What is the “Authentic Self”?

The concept of the “authentic self” is a wonderful-sounding, important element of politically-correct thinking. Especially if one’s “authentic self” includes a deviation from standard sexuality. Many people are proud of themselves for being progressive in encouraging others to admit and embrace inclinations and desires that a few decades ago were considered shameful.

Oprah was a major proponent of the idea. On her television show and her magazine, she encouraged her faithful followers to be open and real about their true thoughts and feelings, desires and dreams, passions and embarrassments. She was (and continues to be) especially insistent on the importance of coming out as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender) if someone had even the faintest leanings in that direction.

In today’s culture, coming out and admitting you’re gay is applauded as “being authentic.” Claiming you are a man trapped in a woman’s body, or vice versa, is “being authentic.” But refusing to accept such labels means you’re inauthentic.

I remember when Oprah interviewed Ted Haggard, disgraced former pastor and head of the National Association of Evangelicals. He said he was a heterosexual man with temptations toward homosexuality (that he regretted giving into), which is consistent with a biblical worldview. Oprah would have none of it. She pronounced him gay and declared with authority, “That is who you are!” It was clear she wanted him to embrace what she considered his “authentic self” and stop denying himself.

It made me think . . . what if a new movement rose up attempting to normalize obesity, calling it “a different kind of beautiful”? And what if obese people came on her show and said, “Oprah, girlfriend, you’ve had a lifelong inclination to

overeat and not exercise. Face it! You are a fat girl! That is who you are! Stop lying about it and embrace it as who you truly are!" She wouldn't like it because she knows some weaknesses are worthy of struggling against. She wouldn't like it because she doesn't want her temptations and her inclinations to define her.

Because temptations and inclinations can be wrong.

When politician John Edwards had an adulterous relationship with Rielle Hunter while his wife battled cancer, Oprah booked her on the show. It was quite intriguing to me to see how Oprah refused to approve of Ms. Hunter's choices.

Oprah: When this is all said and done and we look back on this time of you, Rielle Hunter, the mistress and all of that, what is it you want people to really understand about what has happened here?



Rielle: All of their feelings that they're feeling and hatred that's directed toward me has to do with their fears or their anger and disappointment and sadness about their mother cheating on their father or their father or their husband or their spouse. It has to do with them, and it doesn't have to do with me, because they don't know me.

Oprah: Why can't it just be that they think that it's wrong?

Oprah did not appreciate a woman sleeping with another woman's husband. That's wrong. But if a married woman comes to the conclusion that she's a lesbian, then sleeping with another woman is embracing her "authentic self."

This is not the first time we've seen this in human history. The book of Judges tells the unhappy story, over and over, of

the nation of Israel stumbling into one disaster after another that required rescue because “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

When we do what is right in our own eyes, it never goes well with us. That’s because we are fallen, broken people who live in a fallen, broken world, and we desperately need divine help and re-direction. We can’t trust our hearts to tell us who we really are, who is our “authentic self,” because God declares that the human heart “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

The problem with what the world calls our “authentic self” is that it is the sum of our broken thoughts, feelings, desires, insecurities, and dreams. The “authentic self” that the world urges us to embrace is what the Bible calls the flesh, the part of us that operates independently from God and needs to be crucified, not glamorized (Galatians 5:24). In fact, Jesus had a completely opposite call for us: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Mark 8:34).

When we DO deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit transforms us so we look more and more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). Thinking biblically, the true and authentic self is the one that will last into eternity. A hundred years from today, every Christ-follower will be free from flesh, free from the old rotten self, reveling in the freedom and joy that comes from being completely holy and righteous and true to our re-created self that looks and acts and thinks like Jesus but with the “flavor” of our redeemed individual personalities and temperaments.

Jeanette Howard, author of *Out of Egypt*, explaining her journey out of lesbianism, recently wrote, “I am tired of people claiming that they need to be ‘true to themselves.’ No they don’t. They, like all believers, need to die to themselves and be true to God. That is authentic

discipleship."

More and more Christians are throwing in the towel in their fight against unholy sexual and relational temptations, claiming to follow their "authentic self." Even worse, a growing number of churches are doing something similar by embracing same-sex marriage. I have a question for them. If God really created them to be gay and blesses that identity today, what will happen a hundred years from today? Will there be homosexuality in heaven? There will be no sex in heaven because the only marriage will be between the Church and the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. If one's identity is wrapped up in same-sex attractions, as it is by those claiming to be "gay Christians," who will they be when all sexual and relational brokenness is a thing of the past, a mere memory of earthly life?

I suggest that a believer's true and real and lasting "authentic self" is all wrapped up in not who we say we are, but who God says we are: His beloved child, redeemed and purified and made holy as He is holy. Chosen, accepted, and included, a citizen of heaven and a member of God's household. Belonging to Jesus because He bought us with His very lifeblood. Sealed with the Spirit, made brand new from the inside out.

Now *that's* an "authentic self" I can get excited about!

This blog post originally appeared on April 7, 2015, at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_is_the_authentic_self

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.

1. www.dallasnews.com/news/state/headlines/20150219-women-wed-in-texas-first-same-sex-marriage-but-union-contested.ece



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.

“How Do You Respond to Vicky Beeching’s Coming Out as Gay and Proud?”

Dear Sue,

Did you happen to see this in the past few days? Vicky Beeching, Star of the Christian Rock Scene: I’m Gay. God Loves Me Just the Way I Am

What am I supposed to make of it? I have searched the scriptures, poured my heart out to God over the years and still struggling. I cannot work out how she came up with this view, but it is really rocking my world view and I am in serious danger of coming unstuck. I am starting to wonder if my understanding of Scripture, of this being wrong and the reasons why for all these years is incorrect and it has made me so depressed since I read this article.

My heart hurts for Vicky.

Yes, she experiences same-sex attraction (SSA) and yes, God loves her just the way she is, but He loves her too much to leave her there. Her SSA is like the red light on the dashboard of a car. It means something is wrong under the hood that needs attention. God loves her just the way she is but He wants to bring healing to her heart. She may identify as gay, but God won’t agree to that identity. He would say, “You are My beloved daughter, created in My image and for My glory.”

100 years from today, when she is in heaven, she will not be saying she’s gay. Sexuality is only for this earth. If something about us is temporary, then it shouldn’t be our

identity. That's why God, who doesn't make anyone gay (anymore than He makes anyone selfish or bigoted or self-centered), won't agree with her confusion about her identity.

I think it's good to acknowledge when one has a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). But saying it is good and it's fine and God accepts it as His intention and design is wrong. It would be better to say, "I experience same-sex attraction, and I need help to find out where it came from and what to do about it." And I would say, after fifteen years of helping people deal with unwanted SSA, that the way to deal with the holes in one's heart is intimacy with the Father and the Son and the Spirit. The problem driving SSA is a sense of disconnection, of not belonging or being attached. The way that is resolved is by focusing on Jesus, who said in John 14:23 of His Father, "We will come to him and make Our home with him." Resting in the indwelling Father, Son and Spirit is how that hole is filled.

Blessing you,

Sue Bohlin

Posted Sept. 2014

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When Someone In Your Congregation Says "I'm Gay"

Things to Remember

1. **No one is born gay,** and no one chooses to be gay. Because

of relational brokenness in families and among peers, some people experience emotional needs that they try to meet in ungodly ways. Many of them are uncomfortable with their own gender; later, they discover they are attracted to others of the same sex, but this is not their choice. Acting on it, however, is.

2. **Change is possible.** Even going back to the first-century church, the apostle Paul wrote to former homosexuals in the Corinthian church, "and such were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:11).

3. Because we live in a fallen world, **we are all broken.** Many people in our churches are sexually broken—victims of incest, pornography and masturbation addicts, and compulsive sex addiction. Homosexuality is only one form of brokenness.

4. **Homosexuality grows out of broken relationships and is healed in healthy relationships,** especially same-sex relationships. This is one of the reasons it is essential for recovering homosexuals and lesbians to be actively involved in the church, because this is where they can find healthy, God-honoring friendships. Their homosexuality is not contagious!

5. **Treat them with respect like you would anyone else.** They are people made in the image of God for whom Christ died—they are not their sexuality. Many people trying to come out of the gay lifestyle expect to find respect and acceptance only in the gay community. Finding it in church is immensely healing to their souls.

6. **Accept them where they are, just as Jesus did.** Choose to accept the person, but not sinful behavior. People don't change unless they experience the grace of acceptance first. But once they know they are loved and accepted, many of them are willing to do what it takes to live a life of holiness.

7. **Seek to see them with God's eyes** of love and acceptance, with His intention for their wholeness, healing and freedom. This means depending on the Holy Spirit for divine perspective

and exercising humility to recognize that first impressions are often incomplete and inaccurate.

8. This is a great opportunity to lead people to an understanding of **what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.** Some homosexual strugglers, especially men, feel that they have committed the unpardonable sin. They've heard they are going to hell no matter what they do, so they are permanently separated from God. They need to know this is a lie, because when we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus covers them ALL and cleanses us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

9. Because of abuse issues, most **strugglers seem to have an especially hard time relating to Father God** and to receiving His love. Yet it is the masculine voice (first in earthly fathers, and ultimately in our Heavenly Father) that calls gender out from both men and women, and it is the Father's personal and powerful love that is the most important healing agent in human hearts.

10. Because most pastors are men in authority, **most strugglers (men and women) are INCREDIBLY intimidated** by them. Pastors need to know this and really understand in order to minister to strugglers. This means respecting the fragility of strugglers' relationships with pastors and choosing to be deliberately tender and gentle. They really need "good shepherds." Verbalize to them that God can not only change them, but He is very proud of them (as you are) for sharing this with you and desiring to change.

11. **Most same-sex strugglers have very weak and broken boundaries.** Their deep neediness causes them to lapse into emotionally dependent relationships with everyone who gets close. We encourage you to only counsel these folks at your office during regular business hours where others can be aware of your activities. This gives a sense of security to the struggler and a protection for you as the pastor.

12. The most success in overcoming same-gender attraction has occurred when strugglers experienced **God as Healer through heterosexual people who were willing to come alongside them** in their journeys—men helping men, and women helping women. It would be helpful for you to find someone willing to befriend and mentor the struggler. This takes a person willing to seriously invest in the life of a very needy person. They will need to be available and accessible. Their presence in the struggler's life can be powerful and healing.

13. **If someone comes in with an agenda** of arrogance, demanding acceptance of their sexual sin, don't let them bully you. There is a difference between welcoming the sinner and allowing him to continue in his rebellion. Homosexuality is sin. Lev. 18:22-23; Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Note that these verses condemn homosexual behavior, not feelings.

Five DON'TS:

1. **Don't panic.** An excellent resource for understanding the issue of homosexuality is *Someone I Love is Gay* by Bob Davies and Anita Worthen (published by InterVarsity Press). Also Exodus International (exodusinternational.org/), a Christ-centered ministry that helps people deal with unwanted homosexuality, has numerous resources. Living Hope Ministries (www.livehope.org) is an Exodus referral ministry in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area with excellent online forums for parents, spouses, men and women, and youth (ages 13+) who struggle with homosexuality

2. **Don't make false assumptions or accusations.** For example, please do not assume he is HIV positive. Many aren't. And if he is, AIDS is sexually transmitted; the people in your congregation are safer than many fear. Respect the seriousness of HIV with commonsense precautions (such as contact with bodily fluids), but don't ostracize the person. Handshakes and hugs are perfectly safe.

3. **Don’t shut down pastorally or emotionally.** The person coming to you has known a lifetime of rejection and desperately needs to know that a representative of Jesus Christ will extend grace to him. Hug them when they leave. It may be the first positive touch they have had in years.

4. **Don’t pass judgment.** All of us have besetting sins! As Billy Graham said, “Don’t take credit for not falling into a temptation that never tempted you in the first place.”

5. **Don’t disclose this person’s secret without permission,** even among church staff. There is nothing safe about the gay lifestyle; people struggling with same-sex attraction need to find safety in the church.

> *This is the text of a brochure from Living Hope Ministries, written by Sue Bohlin, who serves on the Board of Directors of Living Hope and moderates one of the online forums. A PDF version of this brochure is also available for download here; you will need the free Adobe Acrobat reader to see it.*

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“It’s OK to Act Out Because Christ Has Already Forgiven Us?”

I have a question that I believe you can help me answer. I am a Christian who struggles with homosexual desires. Since I

have accepted Christ as my Lord and savior, I no longer regard myself as gay or homosexual, but instead I claim the new identity I have in Christ. I have a friend who is also a Christian as far as I know, and I do believe he is, who also has these same desires. He doesn't believe that homosexuality is a sin, and has bought into the pro-gay theology. I don't know if he really believes that homosexuality is not a sin, or if he just wants to believe it is not, I can't judge his heart, but he presented me with an argument that I have a hard time with. He said that even if homosexuality were a sin, as a Christian, covered by the righteous sacrifice of Christ, he could continue to practice that lifestyle in harmony with his faith, and because of the work of Christ on the cross, it really wouldn't matter. In conjunction with what Paul said "all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial", I am having a hard time refuting that argument. Yet I don't believe that he is correct. Am I wrong, do I not understand the power of grace? If so, then why shouldn't I act on my desires and be perfectly comforted in the knowledge that God has already paid the necessary price for my actions? Thank you for your time.

I salute you and honor you for taking the position you have, choosing to take the identity of a child of the King rather than someone who is at the mercy of his desires. That is a HUGE step toward freedom from those desires, and towards healing!

I do share your concern for your friend's rationalization, for that is what it is. Let me share an image that has really touched me from the heart of my friend Randy Thomas, the former director of Living Hope, a ministry to those leaving homosexuality (www.livehope.org). He says that when he is tempted to indulge in a sin, especially of a sexual nature, he imagines himself at the foot of the cross looking up at the Lord Jesus, Who is suffering a horrible death for him. If he allows himself to think, "This sin doesn't matter, You're

going to die for it anyway," it's like picking up the nail and the sledgehammer and pounding it into His body.

Another friend suggested an amazing concept to me. Even though Christ's death was 2000 years in the past, He died for all sins, past present and future. All of my sins were future at that point. That means that every time I choose to sin, I am making Him pay for yet another sin that He didn't have to, and every time I choose NOT to sin, that means that's a sin He didn't have to experience and take onto Himself for me. So, by my choices today, I can affect the number and burden of the sins He suffered and paid for 2000 years ago. Isn't that astounding?

Concerning the power of grace: Paul already answered that very question in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" Seeing grace as the license to sin is a slap in the face of our Savior. And not seeing homosexual practice as sin is an act of self-deception. Here's a question to pose to your friend: what is glorifying to God about homosexual practice? Consider the biology of sex, for starters. Consider the spiritual meaning of sex between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5), as well. There are very good reasons God limits sex to heterosexual marriage.

Concerning the argument "all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial," people have to do some serious theological gymnastics to get around God's condemnation of homosexual sin. There is no way it is permissible because every act of homosexual sin, just like every act of heterosexual sin, is immoral, and God stands against all immorality. Scripture is very, very clear that God's intent for sex is restricted to within the marriage of one man and one woman, and everything else outside of those confines is sin. Joe Dallas' fine work *A Strong Delusion* is an excellent answer to the pro-gay theology that he understands well because he was an apologist for it before repenting of it. I

heartily suggest it to you and to your friend. In fact, that book was the reason one of MY friends finally made the decision to leave lesbianism behind—it was such a powerful statement of truth.

I do hope this helps clear things up. I pray that God will overwhelm you with the peace that comes with His truth, and you will enjoy the confidence of trusting Him no matter what others say.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Homosexual Myths – Exposed from a Biblical Perspective

Sue Bohlin looks a common myths concerning homosexual behavior that are prevalent in our society. These myths prevent us from looking at homosexuality with a biblical worldview and from dealing with this sin in a loving and consistent manner.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

In this essay we'll be looking at some of the homosexual myths that have pervaded our culture, and hopefully answering their arguments. Much of this material is taken from Joe Dallas' excellent book, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*.{1} While the information in this essay may prove helpful, it is our prayer that you will be able to share it calmly and compassionately, remembering that homosexuality isn't just a political and moral issue; it is

also about people who are badly hurting.

10% of the Population Is Homosexual.

In 1948, Dr. Alfred Kinsey released a study called *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* claiming that between 10 and 47% of the male population was homosexual.{2} He got his figures from a pool of 5,300 male subject that he represented as your average "Joe College" student. Many of the men who gave him the data, though, actually consisted of sex offenders, prisoners, pimps, hold-up men, thieves, male prostitutes and other criminals, and hundreds of gay activists.{3} The 10% figure was widely circulated by Harry Hay, the father of the homosexual "civil rights" movement, urging that homosexuality be seen no longer as an act of sodomy but as a 10% minority class.{4}

Kinsey's figures were exposed as completely false immediately afterwards, and by many other scientists since. The actual figure is closer to 2-3%.{5} But the 10% number has been so often reported in the press that most people think it's valid. It's not.

People Are Born Gay.

Ann Landers said it, and millions of people believe it. The problem is, the data's not there to support it. There are three ways to test for inborn traits: twin studies, brain dissections, and gene "linkage" studies.{6} Twin studies show that something other than genetics must account for homosexuality, because nearly half of the identical twin studied didn't have the same sexual preference. If homosexuality were inherited, identical twins should either be both straight or both gay. Besides, none of the twin studies have been replicated, and other twin studies have produced completely different results.{7} Dr. Simon LeVay's famous study on the brains of dead subjects yielded questionable results regarding its accuracy. He wasn't sure of the sexual

orientation of the people in the study, and Dr. LeVay even admits he doesn't know if the changes in the brain structures were the cause *of* homosexuality, or caused *by* homosexuality.{8} Finally, an early study attempting to show a link between homosexuality and the X-chromosome has yet to be replicated, and a second study actually contradicted the findings of the first.{9} Even if homosexuality were someday proven to be genetically related, *inborn* does not necessarily mean *normal*. Some children are born with cystic fibrosis, but that doesn't make it a normal condition.

Inborn tendencies toward certain behaviors (such as homosexuality) do not make those behaviors moral. Tendencies toward alcoholism, obesity, and violence are now thought to be genetically influenced, but they are not good behaviors. People born with tendencies toward these behaviors have to fight hard against their natural temptations to drunkenness, gluttony, and physical rage.

And since we are born as sinners into a fallen world, we have to deal with the consequences of the Fall. Just because we're born with something doesn't mean it's normal. It's not true that "God makes some people gay." All of us have effects of the Fall we need to deal with.

What's Wrong with Two Loving, Committed Men or Women Being Legally Married?

There are two aspects to marriage: the legal and the spiritual. Marriage is more than a social convention, like being "best friends" with somebody, because heterosexual marriage usually results in the production of children. Marriage is a legal institution in order to offer protection for women and children. Women need to have the freedom to devote their time and energies to be the primary nurturers and caretakers of children without being forced to be breadwinners as well. God's plan is that children grow up in families who

provide for them, protect them, and wrap them in security.

Because gay or lesbian couples are by nature unable to reproduce, they do not need the legal protection of marriage to provide a safe place for the production and raising of children. Apart from the sexual aspect of a gay relationship, what they have is really "best friend" status, and that does not require legal protection.

Of course, a growing number of gay couples are seeking to have a child together, either by adoption, artificial insemination, or surrogate mothering. Despite the fact that they have to resort to an outside procedure in order to become parents, the presence of adults plus children in an ad hoc household should not automatically secure official recognition of their relationship as a family. There is a movement in our culture which seeks to redefine "family" any way we want, but with a profound lack of discernment about the long-term effects on the people involved. Gay parents are making a dangerous statement to their children: lesbian mothers are saying that fathers are not important, and homosexual fathers are saying that mothers are not important. More and more social observers see the importance of both fathers and mothers in children's lives; one of their roles is to teach boys what it means to be a boy and teach girls what it means to be a girl.

The other aspect of marriage is of a spiritual nature. Granted, this response to the gay marriage argument won't make any difference to people who are unconcerned about spiritual things, but there are a lot of gays who care very deeply about God and long for a relationship with Him. The marriage relationship, both its emotional and especially its sexual components, is designed to serve as an earthbound illustration of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church.{10} Just as there is a mystical oneness between a man and a woman, who are very different from each other, so there is a mystical unity between two very different, very "other" beings—the eternal Son of God and us mortal, creaturely

humans. Marriage as God designed it is like the almost improbable union of butterfly and buffalo, or fire and water. But homosexual relationships are the coming together of two like individuals; the dynamic of unity and diversity in heterosexual marriage is completely missing, and therefore so is the spiritual dimension that is so intrinsic to the purpose of marriage. Both on an emotional and a physical level, the sameness of male and male, or female and female, demonstrates that homosexual relationships do not reflect the spiritual parable that marriage is meant to be. God wants marriage partners to complement, not to mirror, each other. The concept of gay marriage doesn't work, whether we look at it on a social level or a spiritual one.

Jesus Said Nothing about Homosexuality.

Whether from a pulpit or at a gay rights event, gay activists like to point out that Jesus never addressed the issue of homosexuality; instead, He was more interested in love. Their point is that if Jesus didn't specifically forbid a behavior, then who are we to judge those who engage in it?

This argument assumes that the Gospels are more important than the rest of the books in the New Testament, that only the recorded sayings of Jesus matter. But John's gospel itself assures us that it is not an exhaustive record of all that Jesus said and did, which means there was a lot left out!{11} The gospels don't record that Jesus condemned wife-beating or incest; does that make them OK? Furthermore, the remaining books of the New Testament are no less authoritative than the gospels. All scripture is inspired by God, not just the books with red letters in the text. Specific prohibitions against homosexual behavior in Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 are every bit as God-ordained as what is recorded in the gospels.

We do know, however, that Jesus spoke in specific terms about God's created intent for human sexuality: "From the beginning

of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh. . . What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). God's plan is holy heterosexuality, and Jesus spelled it out.

The Levitical laws against homosexual behavior are not valid today.

Leviticus 18:22 says, "Thou shalt not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination." Gay theologians argue that the term "abomination" is generally associated with idolatry and the Canaanite religious practice of cult prostitution, and thus God did not prohibit the kind of homosexuality we see today.

Other sexual sins such as adultery and incest are also prohibited in the same chapters where the prohibitions against homosexuality are found. All sexual sin is forbidden by both Old and New Testament, completely apart from the Levitical codes, because it is a moral issue. It is true that we are not bound by the rules and rituals in Leviticus that marked Yahweh's people by their separation from the world; however, the nature of sexual sin has not changed because immorality is an affront to the holiness and purity of God Himself. Just because most of Leviticus doesn't apply to Christians today doesn't mean none of it does.

The argument that the word "abomination" is connected with idolatry is well answered by examining Proverbs 6:16-19, which describes what else the Lord considers abominations: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises evil imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers. Idolatry plays no part in these abominations. The argument doesn't hold water.

If the practices in Leviticus 18 and 20 are condemned because

of their association with idolatry, then it logically follows that they would be permissible if they were committed apart from idolatry. That would mean incest, adultery, bestiality, and child sacrifice (all of which are listed in these chapters) are only condemned when associated with idolatry; otherwise, they are allowable. No responsible reader of these passages would agree with such a premise.{12}

Calling Homosexuality a Sin Is Judging, and Judging Is a Sin.

Josh McDowell says that the most often-quoted Bible verse used to be John 3:16, but now that tolerance has become the ultimate virtue, the verse we hear quoted the most is "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matt. 7:1). The person who calls homosexual activity wrong is called a bigot and a homophobe, and even those who don't believe in the Bible can be heard to quote the "Judge not" verse.

When Jesus said "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," the context makes it plain that He was talking about setting ourselves up as judge of another person, while blind to our own sinfulness as we point out another's sin. There's no doubt about it, there is a grievous amount of self-righteousness in the way the church treats those struggling with the temptations of homosexual longings. But there is a difference between agreeing with the standard of Scripture when it declares homosexuality wrong, and personally condemning an individual because of his sin. Agreeing with God about something isn't necessarily judging.

Imagine I'm speeding down the highway, and I get pulled over by a police officer. He approaches my car and, after checking my license and registration, he says, "You broke the speed limit back there, ma'am." Can you imagine a citizen indignantly leveling a politically correct charge at the officer: "Hey, you're judging me! Judge not, lest ye be

judged!'" The policeman is simply pointing out that I broke the law. He's not judging my character, he's comparing my behavior to the standard of the law. It's not judging when we restate what God has said about His moral law, either. What is sin is to look down our noses at someone who falls into a different sin than we do. That's judging.

The Romans 1 Passage on Homosexuality Does Not Describe True Homosexuals, but Heterosexuals Who Indulge in Homosexual Behavior That Is Not Natural to *Them*.

Romans 1:26-27 says, "God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." Some gay theologians try to get around the clear prohibition against both gay and lesbian homosexuality by explaining that the real sin Paul is talking about here is straight people who indulge in homosexual acts, because it's not natural to them. Homosexuality, they maintain, is not a sin for *true* homosexuals.

But there is nothing in this passage that suggests a distinction between "true" homosexuals and "false" ones. Paul describes the homosexual behavior itself as unnatural, regardless of who commits it. In fact, he chooses unusual words for men and women, Greek words that most emphasize the biology of being a male and a female. The behavior described in this passage is unnatural for males and females; sexual orientation isn't the issue at all. He is saying that homosexuality is biologically unnatural; not just unnatural to heterosexuals, but unnatural to anyone.

Furthermore, Romans 1 describes men "inflamed with lust" for

one another. This would hardly seem to indicate men who were straight by nature but experimenting with gay sex.{13} You really have to do some mental gymnastics to make Romans 1 anything other than what a plain reading leads us to understand all homosexual activity is sin.

Preaching Against Homosexuality Causes Gay Teenagers to Commit Suicide.

I received an e-mail from someone who assured me that the blood of gay teenagers was on my hands because saying that homosexuality is wrong makes people kill themselves. The belief that gay teenagers are at high risk for suicide is largely inspired by a 1989 report by a special federal task force on youth and suicide. This report stated three things; first, that gay and lesbian youths account for one third of all teenage suicides; second, that suicide is the leading cause of death among gay teenagers, and third, gay teens who commit suicide do so because of "internalized homophobia" and violence directed at them.{14} This report has been cited over and over in both gay and mainstream publications.

San Francisco gay activist Paul Gibson wrote this report based on research so shoddy that when it was submitted to Dr. Louis Sullivan, the former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Sullivan officially distanced himself and his department from it.{15} The report's numbers, both its data and its conclusions, are extremely questionable. Part of the report cites an author claiming that as many as 3,000 gay youths kill themselves each year. But that's over a thousand more than the total number of teen suicides in the first place! Gibson exaggerated his numbers when he said that one third of all teen suicides are committed by gay youth. He got this figure by looking at gay surveys taken at drop-in centers for troubled teens, many of which were gay-oriented, which revealed that gay teens had two to four times the suicidal tendencies of straight kids. Gibson multiplied this higher

figure by the disputed Kinsey figure of a 10% homosexual population to produce his figure that 30% of all youth suicides are gay. David Shaffer, a Columbia University psychiatrist who specializes in teen suicides, pored over this study and said, “I struggled for a long time over Gibson’s mathematics, but in the end, it seemed more hocus-pocus than math.”{16}

The report’s conclusions are contradicted by other, more credible reports. Researchers at the University of California-San Diego interviewed the survivors of 283 suicides for a 1986 study. 133 of those who died were under 30, and only 7 percent were gay and they were all over 21. In another study at Columbia University of 107 teenage boy suicides, only three were known to be gay, and two of those died in a suicide pact. When the Gallup organization interviewed almost 700 teenagers who knew a teen who had committed suicide, not one mentioned sexuality as part of the problem. Those who had come close to killing themselves mainly cited boy-girl problems or low self-esteem.{17}

Gibson didn’t use a heterosexual control group in his study. Conclusions and statistics are bound to be skewed without a control group. When psychiatrist David Shaffer examined the case histories of the gay teens who committed suicides in Gibson’s report, he found the same issues that straight kids wrestle with before suicide: “The stories were the same: a court appearance scheduled for the day of the death; prolonged depression; drug and alcohol problems; etc.”{18}

That any teenager experiences so much pain that he takes his life is a tragedy, regardless of the reason. But it’s not fair to lay the responsibility for gay suicides, the few that there are, on those who agree with God that it’s wrong and harmful behavior.

Notes

1. Dallas, Joe. *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1996.
2. Dr. Judith Reisman, "Kinsey and the Homosexual Revolution," *The Journal of Human Sexuality* (Carrollton, Tex.: Lewis and Stanley, 1996), 21.
3. Ibid., 26.
4. Ibid., 21.
5. Richard G. Howe, *Homosexuality in America: Exposing the Myths* (found on the American Family Association website at http://www.afa.net) gives this citation: "Knight lists the following sources in support of the 1%-3% figures: J. Gordon Muir, "Homosexuals and the 10% Fallacy," *Wall Street Journal*, March 31, 1993; Tom W. Smith, "Adult Sexual Behavior in 1989: Number of Partners, Frequency of Intercourse and Risk of AIDS," *Family Planning Perspectives* (May/June 1991): 102; John O.G. Billy, Koray Tanfer, William R. Grady, and Daniel H. Klepinger, "The Sexual Behavior of Men in the United States," *Family Planning Perspectives*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, vol. 25, no. 2 (March/April 1993)."
6. Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, "The Gay Gene?", *The Journal of Human Sexuality*, 4.
7. Dallas, 114.
8. Ibid., 112-114.
9. Ibid., 116.
10. Ephesians 5:25-32
11. John 20:30
12. Dallas, 193.
13. Ibid., 195.
14. Peter LaBarbera, "The Gay Youth Suicide Myth," *The Journal of Human Sexuality*, 65.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 66.

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