

# “How Do I Talk to My Friend About Her Son’s Homosexuality?”

My very dear Jewish friend and mother has a gay son. She insists that she knew from age 5 forward, that he was different and going to be homosexual. She loathes Christians who say that being homosexual is not genetic, but learned behavior, and is sinful. How can I best respond to her biblically, about homosexuality? Or to anyone I meet with this perspective?

I’m so glad you asked! I see several issues in your email.

*She insists that she knew from age 5 forward, that he was different and going to be homosexual.*

If she was sensitive to her children, it is not surprising that she noted he was different from very early in his childhood. There’s nothing wrong with being different. But it’s sad that she “knew” he was going to be homosexual because it didn’t have to turn out that way.

I believe there is a [spectrum of masculinity](#) in boys, and they are born at whatever place on that spectrum that is God’s choice, and gift, to them. On one end is the rough-and-tumble physical, athletic, emotionally insensitive boy. Our culture would deem him “classically masculine.” He loves to play ball or engage in various sports, to get dirty, and to play with other boys. On the other end of the spectrum from the athletic boy is the aesthetic boy: gifted in music, art, poetry, performing, enjoying reading and other quiet activities, and emotionally sensitive. Songwriter and musician Dennis Jernigan, himself a former homosexual, calls these boys the “Davids” of the church.

Unfortunately, our culture has too narrowly defined masculinity, labeling the sensitive, artistic boy different and gay. One man I know, provided with this perspective, exclaimed, "If someone had explained to me when I was 17 that I wasn't gay, I was gifted, that would have changed everything!"

When a boy's father, especially, gives him warm attention, affection and affirmation, supporting whatever kind of boy he is, he usually grows up accepting and comfortable with his particular kind of masculinity. When a boy knows that his daddy believes in him and is his #1 cheerleader, he can connect with the world of males and continue to develop without incident. But when a boy doesn't receive the masculinity imprint from his father that makes him feel like he belongs in the world of boys and men, he can remain stuck at that place. (If he DOES have a great relationship with his dad but doesn't make the connection with other boys, the arrested development can happen a few years later.)

How do I know this? From being in ministry to hundreds of men whose stories are heartbreakingly similar. There are a few wild cards, such as sexual abuse, that can produce same-sex attractions even when a boy has a great relationship with his dad and his peers, but most of the time it's a very similar story.

[Incidentally, I see a similar spectrum of femininity for girls, ranging from the foo-foo girly-girl on one end, to the tomboy jockette, allergic to dresses, on the other. Our culture also too narrowly defines femininity, just as it does masculinity.]

*She loathes Christians who say that being homosexual is not genetic, but learned behavior, and is sinful.*

Well, being homosexual is NOT genetic. There is not only no evidence for a genetic cause for same-sex attractions, there

is strong evidence for certain pre-conditions that characterize the histories of those who eventually take on a gay identity: the sensitive temperament, a lack of warm, affirming connection with dad, a lack of affirming connection with other boys, and a resulting lack of self-confidence in being male.

And yet it can feel like people were born that way.

Maybe this analogy will help. My friend grew up in the south where everyone in his family was prejudiced. It was just the culture of his family and pretty much all the people his family ran with. As long as he can remember, he always hated and feared black people. Everyone he knew hated and feared black people. He didn't know there was any other way. But he wasn't born prejudiced. He was shaped that way because of countless interactions and modeling. He told me, "You grow up being taught and thinking that black people are bad and evil and you believe that until the Lord reveals something else. Then you change and you were not what you once were—what felt 'normal' to you."

No one chooses the feelings of a lack of confidence in one's masculinity, of not belonging to the world of boys and men. Then, once the sex hormones start flooding his body in adolescence, no one chooses the resulting sexual/romantic attraction to a guy who possesses what a boy wishes he had or were. The feelings are not learned, but the resulting choices and behaviors are. The Bible, including the Old Testament passages, does not condemn the feelings, only the chosen behavior. (And sexual sin is always a choice.) So I would make a distinction between the feelings and the actions.

So homosexual feelings are not chosen, but acting on them is, and it's sinful. It's not a sin to be tempted (what same-sex feelings constitute), but it is a sin to step over the line and give in. You might mention to your friend something like the fact that it's not a sin to be tempted to shoplift, but it

is a sin to give in and steal. I would imagine she could get that.

*How can I best respond to her biblically, about homosexuality? Or to anyone I meet with this perspective?*

The first issue is to determine if they're even open to hearing another viewpoint. It's not a good idea to try and "correct" someone's values and beliefs when they are content in them, but Jesus told us to be salt and light. So we need to be careful with our words and offer another viewpoint with respect and gentleness, as Peter tells us (1 Pet. 3:7). You might say something like, "You know, there are lots of former homosexuals who see things very differently than what we usually hear in the media."

I would suggest simply stating what God has said in His word: that His plan for sexuality is within the bounds of marriage between one man and one woman. Anything outside of His intention is not only sinful, it's harmful, and that's why he tells us to avoid it. God's rules for sexuality are rooted in His love for us, and He knows that when we insist on doing things our own way, trying to meet legitimate needs in ungodly and illegitimate ways, we will suffer from negative consequences. We can point out that the biology of sex shows that God designed it for male-female coupling. (This argument holds true for an evolutionary perspective as well.) And when people who have been immersed in a culture of anything-goes sexuality insist that homosexuality is a viable option, gently ask what would happen if a group of gay-identifying people populated an uninhabited island. What would happen over time?

All you can do is respectfully offer God's truth as revealed in His word, and trust God with the results. We live in a culture that has been shaped by a definite agenda designed to normalize and legitimize homosexuality, and suggesting people think differently than the culture demands can be like asking

a fish what it's like to be wet. A fish doesn't know the meaning of "wet" because it doesn't understand the concept of "dry." And people don't realize there's a legitimate, though politically incorrect alternative view.

And it's probably worthwhile to mention that someone whose child is gay can easily react very defensively to the offensive idea that homosexuality is preventable and changeable, because that would indicate they played a role in it. And that just hurts too much to consider. Parents usually beat ourselves up with guilt anyway; this issue can push the guilt factor to an unbearable weight. So I think it's wise to be aware of that dynamic.

Hope you find this helpful.

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