reading this in context, I think what she means is that she sees Christianity as it has been presented to her as jumping through hoops to stay a Christian. But she now rejects this and expects that God will accept her even as she lives her gay lifestyle. What Jennifer Knapp, and so many others, seem not to realize is that God does not expect us to justify ourselves, whether theologically or otherwise. But neither will He accept us unchanged.

This same mistake about the Gospel can be seen in a statement made in 2008 by another CCM artist who announced that he is gay: "This is what it really comes down to," stated Ray Boltz. "If this is the way God made me, then this is the way I'm going to live. It's not like God made me this way and he'll send me to hell if I am who he created me to be — I really feel closer to God because I no longer hate myself" ("Ray Boltz Comes Out," http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/09/ray_boltz_comes.html). The problem with this thinking is that every single human being on the face of the earth is born a sinner with a natural inclination to sin. And we do all sin. The Bible tells us that this sinfulness is not God's fault, as Boltz suggests, but is our own fault. We are responsible for it, and it condemns us to separation from God and eternal punishment. But God, in His love, sent His Son to suffer and die in the place of all those who will believe on Him as their Savior. Yet, contrary to what Boltz and Knapp believe, God doesn't save us and leave us in sin. He saves us out of sin. Yes, He puts believers under New Covenant laws that do not condemn. But He does more. He transforms the believer! Something happens to those who believe in Jesus. They die with Him and rise to a new life.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in

that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Romans 6:3-13

None of this is forced on anyone. God graciously gives His children belief and a new mind and a desire to live for Him. Although they may struggle in their new life, their desires and goals and values are God's. They are never contrary to His revealed will in the Bible. When someone says that she does not want to deal with what the Bible says about her lifestyle but that, instead, "a spirit" overrides that, something is seriously wrong.

A Pitiable Situation and Dangerous Example

Jennifer Knapp should receive our pity, not our condemnation. If she refuses admonition, then she should be treated as a non-Christian (which is the meaning of Matthew 18:17). But we should keep in mind that non-Christians are candidates for evangelism.

Also sad in this situation is the dangerous example Knapp has set. Knapp's philosophy seems to boil down to believing that God doesn't want you to feel bad, so He must want you to do whatever feels good to you. How many young people who have been brought up in the church but are doctrinally weak will be influenced to think that Knapp's argument sounds reasonable? This brings up the general danger in having "Christian superstars" in the first place. These people are only human and should not be seen as examples.

Moral Whips and Ouija Boards

The Jennifer Knapp incident brings into focus two of the groups (there are more) that evangelical Christianity is dividing into. On the one hand, there are the conservatives who are seen as being politically conservative, war hawks, and crusaders against sin our culture. They consider the Bible as central to their beliefs, though they may have little knowledge of how to understand it. They are also perceived as lacking compassion.

On the other hand are those who see the Bible as a book upon which we can put our personal interpretations based on our experiences. What we are to believe and do as Christians is not dictated by absolutes but is in a state of flux that changes with the culture. Evangelicals, they say, must leave behind the divisiveness of doctrine, preaching, and moral absolutes; and, instead, work for social change, economic equity, and improving the environment.

Both groups are wrong. The Bible is neither to be used as a moral whip to scourge society into obedience nor as a sort of personal Ouija board to use to find a course in life that feels good to us. Each Christian has a responsibility to feed on the Word of God, make an effort to understand the Bible without prejudice as it interprets itself, and conform to it. Those who are truly converted do not want to conform to the dictates of culture or even to their own carnal inclinations. Instead, they want to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, and "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).