

**The following is a workshop summary from the “MAKING ROOM FOR ALL”  
CONFERENCE, held in Grand Rapids October 29-31, 2009**

**Biblical Studies: “Clobber Texts” & “Texts of Promise”**

Bruce Cornwell and Lynn Japinga

Reporter: Judy Parr

Bruce Cornwell is a pastor at the Community Reformed Church of Colonie, New York, where he has served for twenty years. Lynn Japinga teaches religion and women’s studies at Hope College.

The Biblical Studies workshop was a means for discussion about Biblical passages that are often used to condemn people who are homosexuals. It included references to Biblical passages that affirm inclusiveness for all of God’s children, and considered some questions that help in studying the Bible.

Genesis 18 and 19; Deuteronomy 23:17-18; Leviticus 18:19-22 & 20:13, 18; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-10; and I Timothy 1:8-10 are often deemed the “clobber passages” when interpreted as condemning persons who are homosexuals.

Lynn Japinga listed some of many Bible passages that affirm inclusion of all of God’s children: Jonah 3-4; Matthew 7:12; Luke 10; Acts 10, 11, and 15; Romans 8:28; I Corinthians 7; Galatians 3:28; and Ephesians 2:11-12. “The whole arc of Scripture,” affirmed Japinga, “moves toward more justice and inclusion.”

Helpful questions to think about in studying the Bible are the following:

What did the writers mean then?

What do the writers mean now?

What are cultural assumptions behind the text?

What are cultural assumptions behind our interpretation of the text?

What is the role of the writer?

How are the stories in the Bible told in ways to accommodate human weaknesses in comprehension?

How do we interpret the Bible when our experience and scientific evidence seem to modify or even contradict what the Bible states?

Can the Bible be the authority for what comprises “family values,” especially when we read the stories of the families of Jacob and of David?

Recommending *The Good Book* by Peter J. Gomes, Japinga stated that often the root of homophobia, sexism, and racism is fear. Debate about the Bible, without efforts to learn more about each other and build relationships, does little to remove the fear of differences.

Resources:

Gess, Sally B. and Donald E. Messer. *Caught in the Crossfire: Helping Christians Debate Homosexuality*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Glaser, Chris R. *Coming Out As Sacrament*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Gomes, Peter J. *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

McNeill, John J. *The Church and the Homosexual*. Kansas City, Kansas: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1976.

Nelson, James B. *Between Two Gardens: Reflections on Sexuality and Religious Experience*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983.

Soards, Marion L. *Scripture & Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Via, Dan O. and Robert A. J. Gagnon. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

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