

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Red Bud, Illinois**  
**Adult Bible Class**

Book: "The Church & Homosexuality: Searching for a Middle Ground" (Kirk House Publishers, 2002)

Author: Dr. Merton Strommen is ELCA pastor and research psychologist. His book has nine chapters. Each chapter contains evidence from social science that reflects negatively upon homosexual practice but then the author ends the chapter trying to soften that view in an attempt to look for balance.

Chapter Six- A Dilemma For the Christian Church

(page 77) "There are countless Christians who are homosexuals but not by choice. Their sexual orientation is the result of factors most of which are outside their control."

(page 78) "The dilemma for the church centers not only in the fact that such Christians are part of the church, but also that these Christians are convinced their sexual orientation is God-given, a life to be celebrated and enjoyed. They insist that homosexuality is a gift of God, that this orientation is irreversible, and that homosexuality is as normal as heterosexuality. These gay Christians believe that the rights and privileges accorded heterosexuals should also be theirs, and this includes ordination of non-celibate gays and the blessing of same-sex marriages."

(page 79) "This climate of condemnation, generated by some on the religious right, complicates the situation for people who wish to view this issue from the perspective of Scripture and reliable research. The law orientation of such people stands in opposition to an approach that is ministry oriented."

(page 80) "Gay activists want their point of view established in the church....Some of these people are on national committees and boards of church bodies."

(page 81) "Concerted efforts are currently underway to get national assemblies of major denominations to legitimize the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals and to legitimize homosexual marriages....Their are many who believe a time is coming when this issue will split their church."

*Conclusion-* (page 82) "The question remains before us. Should Christian churches continue to condemn homosexuality and reject homosexuals, or should they fully endorse the gay agenda? Or is there a middle way?"

Chapter Seven- What Does the Bible Say?

(page 83) "The church has taught for centuries that homosexual practices are wrong in God's eyes." (The author refers often in this chapter to a book by theologian Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practices* [2001] who says that "there is clear, strong, and credible evidence that the Bible unequivocally defines same-sex intercourse as sin".)

(page 84) "The Christian Church's traditional condemnation of homosexuality is based on a handful of Bible passages: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10-11; Romans 1:26-27...(page 85) According to these texts, homosexuality is a behavior God does not favor."

(page 85) “It requires a stretch of the imagination to say that homosexual behavior is another expression of God’s creation—an activity which He can bless and honor. One is faced by the issue—How authoritative is God’s Word? Does one take seriously what is written in Scripture?”

(page 86) “Some biblical scholars are reinterpreting the scriptural passages that deal with homosexuality so they do not condemn homosexual behavior among consenting adults. I am not persuaded.”

(page 88) “If children are helped to view homosexuality as normal, then as they grow older, condemnation and discrimination of homosexuals will largely disappear. This position is currently being held by many intelligent and devout Christians in the Lutheran church and most other denominations....It can be assumed that as educators, pastors, laity, theologians, and policy makers come to accept the position that gays represent another expression of God’s creation it will gradually become church policy.”

(page 88) “Studies in the field of innovation and change have established the fact that in the absence of intellectual opposition, an opposing notion will gradually come to be absorbed into the culture. It will be accepted by degrees, by dint of constant pressure on one side and constant retreat on the other, until the day when it suddenly becomes the church’s official position.”

(page 88) “In addition to those retranslating the Bible passages dealing with homosexuality, some theologians and church leaders are reinterpreting these passages to mean something different from the church’s traditional position. As a result of their efforts the historic position of the church is being fiercely attacked.”

(pages 91-92) “It is significant that the church from its earliest days has rejected same-sex practices...A review of history shows that in each era of the church, Christian moralists have rejected same-sex practices...Clearly the church’s traditional position is being challenged and even rejected by a number of articulate voices. But current scholarship still makes a strong case for the traditional position.”

(page 94) “Love does not always refrain from disagreeing with our neighbor, neither does it justify being hateful and cruel with one’s neighbor. There are times when love motivates us to speak up and challenge the actions of our neighbor. The issue of homosexuality can be a case in point.”

*Conclusion* (page 94) “In the current debate on what the Bible says about homosexuality, those who hold to the historic interpretation want to be faithful to the Scriptures and the tradition of the church and are convinced that these should not be overturned without compelling theological reasons. Those who wish to reinterpret the church’s position are doing that out of love for homosexuals and the desire to protect them from injustice and rejection. They are well-intentioned, but before we accept their agenda we need to look at its implications for the church.”

**Is it fine to be wrong as long as you are sincerely wrong?**