How Should We Think About Texas’ First Same Sex Wedding?

Last week saw a front-page story of Texas’ first gay marriage. I asked my friend Hope Harris to guest blog for me, responding to this event out of her decades of experience and perspective as a former gay activist before Jesus changed everything in her life.

For well over 25 years I lived openly as a lesbian, advocating for gay rights and Marriage Equality. Just over six years ago I trusted Christ, and since then I have wrestled in depth with resolving my faith and sexuality, gender roles and Marriage Equality. Because of my belief that God’s Word is true, I have landed on the side of the Biblical view of these issues. I can’t even begin to express what a transformation God has made in me, that He would bring me to the place where I embrace the Biblical definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

Last week, on February 19, 2015, Suzanne Bryant and Sarah Goodfriend became the first same sex couple to legally wed in the state of Texas. Shortly after the ceremony, the Texas Supreme Court responded with a stay, making it clear that this same sex marriage license is illegal and is not legally binding. This was a one-time marriage license granted by a probate judge based on the fact that one of the women is battling ovarian cancer, because it is possible that Ms. Goodfriend may not live to see same sex marriage legal in the state of Texas.

How should we think about this?

Let’s start with the premise by which this couple was granted a marriage license. It is based on Ms. Goodfriend’s cancer battle; there is limited information available as to what stage her cancer has progressed to. In its article “Women Wed in Texas”{1}, the Dallas Morning News states,

“Goodfriend, policy director for state Rep. Celia Israel, said during a news conference that her last chemotherapy treatment was 4 1/2 months ago. But, she added: “All of us wonder if the cancer grows back along with the hair growing back.”

I am sorry that Ms. Goodfriend is suffering from ovarian cancer and my prayers are with her for full restoration of health. Furthermore, this not a personal attack on Ms. Goodfriend or her partner Ms. Bryant.

From my experience as an advocate for Marriage Equality, I see this as a public appeal to gain sympathy for same sex couples in Texas. After all, who would deny a “dying woman” and her faithful partner of 31 years the right to make medical and legal decisions? On the surface this sounds like a valid reason to side with the couple—after all, this is a one—time exception.

First, the couple themselves are well educated individuals. Ms. Bryant is an attorney who graduated from Duke Law School. She specializes in second parent adoptions for alternative families, meaning same sex couples. Ms. Goodfriend holds a Ph.D. in Economics from UNC.

It is a fact these women are long term partners and based on their level of education and positions, it would be hard to believe that they have not long ago obtained medical power of attorney and given each other the legal right to make medical decision should the other not have the fortitude to do so. Additionally I am sure they have had the foresight to make funeral arrangements as well.
Let’s look at another aspect of this situation that appeals to our sense of equality and justice.

Bryant said Thursday that being legally married to Goodfriend, who has ovarian cancer, would ensure inheritance. . . “Financially, now we’re intertwined, and we will have community property that we will share.”

As mentioned above, the couple is well educated, and they have the ability—apart from marriage—to legally ensure that their joint property goes to the parties they intend it to, such as the remaining partner and their two adopted daughters. I see this as a ploy to gain the compassion and understanding of their fellow Texans for the larger agenda of granting all same sex couples the rights, responsibilities and portability now granted to heterosexual couples in the State of Texas.

What should our response be as Christ followers who want to uphold the Biblical definition of marriage?

It is crucial that we have each resolved that the Biblical definition is God’s best plan for humanity. I can assure you that the battle is just gaining momentum in Texas. As it does it will also bring many heated and harsh exchanges between people on both sides of the issue, in public forums, town meetings, churches and personal conversations. Anger will be most intense towards those who stand on the side of Biblical marriage.

Understand that those advocating for Marriage Equality often view Christians as unkind, uneducated and intolerant. Because of this, I believe it is all the more necessary for God’s people to become educated. Learn to effectively demonstrate a balance of love and truth. Become men and women who can exercise empathy and compassion without compromise to those with opposing views. Below are three common positions most often brought to the forefront of the Marriage Equality argument.

**Social Constructs Argument:** *Men and women are equal and able to effectively carry out the roles of the opposite gender in traditional marriages.*

Understand that gay marriage dilutes the value of marriage by insisting that there is nothing intrinsically essential about the balance of male and female. It will further weaken the family bonds that God ordained.

**Civil Rights Argument:** *Gay rights and same sex marriage are civil rights issues parallel to the 1960s civil rights movement.*

Same sex marriage is not a civil right, by definition; civil rights are based on socio-economic changes rather than emotional wants and physical attractions.

I have always found this position personally offensive to men and women of color who fought tirelessly to gain equal footing to their counterparts here in the United States. From the perspective of one formerly immersed in the gay culture, I can attest that the majority of the LGBT community are well educated Caucasians who have not suffered the civil injustices people of color have.

**Religious Argument:** *It is necessary to redefine marriage and sexual identity as a cultural norm in order to justify living as one’s “authentic self,” according to one’s primary attractions.*

God created sexuality as complete and perfect; however, as the result of sin entering the world, humanity now lives with sexual and relational brokenness. People are using the term “authentic self” to describe what is actually flesh, the part of us operating independently from God and His intentions for us.
The cultural tide is sweeping the church, not only accepting but affirming men and women who chose their primary identity as gay rather than as a redeemed child of God. Furthermore, many so-called “gay Christians” are advocating redefining God’s design for marriage and sexuality as it is stated in the Bible. (So many people have become desensitized to this label or identity that it fails to disturb any more. How would we respond if a group started a “Christian swingers” or “KKK for Christ” movement?)

This position diminishes the integrity of the Bible as absolute Truth and God-inspired, with the ability to evaluate and direct our lives to become the people God calls us to be.

For those who embrace the Biblical definition of marriage being between one man and one woman, there are moral, ethical and theological implications—for Christians, churches, and pastors in Texas, the United States and beyond. We must not succumb to the cultural tidal wave challenging God’s definition of marriage. Be brave and courageous, friends. Stand firm in God’s Truth. Keep a level head and a calm spirit, and speak the truth in love.


Follow Hope’s blog, Hope’s Pathway, at hopespathway.wordpress.com/

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/how_should_we_think_about_texas_first_same_sex_wedding on February 24, 2015.

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**Gay Agenda in Schools - A Christian Worldview Perspective**

*Kerby Anderson summarizes the efforts currently underway to implement a gay agenda in our public schools, identifying some of the negative consequences. Looking at this initiative from a biblical worldview perspective, he suggests actions that Christians should take in response to these actions.*

**Advancing the Gay Agenda in Schools**

Since the early 1990s gay activists and various homosexual groups have been using strategies that
provide them with greater access to public schools. Usually the focus is upon making the schools a safer place for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual students, thereby justifying the introduction of topics and speakers on the subject of homosexuality. And the establishment of homosexual clubs on campus provides an ongoing program to continue to introduce homosexuality to students on campus.

Two key organizations are the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Both have been helpful in establishing a foothold for homosexual speakers, programs, and curricula.

Perhaps the most effective wedge used by gay activists to open the door to the public schools has been concern over student safety. Kevin Jennings, Executive Director for GLSEN, explained in a speech how the “safety” issue was a most effective strategy:

In Massachusetts, the effective reframing of this issue was the key to the success of the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. We immediately seized upon the opponent’s calling card—safety—and explained how homophobia represents a threat to students’ safety by creating a climate where violence, name-calling, health problems, and suicide are common. Titling our report “Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth,” we automatically threw our opponents onto the defensive and stole their best line of attack. This framing short-circuited their arguments and left them back-pedaling from day one. {1}

The strategy has obviously been successful because no one would want to be against making the schools a safer environment. It almost doesn’t matter whether the allegations are true. Once you raise the concern of safety, most administrators, teachers, and parents quickly fall in line.

There is an irony in all of this. Many of the behaviors that are taught and affirmed in these school programs and clubs are unsafe in term of public health. For example, Pediatrics (Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) reported on a Harvard study that found more than thirty risks positively associated with self-reported gay-lesbian-bisexual (GLB) orientation. {2} So it is indeed ironic that the idea of “safety” is often used as means to introduce teaching and discussion of behaviors that have been proven to be quite “unsafe.”

**The Goals of GLSEN**

The mission statement of GLSEN is straightforward: “The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.” {3} It is a growing, well-funded homosexual organization that promotes homosexual identity and behavior on campus. It has been very successful in gaining access on campus by working with such influential groups as the National Education Association.

Anyone who takes the time to read some of the materials recommended by GLSEN will quickly find that it condones sexual themes and information that would be disturbing to most parents. One
researcher who has taken the time to review these materials and investigate various school programs came to the following seven conclusions:

1. GLSEN believes the early sexualization of children can be beneficial. This means that virtually any sexual activity as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children, as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. “Coming out” (calling oneself or believing oneself to be homosexual) and even beginning homosexual sex practices at a young age, is a normal and positive experience for youth which should be encouraged by teachers and parents, according to GLSEN.

3. Bisexuality, “fluid” sexuality and sexual experimentation is encouraged by GLSEN as a right for all students.

4. Meeting other “gay” and “questioning” youth, sometimes without parental knowledge, is a frequent theme in GLSEN materials. At these meetings, minors will come into contact with college-age people and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. In GLSEN material, the “cool” adults—parents, teachers and counselors—are those who encourage students to embrace homosexuality and cross-dressing. They also allow adult-level freedoms and let children associate with questionable teens or adults.

6. GLSEN resources contain many hostile, one-sided anti-Christian vignettes and opinions, as well as false information about Christianity and the Bible’s position on homosexuality. This encourages antagonism against biblical morality and increases the risk that youth will experiment with high-risk behavior.

7. The spirituality presented positively in GLSEN resources is heavily laced with occult themes and nightmarish images.

Goals of PFLAG and Gay Clubs

PFLAG is a national organization of parents, families, and friends that “promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.” It has been an active organization at the local level to promote its views of human sexuality into schools, churches, and various youth organizations. Although there is a strong emphasis on rights and tolerance, their message about sexuality would be disturbing to most parents.

One researcher who has taken the time to review their brochures and other materials came to the following five conclusions:

1. PFLAG believes in total sexual license for people of all ages. For children, this means that virtually any sexual activity, as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. “Coming out” (calling oneself homosexual or cross-dressing) at a very young age, and even beginning early homosexual sex practices, is a desirable goal in the world according to PFLAG.

3. Bisexuality, fluid sexuality, and sexual experimentation is encouraged by PFLAG. The group believes it’s important for all students to learn about these options.

4. Meeting with other “gay” and “questioning” youth, usually without parental knowledge, is a
frequent theme in PFLAG materials. At these community meetings, thirteen-year-olds will come into contact with college-age youth and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. PFLAG spreads false information about the Bible, religious faith, and restoration of heterosexuality through faith. This misinformation closes the door of change for many young people, and stirs up anti-Christian and anti-Jewish bias and hostility.

Another way the gay agenda is promoted in the public schools is through Gay-Straight Alliance clubs. In the mid-1990s, there were a few dozen Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in U.S. high schools. Today there are 3,200 GSA clubs registered.\(^7\)

These student-run clubs provides a meeting place for student talk about homosexuality and homosexual behaviors. It is also provides a platform for outside speakers to address various topics and for students to organize a “Pride Week” on campus. Once a year, many of the students in these clubs also participate in “The Day of Silence.” This is a day when students will remain silent all day as a way of acknowledging the silence induced by those who oppose homosexuality.

**Legal Liability**

Is there any legal liability when schools permit and even promote the teaching of homosexual education the campus? One group (Citizens for Community Values) believes there is a potential liability. The group has published a manual documenting the potential liability that schools, administrators, and teachers might face. The following is a brief summary of much more information that can be found in the document “The Legal Liability Associated with Homosexual Education in Public Schools.”\(^8\)

**Life expectancy**—The *International Journal of Epidemiology* found that gay and bisexual men involved in homosexual behavior cut off years from their lives. One study showed that “life expectancy at age 20 years for gay and bisexual men is 8 to 20 years less than for all men.” They therefore concluded that if “the same pattern of mortality were to continue, we estimate that nearly half of gay and bisexual men currently aged 20 years will not reach their 65th birthday.”\(^9\)

**Sexually transmitted diseases**—The danger of various STDs, including HIV infection in homosexual relationships, has been well documented through many studies. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health says that “Homosexual men are at significantly increased risk of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, anal cancer, gonorrhea and gastrointestinal infections as a result of their sexual practices. Women who have sex with women are at significantly increased risk of bacterial vaginosis, breast cancer and ovarian cancer than are heterosexual women.”\(^10\)

**Other health risk behaviors**—A study by Harvard University of over four thousand ninth- to twelfth-grade students found that gay-lesbian-bisexual “youth report disproportionate risk for a variety of health risk and problem behaviors” and they found that they “engage in twice the mean number of risk behaviors as did the overall population.”\(^11\)

**Mental health**—A study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* found those engaging in homosexual behavior have a much higher incidence of mental health problems. “The findings support the assumption that people with same-sex sexual behavior are at greater risk for psychiatric disorders.”\(^12\)

Permitting and promoting homosexual activity through on-campus programs and clubs will certainly increase homosexual behavior among students. Administrators, teachers, and parents should
reconsider the impact these programs, and the subsequent behavior, will have on the student body.

**Biblical Response**

When we talk about the issue of homosexuality, it is important to keep two biblical principles in tension. On the one hand we must stay true to our biblical convictions, and on the other hand we should reach out with biblical compassion. Essentially this is the balance between truth and love.

On the one hand, it is crucial for us to understand how the homosexual agenda threatens to normalize and even promote homosexuality within the schools. Moreover, gay activists are pushing an agenda in the courts, the legislature, the schools, and the court of public opinion that will ultimately threaten biblical authority and many of our personal and religious freedoms. Christians, therefore, must stand for truth.

I have provided a brief overview of the groups and programs that are promoting the gay agenda in the public schools. I encourage you to find out what is happening in your community. We have also documented the potential legal liability associated with many of the behaviors that are encouraged by these programs. Often administrators and teachers are unaware of the potential dangers associated with homosexual education in the schools. Take time to share this information with them.

On the other hand, it is also important for us to reach out to those caught in the midst of homosexuality and offer God’s grace and redemption. We cannot let the hardened rhetoric of gay activists keep us from having Christ’s heart toward homosexuals. As individuals and as the church, we should reach out to those caught in the sin of homosexuality and offer them hope and point them to Jesus Christ so that they will find freedom from the sexual sin that binds their lives.

It is important to remember that many in the homosexual lifestyle are there because of some emotional brokenness in their families. They may be trying to meet their emotional needs in ungodly ways. Youth in the public schools may be experimenting sexually and find themselves caught up in the homosexual lifestyle.

It is also important to remember that change is possible. The testimony of hundreds of former homosexuals is proof that someone can change their sexual behavior. So are the various studies that document these same behavioral changes. And, most importantly, the Bible teaches that change is possible. Paul, writing to former homosexuals in the Corinthian church, noted that “such were some of you” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In addressing the issue of the gay agenda in public schools, it is crucial to stay true to our biblical convictions (and stand for truth) while we also reach out with biblical compassion.

**Notes**

Sue Bohlin takes a look at the arguments for same sex marriage and finds them lacking from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. She explains that those pushing for same sex marriage have redefined it into something it never was and was never intended to be.

What’s Marriage For?

In any discussion on same sex marriage, we need to start at the beginning: What is marriage is for, anyway? Marriage begins a family. The family is the basic building block of society. It has always been this way from Adam and Eve down to today.

Man did not invent marriage; God did. He invented and ordained marriage as the foundation for all human society when He gave Eve to Adam and pronounced them man and wife. Marriage is one of those institutions that is found in every human culture. Across the globe and across the ages, marriage has always been defined the same way: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children. I would suggest that since this pattern for marriage applies to all cultures and all times, this indicates that God is its inventor and creator. It’s such an intrinsic part of the way we relate to each other that even those who have lost track of the story of the true God (the non-Judeo-Christian cultures) still practice marriage according to the pattern God designed: one man and one woman in a committed relationship, providing a safe place to bear and raise children.

God has woven “marriage into human nature so that it serves two primary purposes throughout all societies.”{1} The first is the way men and women were created to complement each other. Marriage balances the strengths and weaknesses of masculinity and femininity. Women help civilize men and channel their sexual energy in productive rather than destructive ways. Men protect and provide for women—and any children they produce together.

Marriage is built on a basic building block of humanity—that we exist as male and female. The strong benefit of marriage as God intended it is that males and females are designed with profound and wonderful differences, and these differences are coordinated in marriage so that each
contributes what the other lacks.\(^2\)

The second purpose of marriage is producing, protecting, and providing for children. Marriage ensures that children have the benefits of both mother and father. Each gender makes a unique and important contribution to children’s development and emotional health, and marriage provides the best possible environment for children to thrive as they enjoy the benefits of masculinity and femininity.

Those who are pushing for same sex marriage don’t see marriage this way. They seek to redefine it as a way to get society’s stamp of approval on their sexual and emotional relationships, and a way to secure financial and other benefits. Both of these reasons are about the adults, not about children. Both reasons are driven by the philosophy of “How can I get what I want? How can I be happy?” It’s a very self-centered movement.

Many homosexuals want the right to marry only because it confers society’s ultimate stamp of approval on a sexual relationship—\textit{not} because they want to participate in the institution of marriage.

\textbf{Why Same Sex Relationships Are Wrong}

Let’s look at several reasons (though not an exhaustive list by any means) that same sex relationships are wrong.

First, homosexuality is an attempt to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate, ungodly ways. We all have God-given heart hungers to feel loved and known and validated—to feel that we matter. God intends for us to have those needs met first by our parents and then by our peers, but sometimes something goes wrong. People find themselves walking around with a gaping, aching hole in their souls, longing to make the connections that didn’t happen when they were supposed to, earlier in their lives. From both the women and the men that I know who are dealing with unwanted homosexuality, I hear the same thing: “I just want to be held, I just want to be known, I just want to be special to someone.” But turning to homosexual or lesbian relationships to get those needs met is not God’s intention for us.

Second, same sex relationships are outside of (and fall far short of) God’s created intention for sex. God made us male and female, designed to complement each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Two men or two women coming together can never live out God’s intent for His creation. The biology of our gender shows us that same sex relationships don’t work, but opposite sex relationships do. It is unwise to ignore the obvious about how the pieces fit, or don’t fit, as the case may be.

Third, marriage is an earthbound illustration of the mystery of Christ and the church.\(^3\) There is a mystical unity of two very different, very \textit{other} beings coming together as one. Only the profound differences of man and woman display this mystery. “If the man represents Christ and the woman represents the church, then a male to male partnering would be, in essence, a symbolic partnering of God with Himself apart from His people. Likewise, a lesbian relationship would become a symbolic partnering of God’s people without Him. Either option is incomplete, unnatural, and abhorrent.”\(^4\)

Fourth, same sex relationships are idolatrous. In Romans 1, Paul describes the downward spiral of people who worship the creature instead of the Creator. When God says intimate relationships with people of the same sex are forbidden, and people insist on pursuing them anyway, they have
elevated something else to the position of a god. It could be the other person, or sexual pleasure, or even just one’s own feelings, but all these things become idols because they are more important than anything else, including God.

Homosexual and lesbian relationships are wrong because God designed us for something far better. The nature of the gospel is to bring transformation to every aspect of a believer’s life, and many people have discovered the “something better.” (See my article, “Can Homosexuals Change?”)

The Differences Between Heterosexual and Homosexual Relationships

Sometimes you hear gays or lesbians say, “We’re just like anybody else. We have two kids, a dog, a mortgage, and we worry about the economy. We just don’t want anybody telling us who we can love.” My friend Brady, who used to be part of that gay sub-culture, calls the homosexual lifestyle “a façade of normalcy.” And it is only a façade.

Consider the huge variance in the stability of relationships. Despite a high divorce rate, 57% of heterosexual marriages last over twenty years. The average length of homosexual relationships is two to three years. Only 5% of them last 20 years.

And consider the issue of promiscuity. In heterosexual marriages, over three-fourths of the men and 88% of the women remain faithful to their marriage vows. Most sexually active gay men are promiscuous, engaging hundreds of sexual partners over a lifetime.

The concept of a committed relationship is very different for the two groups. Most heterosexual couples are faithful and stable. When homosexual men are in what they call a “committed” relationship, this usually includes three to five outside partners each year. Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, told the Dallas Morning News, “Monogamy is not a word the gay community uses. . . . We talk about fidelity. That means you live in a loving, caring, honest relationship with your partner. Because we can’t marry, we have people with widely varying opinions as to what that means. Some would say that committed couples could have multiple sexual partners as long as there’s no deception. Each couple has to decide.”

In Holland, which legalized gay marriage in 2001, the average is eight outside partners. One study of gay men who had been together for over five years could not find one single monogamous relationship. Not one!

Women in lesbian relationships often stay together not because they want to, but because they’re stuck financially and emotionally. “I heard one speaker say at a Love Won Out conference, “We don’t have partners, we have prisoners.” Of course, that’s not universally true, but over the years of walking toward Jesus with women who were no longer in lesbian partnerships, I have heard over and over, “We didn’t know how to do life apart from each other.”

Heterosexuals live longer, happier lives. Sexually active homosexual men live a dangerous and destructive lifestyle. They are at huge risk for contracting AIDS, and run a much higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases than straight men. The gay community experiences three times more alcoholism and drug abuse, and much more promiscuity and domestic violence than the straight world. Gay men can expect to live twenty years less than their straight neighbors.

And finally, a home with a mom and a dad is the best possible place for children. Homosexual parents put kids at risk. The American College of Pediatrics discovered that children raised by gay parents tend to be more dissatisfied with their own gender, suffer a greater rate of molestation in
the family, have homosexual experiences more often, and are encouraged to experiment in
dangerous, destructive lifestyle choices.\textsuperscript{17}

Please hear me: We’re commenting on the extremely high-risk \textit{behavior} that is part and parcel of a
homosexual lifestyle. That’s not the same thing as condemning the \textit{people} who engage in it. A
homosexual lifestyle \textit{is} a façade of normalcy, but it can be changed.

\textbf{Answering Arguments for Same Sex Marriage}

Let’s look at several arguments being offered for same sex marriage.

The first is that marriage will encourage faithfulness and stability in volatile homosexual
relationships. But the nature of homosexual and lesbian relationships is broken to begin with. Two
broken people will not create a whole, healthy relationship. The best description I’ve ever heard of
same sex relationships is “one broken little boy looking for his daddy, connecting with another
broken little boy, looking for his daddy.” And the same is true of women. Neither a marriage license,
nor the approval of society, can fix the nature of a relationship that is irretrievably broken at its
core.

Another argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure hospital visitation. But it’s the
patient who decides. If he appoints his partner as a health-care proxy, even if he’s in a coma that
document will insure access to the hospital. We don’t need marriage for that. It’s a smokescreen.

A third argument is that we need same sex marriage to insure survivorship benefits. But that’s what
a will is for. You don’t need marriage for that.

Some say that we need same sex marriage for Social Security benefits. This is an interesting
argument, since Social Security benefits were created to address the financial inequity of father as
breadwinner and mother as stay-at-home caregiver. Homosexual relationships are usually two-
incomes. It’s very rare to have one stay-at-home caregiver of the kids, since homosexual
relationships do not and cannot produce children naturally. When they do, they are borrowing from
God’s plan for creating families.

Then there’s the discrimination argument. There are really two issues that fall under this argument:
denied liberties and denied benefits.

Concerning the issue of denying the liberty to marry, this argument doesn’t hold water. Any person
can marry whoever he or she pleases, with certain restrictions that are true for everyone. You can’t
marry a child, a close blood relative, a person who is already married, or a person of the same sex.
These restrictions apply equally to everyone; there is no discrimination here. The problem is, some
people don’t like the restrictions.

True discrimination functions against an unchangeable identity, such as gender or color.
Homosexuality is a lifestyle, a chosen behavior. Even sexual orientation is changeable. It’s not easy,
but it \textit{is} possible.

The other issue of discrimination is denied benefits. But benefits are granted to families because
society has an interest in providing a safe place for children to grow up and be nurtured. So the
government provides child-oriented benefits such as inheritance rights and tax relief to ease the
financial burden of children. Insurance policies and Social Security benefits provide for the money
gap between wage-earner and caregiver. These benefits are inherent to \textit{families}. The essence
of marriage is about building families. Homosexual relationships cannot build families legitimately.
They have to borrow from heterosexual relationships or technology to create children.

Final Points to Consider

Joe Dallas draws on his wisdom and experience as a former homosexual to address the issue of same sex marriage in his book *When Homosexuality Hits Home*. He provides some excellent points to consider about this subject. (18)

We can recognize that people genuinely love each other, and we can respect their right to form a partnership, even if we disagree with the nature of their partnership. We can say a relationship is wrong without disrespecting or condemning the people in that relationship.

For example, look at the relationship between Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. Tracy was a married man when he met and fell in love with her. For decades they had a deeply committed and affectionate relationship although they never married. Note two glaring and conflicting facts about their relationship: it was adulterous, and therefore wrong, and they truly loved each other. You can find a number of good things about their relationship, such as the way they respected each other and cared deeply for each other and seemed to be good for each other. When we say it was morally wrong, this does not deny the good things about their relationship. But to recognize the good things does not change the fact that it was morally wrong. The two are not mutually exclusive.

With gay or lesbian couples, we can acknowledge that there may, indeed, be deep love and commitment to each other. After all, humans have an amazing God-given capacity to love—even outside the bounds of His design and commands. But God cannot and does not sanction homosexual relationships, so we cannot either. We can respect those involved without capitulating to their demands.

Redefining marriage is especially unacceptable to Christians, since it is spelled out in both Testaments as a type of God’s relationship with His people. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as the husband of the nation of Israel, and in the New Testament, Jesus is the bridegroom of the Church. Marriage is far more than a social construct that provides for the creation of new families. It is a living parable that helps us to understand the dynamic, mysterious relationship between God and His people. How can we redefine something that has such a deep, spiritual meaning? Even if that were not part of the equation, we would still need to deal with the truth that marriage was created by God, and we do not have the right to tinker with His creation.

The problem with same sex marriage is that it doesn’t work, it doesn’t fit, and it is an attempt to make right something that is intrinsically, irretrievably wrong. God created us in His image as both male and female, and intends that His full image be expressed as men and women come together in designed complementarity. This is impossible in same sex marriage.

Notes

2. Stanton and Maier, 24.


17. http://www.acpeds.org/?CONTEXT=art&cat=22&art=50&BISKIT=2920801063


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See Also:

- Can Homosexuals Change?
- Did Phil Get It Wrong? Is Homosexuality Sin?
- Homosexual Myths
- Homosexuality: Questions and Answers
- Homosexual Theology
- When Someone In Your Congregation Says “I’m Gay” (Pastors’ Brochure)
  And also our answers to e-mails about homosexuality issues
Can Homosexuals Change? - A Christian View of Homosexuality

Sue Bohlin looks at the real evidence showing people who have changed from homosexuality. From a Christian perspective, Sue presents some proven paths to recovery from homosexual thoughts and practice. When we let Christ begin to heal our underlying hurts and feelings of inadequacy, it is truly possible to experience a fundamental change.

Is It Possible for Homosexuals to Change?

Mike was marching in a Gay Pride parade when God got a hold of him. He had been high for four days and his “buzz” suddenly evaporated as he heard a voice in his head say, “You don’t have to live like this.” He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was God offering him a way out. He put down his Gay Pride sign, left the parade, sat down in a nearby stairwell, and repented of his rebellion. He gave his heart to Jesus Christ and starting walking out of homosexuality that day. Today, several years later, he is married with a child, and living a very different kind of life. Not just on the outside; his heart was changed from the inside out.

Paul was on a self-destructive path of drug and alcohol abuse and homosexual activity. When he told his mother he was gay, she threw him out of the house, and the only place he could find belonging, safety, and identity was the gay community. As he spent more and more time “escaping” the pain in his life through sex and alcohol, he began to realize how bad his life was. He wanted to die but God had something else in mind.

Paul was invited to a Bible study where he met a man who had left the gay lifestyle and was living a changed life. For the first time he honestly called out and said, “God, please help me.”

One of his friends became a Christian. He asked her about homosexuality and was angered by her initial response. She said, “I now believe it is a sin—but God wouldn’t call it a sin if there weren’t something better.” Paul eventually realized that he was a sinner who needed God’s love and grace, and in 1992 he trusted Christ as his Savior. Two months later, he was led to an organization that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He left his homosexual identity behind and embraced his true identity as a child of God, committed to holiness and purity. Paul is now director of that ministry and is helping others walk out of homosexuality. He’s not perfect, he’s still growing . . . just like me and every other Christian I know. But the “something better” God had in mind for him is an intimacy with Christ that is breathtaking.

Randy brings glory to God every day of his life by living out the abiding truth that change is possible.

Stories of Women

Carol grew up in a religious home with parents whose standards were too strict to allow her to please them. But she was smart, and a good student, and her teachers gave her the affirmation and encouragement her heart longed for. She developed very strong bonds with her teachers, some of which became profound emotional dependencies.

In graduate school, she was hit by the unexpected pain of loneliness and emptiness. Carol got into an intense relationship with a married woman, facing completely new temptations. She was totally unprepared to resist the strength of same-gender attraction, and quickly found herself emotionally
and physically involved in a relationship she couldn’t believe was happening. Now she was not only emotionally needy, she was shackled by deep shame, woundedness, and guilt.

A friend told her about a ministry to those dealing with same-sex attraction, and it was like finding a door to another world. Through the support she found there, Carol was challenged to identify the lies of Satan which she had believed her whole life and replace them with the truth of Scripture. God is renewing her mind, meeting her deep heart-needs, and bringing her to a place of freedom and hope.

Diane’s story is different. She spent eighteen years in a committed lesbian relationship with another woman she believed to be her soul-mate. They went through a commitment ceremony in a gay church, and raised a daughter together. She enjoyed a position of leadership as a bright and articulate spokesperson for a gay church.

Through all those years, Diane’s mother was steadfast in three things. She loved Diane unconditionally. She never backed down about her belief that her daughter’s lifestyle was sinful because God says it’s wrong. And third, she prayed faithfully for her daughter.

Diane and her partner sought the Lord about everything except their sexuality. At one point, they were praying together for wisdom and truth about a situation that had nothing to do with their relationship. God answered their prayer in an unexpected way; He showed them the truth about the sinful nature of their relationship. It was a terribly painful and unwelcome discovery to learn that they had been deceived. Together, they decided out of obedience to God to separate and break off their relationship. It’s still painful, even as Diane experiences God’s healing touch in the deepest parts of her wounded soul. He’s changing Diane and Carol from the inside out.

**Three Claims for Change**

Some people deal with same-sex attraction by pretending it’s not there. Denial is unfortunately the time-honored “Christian” response. But this is not the way God wants us to deal with problems; Psalm 51:6 says, “Surely you desire truth in my inmost parts.” Acknowledging one has a homosexual orientation is like seeing the red light on your car’s dashboard; it means something is wrong somewhere. A homosexual orientation isn’t the actual problem; it’s the symptom of a deeper issue—legitimate, God-given needs for relationship and intimacy that have been channeled in unhealthy and sinful directions.

But it is not a simple matter, and it would be disrespectful to imply that there is an easy solution to the complex issue of homosexuality. Among those who claim that change is possible, there are three main schools of thought on how to get there.

The first is the deliverance ministries. They say that homosexuality is caused by a demon, and if we can just cast out the demon, the problem is gone. Sounds like an easy fix, but it ends up causing even more problems because homosexuality isn’t caused by a demon. The person who was “delivered” may experience a temporary emotional high, but the same temptations and thought patterns that plagued him before are going to return because the root issue wasn’t dealt with. Only now, he’s burdened by the false guilt of thinking he did something wrong or that he’s not good enough for God to “fix” him.

A second and more effective treatment for homosexuality is reparative therapy. There is a lot of wisdom to be found here because many therapists believe that homosexuality has its roots in hurtful relationship patterns, especially with family members, and many homosexual men and women report exactly that. But reparative therapy is often just behavior modification, and it deals only with the
flesh, that part of us independent of God. Reparative therapy can make people feel better, but it can’t bring true inner healing.

The third, and I believe best, way to bring about real and lasting change is a redemptive approach. Ministries that disciple men and women in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ are able to lead them into inner healing because God transforms His people. It’s excruciatingly difficult to leave homosexuality without support. Fortunately, even for people who do not live in an area where there is a ministry tailored for those dealing with unwanted homosexuality, there are online support forums that can be almost as powerful as face-to-face groups. I especially recommend Living Hope Ministries’ online support groups at www.livehope.org. There are also some wonderful books available, particularly *Coming Out of Homosexuality* by Bob Davies, and *Someone I Love is Gay* by Anita Worthen and Bob Davies. Another excellent book is *You Don’t Have to Be Gay* by Jeff Konrad for men and *Restoring Sexual Identity* by Anne Paulk for women. My all-time favorite author on this topic is Joe Dallas; anything he writes is exceptionally good. But discipleship is hard work, and there is no simple and easy fix.

**The Path to True Change**

The most effective route to real, lasting change for those caught in same-gender attraction is a redemptive approach. This means discipleship, being taught and encouraged and held accountable to develop intimacy with Christ. Interestingly, it doesn’t seem to matter what the particular stronghold is in a person’s life—whether it be homosexuality, gluttony, drug dependency, compulsive gambling or shopping, alcoholism, sexual addiction, or any other stronghold—the most effective solution is the same: intimacy with Christ.

True discipleship is hard work. And God even gives us the energy for discipleship! But it takes tremendous self-discipline to choose to operate in the Spirit instead of in our own flesh, to depend on God’s strength instead of our own. The real battle is in the mind.

The steps to overcoming homosexuality also apply to overcoming any stronghold.

First, the person has to stop the sinful behavior. It’s best to ask for God’s help. This is no different from the requirement for any drug or alcohol abuse treatment. You can’t work on a problem when you’re still totally controlled by it.

The second step is to work on learning what the Bible says about who you are in Christ. Just as people learning to identify counterfeit money examine real currency so they can spot the fakes, the struggler needs to fill their mind with God’s Word so they can enter into their true identity as a beloved, valuable child of God.

The third step is working on the thought life, since this is where the battle is. It’s important to identify Satan’s lies playing as tapes in one’s head, and stop the tape player! Then, deliberately replace the lies with the truth. Instead of “I’m never going to change,” repeat the truthful promise that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Instead of obsessing over the aching and longing for the unhealthy and sinful behavior or relationship, fill your mind with praise and worship and Scripture.

Next, face the fact that it feels lousy! When we stop trying to meet our needs in our own ways, we start experiencing the emotional pain that our strongholds had covered up. When it feels really really bad, we are at that very point where God can make the biggest difference. Ask, *What is my true need?* What is it my heart is truly longing for? Go to Jesus and let Him meet your deepest heart-needs. Let Him direct you to get your divinely-designed needs for relationship with other people met
in godly ways.

This is where powerful healing happens.

**Ex-Ex-gays**

For the last several years, people who had left homosexuality have slowly but surely gained a hearing in telling their stories. Word is getting out: change is possible!

And there are also the voices of the frustrated and disillusioned souls who tried to leave homosexuality, who tried to change, and gave up. There’s even a name for it: “Ex ex-gays.” Their stories are full of tremendous pain, and some have even lost their faith over it. What happened?

Well, I think the same thing that happened to people who tried AA but couldn’t stop drinking, or those who tried Weigh Down Workshop but couldn’t lose weight. I have a friend who was in Weigh Down Workshop, and it didn’t do a thing for her. The problem is, she never made the commitment to “die to self,” to use an old spiritual term{2}. She never got to the point of saying, “Jesus, I choose You over food. I choose a holy relationship with You over an unhealthy relationship with my appetite. And I will do whatever it takes to allow You to change my heart.”

Many people who tried to change their homosexuality could win contests for praying and reading their Bibles. They really did try very very hard. But the prayers are often misdirected: “God, change me. Take away my desires. Let me start liking people of the opposite sex.” Unfortunately, as well-intentioned as this prayer is, it’s a lot like trying to get rid of dandelions in your back yard by mowing them. They keep coming back because you’re not dealing with their roots. The basic cause of a homosexual orientation isn’t genetics or choice; it’s a wrong response to being hurt. It’s about protecting oneself and trying to get legitimate needs met in ways God never intended. True change can only happen with the hard work of submitting to God, allowing Him to expose the deep hurts and needs of one’s heart, which means facing horrible pain, and inviting Him to bring healing to those wounded places. That’s why intimacy with Christ is the answer. A wise friend observed that homosexuality is the fruit of sinful ways of dealing with pain—sinful because they cut us off from the One who can heal and meet our needs, sinful because they place us at the center of our universe and we don’t belong there. Jesus does.

I hope you can see that real change is hard and it costs a great deal because it requires strong motivation, hard work, and perseverance. But hundreds of former homosexuals have found a large degree of change, attaining abstinence from homosexual behaviors, lessening of homosexual temptations, strengthening their sense of masculine or feminine identity, and correcting distorted styles of relating with members of the same and opposite gender. Some former homosexuals marry and some don’t, but marriage is not the measuring stick; spiritual growth and obedience are.

The bottom line is, change is possible.

**Notes**

1. All names in this article are changed.

2. This term is not actually biblical, but the concept is. See Romans 6.

**See Also:**
Did (Duck Dynasty’s) Phil Get it Wrong? Is Homosexuality Sin?

In one of the biggest social media flaps since social media was invented, Duck Dynasty’s Phil Robertson openly said that homosexuality is sinful. Then the cyber world blew up in a clash of worldviews—the progressive, whatever-floats-your-boat perspective of A&E, the cable network that profits greatly from the Robertsons’ TV show, against the traditional biblical view of sin and sexuality. A lot of people think that Phil’s old-fashioned morality is not only antiquated but unfair.

Is it? Is homosexuality a sin? If people are born gay, why would God condemn people for being the way He made them? What kind of God would do that?

Let me answer those questions in reverse order. First, how do we know that people are born gay? This idea is a newcomer on the scene of human history, arising only within the past hundred years—maybe only fifty. We “know” it because people keep saying so, and people say so because, looking into the rear view mirror of their lives, many of those who eventually identify as gay recall always feeling different, “other than.” According to the spirit of the age, that means they were always gay. Which means sexually and romantically attracted to people of the same sex.

But think about a newborn baby. Is he or she sexually and romantically attracted to people of the same sex? No, of course not. That is an emotional development issue that will arise years down the
road. Consider a toddler: how does one find the gay kids in a church or daycare nursery? You don’t. But even in toddlers, some temperament and personality differences have surfaced, the kinds of differences that can lead to a child feeling “other than.”

Little boys who are emotionally sensitive, artistic and creative, can be uncomfortable around the rough-and-tumble boys who are far more physically aggressive, sporty and relationally insensitive. It doesn’t mean they’re gay, it means their design, their God-chosen kind of masculinity, is different. They’re probably going to feel “other than,” and later on someone will label that as gay. It’s not.

Little girls who have athletic gifts and abilities, who don’t care for pink or dresses or nail polish and are often natural leaders, can be uncomfortable around the girly-girls who are interested in very different things. It doesn’t mean they’re lesbian, it means their design, their God-chosen kind of femininity, is different. They’re probably going to feel “other than,” and later on someone will label that as lesbian. It’s not.

People are not born gay, which is a constellation of beliefs and feelings about oneself and others that is the result of many interactions with many people over many years. Just like people are not born prejudiced. Or entitled. Or English speaking, for that matter. But all those things can become so entwined with a sense of self that it feels like that’s who one is.

Recently, my husband was talking with a new friend who struggles with same-sex attraction. His friend said it was hard growing up in a slender “case” (body type) and so sensitive, and that’s why he was gay. My husband pointed out that he, too, had the same body type and was emotionally sensitive, that that was their design. Ray talked to him about the gender spectrum for different kinds of masculinity as God’s creation, and his friend absolutely lit up with gratitude. He had never heard that the way God had made him didn’t mean he was gay, it meant he was gifted, and he had never heard an “everstraight” like my husband acknowledge that boys and men can live on that end of the spectrum and not identify as gay. There is another way of explaining the feeling of “other than” that honors both the person and the God who made them in a way that has often not been appreciated or affirmed.

But let’s turn to the first question: is homosexuality a sin?

It’s important to define your terms. What do you mean by homosexuality? Our culture has clouded the biblical perspective of the issue. Do you mean being same-sex attracted? Or do you mean “stepping over the line,” actually engaging in same-sex romantic and sexual relationships? What Phil Robertson did, which is part of the firestorm, is to shine a light on what the Bible says: all sex outside of marriage is sin, both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. Our sex-saturated culture finds that offensive and unacceptable. Sex is seen as a right and a basic need of life, when it is neither.

But the Bible never condemns same-sex attractions, which constitute temptation and not sin. People generally discover, not choose, that they are drawn to the same sex, and there are very good reasons for this. As with all temptations, God says to stand against them and not give into them. It is foolishness to define oneself by our temptations and weaknesses! (Much better to define ourselves the way God sees us, as His beloved child who desperately needs Him.)

So define homosexuality. If you mean simply feeling “other than” and different, complicated by being drawn to members of the same sex, then homosexual attractions are temptation, not sin. If you mean acting on those attractions to engage in emotionally dependent and/or sexual relationships, then according to the Bible’s standards, yes that is sin. Note how God addressed Cain’s struggle with feelings and temptations: “Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master
it.” (Genesis 4:7) So it really comes down to feelings vs. behavior. The feelings are not necessarily sinful (although sin begins in the mind, where attractions can cross over the line into the sin of lust, regardless of the object of those attractions), but behavior always is. We need to keep homosexuality in the context that God does: pre-marital sex, adultery, same-sex sex, incest, and sex with animals: anything outside the marriage bed (defined as one man and one woman, Gen. 2:24) is sin.

Many people have a faulty concept of a distant, scowling god sitting on his throne looking for people having a good time so he can be mad at them, looking for an excuse to hurl thunderbolts at them for daring to enjoy themselves. The God of the Bible is not Zeus. Jesus corrected many aspects of our misunderstandings of His Father. He is a loving God who put guardrails on the treacherous mountain road of human sexuality. He doesn’t condemn people who run off the safety of the road by crashing through the guardrails He put in place; He knows that the natural consequences of running off the cliff are their own discipline. God says, “Don’t have sex outside of marriage” because He loves us and knows that sex outside of marriage brings pain to the soul (as well as dishonoring everyone involved, including Him).

God doesn’t make anyone gay, but He is full of compassion for those who find themselves with same-sex attractions. He warns us against all kinds of sexual sin because He knows how destructive it is when we violate His intention and design for our bodies and souls. He wants so much better for us.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/did_phil_get_it_wrong_is_homosexuality_sin on Jan. 1, 2014

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**Exodus is Shutting Down, But Jesus Isn’t**

*July 17, 2013*

Recently, Exodus International announced that it was shutting down. For decades, Exodus was the oldest and largest Christian ministry dealing with faith and homosexuality. But in the past few years, it had become a lightning rod for controversy, and the name had accumulated a lot of baggage. They hoped that by shutting down the ministry, the church would step up and do its job of loving and leading people well. They realized that many churches and pastors are still under-educated about those who deal with same-sex attractions, and some are unsafe. But by having a separate ministry to send people to, they haven’t needed to change, and it was easy for the unbiblical “us/them” dichotomy to flourish.

This made the news because on the one hand, there is a lot of contempt and hatred for Exodus by gay activists who insist there’s nothing wrong with homosexuality, and many considered it a victory. On the other hand, Exodus was the go-to place for people seeking help with this issue, and as the umbrella organization for scores of local ministries, they were able to refer people to places where they could find support. As a longtime board member for Living Hope Ministries, the Exodus referral ministry for Dallas/Ft. Worth, I know how valuable the Exodus referrals have been.

How did this happen?
Over the past several years, Exodus got off track when some people promoted “gay to straight” change efforts, including the controversial reparative therapy technique. Both of these are nothing but “flesh management,” using natural, human-only tools and methods. They lost their focus on the founding values, which until recently was still found on their “About Us” page:

While we have never met anyone who “chose” to feel same-sex attracted, people do have to eventually make a decision to either act on those feelings or not to act on them. Since 1976, Exodus has served as an organization helping men and women surrender their sexual struggles to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We do not believe that same-sex attractions are sinful in and of themselves but rather one type of struggle and temptation among the millions that impact each and every human being.

We do believe that any sexual expression outside of a monogamous marriage between one man and one woman falls outside of God’s creative intent for human sexual expression and is sinful. Homosexuality is no greater or less a sin than any other and is not the determining factor for a relationship with Jesus Christ. (emphasis mine)

What I see here is a statement pointing to God’s standards, God’s intent for human sexuality. It conforms to the limits of what the Bible actually says, which is a prohibition against acting on one’s sinful desires regardless of what those desires are. It acknowledges that all of us are messed-up sinners who can’t stop being sinners and can’t stop our temptations, but we do have control over what we choose to do with our feelings and temptations.

Ricky Chelette, the Executive Director of Living Hope, says, “I have been to every Exodus Conference for the past 15 years and every Leader’s Conference except this past year, and have always felt that we were centering on Christ, upholding God’s truth, and encouraging people not so much to be “straight” but to be rightly and intimately related to Christ, which then transforms our lives, actions, hearts and thinking. Living Hope will continue to do what we have always done: ‘Proclaim God’s Truth to those who are seeking sexual and relational wholeness through a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.’ Nothing has changed for us.”

Since Living Hope is one of the largest, if not THE largest ministry of its kind in the world, I am encouraged that Kingdom values are still unshaken despite what’s going on at Exodus headquarters.

I’ve had a lot of emails and messages asking “What does all this mean?” Well, I can tell you want it doesn’t mean:

• It doesn’t mean that Jesus is not enough for sexual struggles.

• It doesn’t mean that He has left His throne and is no longer in control.

• It doesn’t mean that there isn’t any help for those dealing with this issue, either for themselves or a loved one.

• It doesn’t mean that it’s pointless to fight against unwanted same-sex attraction (or any other temptation). By developing intimacy with Christ so that we are continually transformed into His image from one glory into another (2 Cor. 3:18), He changes and decreases the power of those temptations.

• It doesn’t mean change isn’t possible. Exodus coined the phrase “change is possible” and then backed off the hope of change. But people’s personal filters about what kind of change led to
unrealistic expectations about what they could expect.

Of course change is possible—it’s an intrinsic part of being alive! Whether one is a believer or not, we change over time. The Christ-follower should expect change because we are transformed into what we worship. As we focus on Jesus, we become more like Him. That means greater holiness, more self-control, rightly relating to our own gender and to the opposite sex. As John the Baptist indicated, He increases and we decrease. That is change. Our attractions are also our temptations, and as my pastor says, “Jesus never promises to take away our temptations. He hasn’t taken away mine either.”

I recently said to my friend, a former lesbian activist, “You know, it’s entirely possible your attractions to women won’t change and you will walk with an emotional limp the rest of your life... just as I will continue to walk with a physical limp the rest of my earthly life. But both of us can glorify God in our limping by honoring Him with our choices, as we look to Him to restore us to a perfect future that includes running and jumping and leaping and loving perfectly, on the other side.”

I know that may sound weird, “glorifying God in our limping,” but I think He receives more glory through limping people who are dependent on Him, than healthy people who breeze through life independent of Him.

Even though Exodus International is shutting down, Jesus Christ is still very much loving and changing those who turn to Him in trust and obedience. And I am grateful to be a part of it.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/exodus-is-shutting-down-but-jesus-isnt

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When Ex-Gays Return to a Gay Identity

I recently received an envelope in the mail with no return address and no personal note, just copies of three articles about men who used to be part of Exodus International, who used to identify themselves as “ex-gay,” and now repudiate that part of their histories. It is consistent with emails and blog comments I have received pointing this out, and asking if that doesn’t negate my position that homosexuality is changeable.

No. The fact that some people, denouncing something they used to support, now represent themselves as proud gays and lesbians, doesn’t change anything. Just as people who lived in sobriety from alcohol and drugs for years have been known to get sucked back into their addictions, it isn’t surprising that some would get weary of the struggle against their temptations and stop fighting.

Some people gave up earlier than others, hoping and expecting that if they just kept living “the straight life,” their feelings would catch up with their resolutions. They kept waiting for homosexual desires and temptations to disappear, and they didn’t. So they decided that they were done with trying to pretend to be something they weren’t. I’m good with not pretending; I’m a huge believer in authenticity and transparency.
But if someone continues to experience same-sex attraction even if they don’t act on it, does it mean they’re gay, as the culture insists?

What the culture says—if you ever have same-sex feelings, it means you’re gay—doesn’t matter compared to what God says.

God calls us to make choices every day that contradict and violate our feelings and temptations, but which we choose because they are the right thing to do. From the basics of the Ten Commandments to the ultimate example of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, He calls us to choose obedience and behavior that honors Him and other people despite our feelings. What if we don’t feel like telling the truth? Don’t lie anyway. What if we don’t feel like not killing the person who really ticks us off? Don’t murder anyway. What if we don’t feel like remaining faithful to our spouse? Don’t commit adultery anyway.

So what if someone doesn’t feel like stewarding their sexuality in purity and self-control? Regardless of the nature of the temptation, whether same-sex or opposite-sex, God calls us to possess our own body in holiness and honor (1 Thess. 4:4).

Sadly, some men who had come out of homosexuality have left their wives and children to return to living as gay men. This isn’t really much different from men who leave their wives and children for another woman. Succumbing to temptation, regardless of who tempts us, is still sin. Heartbreaking, home-breaking sin.

We’re hearing people saying, “I’m not ex-gay anymore because trying to be ex-gay doesn’t work. ‘Pray away the gay’ (a rather offensive term used by scoffers) doesn’t work. Trying hard to be straight doesn’t work. ‘Claiming my healing’ doesn’t work. I’m done.”

And they’re right.

**What doesn’t work:**

*Name-it-and-claim-it theology,* the religious version of “wishing will make it so.” Trying to speak reality into existence, as in “I am no longer gay because I’m a Christian,” doesn’t work because we don’t create reality through our words. Only the Creator God can do that.

*Casting out the demon of homosexuality.* While there is always a demonic component to idolatry and unrepentant sin, homosexuality is not caused by a demon, any more than bigotry, selfishness or gossip are.

**Trying harder,** praying harder, reading the Bible, begging God to make the gay feelings to go away. These human efforts are the religious equivalent of mowing the grass to get rid of dandelions. (For a completely different approach—grace—check out True-Faced.)

**What does work:**

*Laying aside one’s sexuality as the measure of identity.* “Who I really am” according to our flesh is always going to be at odds with “who God says I am” according to His word. Seeking a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the spiritual disciplines moves us toward reframing our faulty identity, no matter who we are or what we struggle with. We need to choose to find our identity in what God says about us—most importantly, receiving and owning the truth that He says, “You are My beloved child in whom I am well pleased.”

Looking at the contributing factors that shaped the same-sex “hole” in one’s heart (and the lies
connected to them) to process them in light of God’s love and sovereignty, and then forgive the people who inflicted the wounds.

*Choosing to learn to live with a tension:* our flesh wants things that are dishonoring to God, dysfunctional and dangerous, but God calls us to do the right thing anyway. Regardless of our desires and feelings. Right from the beginning, He told Cain, “[I]f you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it” (Gen 4:7). God didn’t say to Cain, “I know, you’re angry because I didn’t accept your offering. That’s who you are, an angry soul. Go and let your anger explode!” In the New Testament, we read, “The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need” (Eph. 4:28). God didn’t say to the thief, “I know, you feel compelled to take what doesn’t belong to you. That’s who you are, a stealing soul. Go and act on your desires to steal!”

Now we have people saying, “I am attracted to the same sex. Since everyone says I am defined by my feelings, I now realize that’s just who I am.” And God does not say to them, “I know, you are gay/lesbian/transgender/bi-sexual. That’s who you are, so go act on it!” God calls everyone to the same standard: sexual holiness and integrity, which means keeping all sex within the bounds of marriage between one man and one woman.

*Adjusting one’s expectations.* Accepting the truth that one’s attractions and desires may always be warped to some degree; they may always remain an area of weakness that can drive the disciple to a deeper level of dependence on God, which is essential for growing in relationship with Him. That may mean learning to live with a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7-10) instead of insisting that the only culturally acceptable change is a 180-degree shift in attractions from homosexual to heterosexual.

There is no “easy button.” Submitting to the process of sanctification means crucifying the flesh, and that’s hard. For any Christ-follower. And that’s where lasting change happens—as we are made into the image of Christ (Gal. 4:19), as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). And that might, or might not, extend to our feelings. Regardless of who we are.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/when_ex-gays_return_to_a_gay_identity on May 7, 2013.

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**LET IT GO**

*January 1, 2013*

Most people’s New Year’s resolutions involve things to add or incorporate into your life: losing weight, reading through the Bible, decluttering your house, filing your income tax before April 15. (I hereby make a public commitment on that last one. Feel free to ask me about it.)

But some people don’t need to add anything else, they need to LET GO.
Judy’s ex-husband made some horrifically sinful, deceived, foolish choices that culminated with sex-change surgery. For months she has been tormenting herself daily with false guilt: if she had loved him more, if she had changed this or that, he wouldn’t have mutilated himself, now preening before a mirror at how beautiful he thinks he is. She needs to let go of the fantasy that it was within her power to fix him or change him. She needs to let go of the refusal to accept reality.

Polly is married to a difficult man. Neither one knew the other well when they married after a short internet courtship. She believed that marriage was an endless supply of unconditional love, acceptance and conversation. He believed that marriage was an endless supply of sex multiple times a day. Fifteen years later, she sees women she thinks are released from their sin-wracked marriages and doesn’t understand why God keeps telling her to stay put and trust Him. She needs to let go of the fantasy of an easy out that would solve her problems.

Diane dances at the brink of disaster, focusing on how wonderful it would feel to nuzzle and cuddle the other women she’s attracted to. When she crosses the line into flirting, touching inappropriately, and making suggestive small talk, she destroys one friendship after another. She needs to let go of the resentment that God says same-sex relationships are wrong and let go of the fantasy that if He would just say it’s okay, she could cross the line with impunity and she could get what she’s sure would make her happy. Finally.

Colleen bought into the lie that she could get away with cheating on her husband. When she came to her senses after the divorce was final and her husband had custody of their children, she begged for forgiveness and reconciliation. But he had given himself permission to move on, and refused to consider it. Now she beats herself up regularly: “I can’t do this! I want my family back! What can’t I have my family back?” She also needs to let go of her refusal to accept reality, pushing back with, “I don’t want reality! Why can’t I have my family back?”

Brae carries deep wounds from her family. Unrelenting shame often erupts in rage, but Brae cannot imagine being able to express her rage at her shaming parents. So she directs it at herself through life-threatening self-injury. She needs to let go of the belief that watching her blood flow into the bathtub is a solution to the emotions that overwhelm her. And she needs to let go of the belief that hurting herself is the only way to release the rage inside.

We all cling to wrong beliefs and sometimes demonic deceptions that we trust to make life work, but they are our blind spots. We can no more identify those false idols than a fish can tell you what water is.

That’s why one of the best prayers we can pray is, Lord, show me where I’m being deceived. Reveal my idols to me. Show me what I’m trusting to make life work instead of You. Shine a light on where I need to let go of every thought, every habit, every burden, every encumbrance that so easily entangles me (Heb. 12:1).

And then LET GO of whatever He shows us.

Often, God uses other people who are “doing life” with us, who don’t have blinders on like we do, to point out the self-sabotaging or dangerous or foolish things we cling to—or which we allow to cling to us. This is yet another reason He wants us to live in community, where we know and are known and people will speak the truth in love to us.

When they point out something that is a self-sabotaging or dangerous or foolish encumbrance, we need LET IT GO.

Lord, I need You to help me LET GO of whatever You convict me of. In Your strength, I set it down,
Queen James Bible

Thomas Jefferson created his own version of the New Testament by literally cutting and pasting everything he agreed with, and leaving out anything supernatural. That’s one way to treat what you don’t like in God’s word. Another is the recent publication of the Queen James Bible, where the editors changed eight verses that express God’s prohibitions of homosexual acts to make homosexual expression okay.

As Bible versions go, this is a rather bizarre one. Legitimate Bibles are translated and thoroughly discussed by a team of scholars whose identities and credentials are freely cited. The identity of the QJV editors is completely opaque, per the QueenJamesBible.com website and, apparently, the printed Bible itself. On Amazon, the author is listed as “God,” with “Jesus Christ” as a contributor.

The King James Version, first published in 1611, is now in the public domain. The editors changed the wording on eight verses that prohibit gay and lesbian practice, leaving the rest of the text unchanged. They explain their reasoning on the website and the printed version. Not a bit of it holds water.

For example,

**Genesis 19:5**

KJV: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.
QJV: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may rape and humiliate them.

The editors write, “We side with most Bible scholars who understand the story of Sodom and Gomorrah to be about bullying strangers.” Most Bible scholars? Maybe the few the editors read. That statement is patently untrue, particularly in the scope of church history. Further, the Hebrew word for “know” is used 946 times in the Old Testament, and not one time does it mean “rape and humiliate.”

**Leviticus 18:22**

KJV: Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination.
QJV: Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind in the temple of Molech: it is an abomination.

Since the command not to participate in pagan child sacrifice to the pagan god Molech immediately precedes the prohibition against men lying with men, the editors decided to incorporate it into verse 22. Interestingly, the verse on the other side of verse 22 prohibits sex with animals, but the editors decided to ignore that one in favor of reconfiguring this classic prohibition against male homosexual acts to be limited to male temple prostitutes.

**Romans 1:27**

KJV: 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.

QJV: Men with men working that which is pagan and unseemly. For this cause God gave the idolators up unto vile affections, receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

The editors, citing Paul’s familiarity with the holiness code in Leviticus, decided that “Leviticus, as we know, is intended to condemn ritual impurities associated with pagan idol worship.” So the editors pass the Romans passage—that condemns all same-sex intercourse—through the lens of pagan ritual and idolatry only. They ignore Paul’s use of the word “natural,” which is important because the apostle supports God’s design for male-female pairings in creation.

**1 Corinthians 6:9**

KJV: 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.

QJV: Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor morally weak, nor promiscuous.

The two Greek words in this passage were not ambiguous in that culture. Bible scholar Dr. Robert Gagnon explains them: “Malakoi (lit., “soft men,” but taken in the sense of men who feminize themselves to attract male sex partners) and arsenokoitai (literally, “men who lie with [koite] a male [arsen]”) in 1 Cor 6:9 are clearly inclusive of all homosexual bonds…” (www.robgagnon.net/articles/HomosexHowBadIsIt.pdf) It is irresponsible to twist these descriptors to mean “morally weak” and “promiscuous.”

The Bible is replete with stories of people who “did what was right in [their] own eyes” (Judges 17:6). It never ends well. The Queen James Bible is another in a long line of unfortunate decisions to set aside what God has said and pursue what people think will make them happy. At the core of the QJV, just as in every self-serving sin each of us indulge in, is a core of rebellion and independence from God.

Editors can change the words they don’t like in God’s word, but it doesn’t change the reality of His created intent for us. One day, the people who published this Bible, just like the people who believe the changes, will face the truth: God knows what He’s doing, and we don’t get a vote in it.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/queen_james_bible on Dec. 18, 2012
Jesus’ most famous parable in Luke 15 tells the story of a rebellious young man usually dubbed “the Prodigal Son” who demanded his share of his father’s inheritance while his dad was still alive, shameful enough, but then went off into “the far country” to squander it on riotous living. A modern-day prodigal and his mother have written their story, telling parallel stories from each one’s perspective. The son’s “far country” included drug dealing, living it up as a party animal, and gay promiscuity leading to a diagnosis of AIDS. But God brought both mother and son out of the far country to Himself.

Because I am privileged to walk with a number of people out of their own personal “far countries” of homosexuality, Out of a Far Country was a compelling read for me. But because I am also a mother, Angela Yuan’s testimony of trusting Christ and then entrusting her beloved son into His hands again and again as a faithful prayer warrior, was deeply encouraging as well.

I was reminded of several lessons on prayer through this book.

First, it’s better to pray big than to try to micro-manage the outcome. Angela continued to relinquish her own desires for her son to the Lord’s better plan, which was for Christopher to walk in his true identity as a beloved child of a loving heavenly Father. When her son was angry and rebellious, she kept her eyes focused on the Lord instead of Christopher. She writes, “I started fasting and praying, asking God for wisdom and discernment. I had no idea what it would look like, but I had a clear sense that Leon and I needed to step aside and get out of the way so that God could work in Christopher’s life.”

When Christopher was three months away from graduating from dental school, he learned he was expelled because of his foolish, illegal and sinful choices. His parents went to meet with the dean. Both the dean and the son expected the senior Yuans to put pressure on the school, but instead, Angela said, “Actually, it’s not important that Christopher becomes a dentist. What’s important is that Christopher becomes a Christ follower. Leon and I have flown down to Louisville to tell you”—I looked over at Leon—“that we will support whatever decision you make. I only pray that my son will turn to God.”
And he did. It didn’t happen until he was incarcerated for his drug dealing, but God answered the far more important prayer.

Second, let go of your timeline. We are such impatient people! We start praying and we want God to answer in the next day. Or week. Or month. But while He is at work behind the scenes, unscrambling the mess we tend to make of our lives, we don’t think He is listening or answering. Angela prayed for years for God to bring Christopher out of the far country, and when He did, it was glorious. Christopher went from prison, where he met the Lord Jesus, to Moody Bible Institute, and then graduate school at Wheaton College, and now has a worldwide ministry telling his/their story and bringing great glory to God in the process.

Third, prayer is essential for the spiritual battles against the forces of darkness. Christopher’s choices to engage in ongoing sexual sin, drug use and wild living went hand-in-hand with a spirit of rebellion and a strong delusion. Both of these involve demons, because his sinful choices opened up doorways to demonic influence. The Yuans’ book provides plenty of examples of the spiritual blindness that resulted. But Angela’s faithful time in the Word of God and intercessory prayer tore down the strongholds that held her son captive to his fleshly desires and his spiritual bondage. She turned a shower stall into her prayer closet, where she spent literally hours every day immersing herself in the Bible and prayer.

Fourth, remain thankful. When Christopher called his parents to tell them that he had been arrested and was in jail, Angela recognized this as the answer to her frequent prayer: Lord, do whatever it takes to bring this prodigal son out of that far country to you. For the first time
in years, she knew that where her son was, and that he was safe. She grabbed a length of adding machine tape and wrote down that blessing. And then, as God unfolded His glorious plan for drawing Christopher to Himself and then redeeming the pain of his rebellion, she kept adding to the blessing list over the years. When I heard her tell her story at an Exodus International conference several years ago, she held up her rolled-up blessings list and let it drop: it’s about six feet long! Christopher tells me it’s almost full on the second side as well. Choosing to focus on the ways in which God continues to bless us in the midst of suffering, developing an attitude of gratitude, keeps us from losing heart in a hard situation.

Fifth, persistent prayer changes the one praying. Desperation for her son drove Angela Yuan to an incredible intimacy with her Savior. Her daily time in His word and her gift of intercessory prayer drew her heart ever closer to Him. Out of the Far Country isn’t just a story of a mother’s and son’s spiritual journey, it is an inspiration to “always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/the_power_of_a_mothers_prayers