

Film argues that Bible does not condemn homosexuality: For the Bible Tells Me So

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For the Bible Tells Me So, a documentary that seeks to make the case that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality, is making the rounds at film festivals and screenings in select cities.

The 97-minute film weaves biblical analysis with the stories of five Christian families who learn that one of their children is gay.

Two of the families have well-known members: former House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt, whose daughter Chrissy is a lesbian, and Episcopal bishop V. Gene Robinson, who made headlines as the church's first openly gay bishop.

The documentary traces each family's experience of wrestling with how their child's sexuality fits in with their religious beliefs. Some come to accept it; others continue to love their children while still believing that homosexuality is wrong.

One parent's strained relationship with her daughter ends with the girl's suicide. That mother, Mary Lou Wallner, becomes a gay rights activist.

"The gay kids are in the film, but it's really about those parents," said the film's director, Daniel Karlake, at a discussion following the film's Washington premiere.

"The film was made with a conservative Christian audience in mind," Karlake said. His expectation was that those viewers would identify with the parents in the film as they struggled to reconcile their faith with the sexuality of their children.

The film has already won a number of awards, including the HBO Audience Award at the Provincetown Film Festival and the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Seattle International Film Festival. It was also nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

Though reasonably respectful of the opposing point of view, the film is likely to attract audiences already open to the compatibility of scripture and homosexuality.

In addition to the families' stories, the documentary features religious leaders, including Peter Gomes of Harvard University and retired Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu, who maintain that biblical passages typically used to suggest that homosexuality is sinful have been misinterpreted or distorted. The film contends, for example, that some scholars say the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was failure to take in travelers, not homosexuality.

Richard Mouw, the president of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, is the one voice in the film critical of this approach. He disputes that reading of Sodom and Gomorrah. One couple, Brenda and David Poteat, remain uncomfortable with their daughter's sexuality.

Much of the film's analysis of scripture is based on seminars given by Steve Kindle, a Disciples of Christ pastor and the founder of Clergy United for the Equality of Homosexuals. *-Religion News Service*