Helping Teens Understand Homosexuality – Facts to Help Youth Withstand the Current Culture

Sue Bohlin provides practical ways to communicate with teens about common misunderstandings and the truth concerning homosexuality. Recognizing that teens deal with peer pressure to experiment and feelings of same sex attraction, she provides real ways to help teens make their way through this maze of contradiction and confusion.



In this article we look at ways to communicate the truth about homosexuality to teens. We examine the lies they are told and the sexual pressure they are under. We also look at ways to help kids process their gender confusion, as well as address helpful ways to encourage teens who already identify themselves as gay or lesbian. And finally, we provide perspective on how to treat those who struggle with same-sex attraction in a compassionate and godly way. By looking at this topic, from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective, we can communicate the depth of God's love and His desire for us to experience the best life possible.

The Lies They Hear

In many schools and in the rest of the culture today, only one perspective is allowed to be heard. Consider four lies that are very familiar to teens today:

First, *"Homosexuality is normal and healthy."* It's neither. The fact that it simply occurs (in about 2% of the population) doesn't make it normal. When we look at the way males and

females were designed to complement each other both emotionally and sexually, that tells us something about the nature of homosexuality, that something has gone wrong somewhere. This is not judging the people who experience same-sex attraction; it's like a red light on the dashboard of a car, denoting that something needs attention.

Acting physically on same-sex attractions is certainly not healthy. Those who do are at far greater risk for sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS; alcoholism and drug abuse; depression; emotionally exhausting relationships; and a shortened lifespan.{1} Please see the "Facts About Youth" website from the American College of Pediatricians, especially this article: Health Risks of the Homosexual Lifestyle.

Lie #2: *"If you're attracted to someone of the same sex, that means you're gay or lesbian."* Not so. It really means that there are unmet, God-given needs for love and attention that were supposed to be met earlier in life. Having crushes on other people, of both sexes, is also a normal part of adolescent development. It means teens are transitioning emotionally from child to adult.

The third lie is, "*Since you were born that way, you can't change.*" First, there is no scientific evidence that anyone is born gay. It's a myth that has been repeated so often that people believe it. Second, thousands of people who were once gay have experienced significant changes in their attractions and behavior.{2} Change *is* possible.

The fourth lie is, "*Embrace and celebrate your gay identity, because gay life is cool.*" Those in ministry to those dealing with unwanted homosexuality have heard many heartbreaking stories of the truth: a dark side of intense and difficult relationships, relational patterns of disillusionment and breakups, physical and emotional unhealthiness.

Countless people have said they wished they never entered the

gay community in the first place, but it’s hard to leave.

Teens and Sexual Pressure

Adolescents are under an extraordinary amount of sexual pressure. They live in a sex-saturated culture, and the messages they receive from the media and, unfortunately, in school, clearly communicate an expectation that sex is just part of having a social life. Rarely do they hear about the heart-wrenching consequences of being sexually active, both physically and emotionally. The agenda pushing sexual freedom is also engaged in trying to normalize homosexuality as well.

Teens are pushed to decide early if they are gay, straight, or bisexual, as young as elementary school. But kids in their early teens, much less even younger than that, are no more equipped to “decide” their sexual orientation than they are to choose a college major and career track. A landmark study done by the University of Minnesota determined that at age twelve, one fourth of the students were unsure of their sexual orientation. Their bodies were just beginning to experience the changes that would turn them from children into adults, and they were being asked if they were gay, straight, or bisexual. No wonder so many were confused! But by age seventeen, that number of kids unsure of their sexual orientation had dropped to 5%.{3}

And psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover says, “[W]ithout any intervention whatsoever, three out of four boys who think they’re gay at age 16 aren’t by 25. So if we’re going to treat homosexuality as a state, 75% of ‘gays’ become ‘non-gay’ spontaneously. That’s a statement which I consider ludicrous, but if you accept this tacit proposition—that being gay is an actual state, like being short or being tall, black or white—then in three out of four people that condition changes itself spontaneously. . . That’s with no outside intervention, just the natural processes of development.”{4}

We need to tell teens, “It’s too soon to ‘declare a major’ in your sexuality.”

Teens are also pressured to experiment with both sexes as the only way they can know their sexual orientation. It’s presented as nonchalantly as our cruise ship table partner suggesting we try escargot—”Hey, how can you know if you like it unless you try it out?”

Teenage sexual behavior can have lifelong consequences, but they are not in a position to recognize that. Their brains don’t finish developing until age twenty-five, and they tend to make decisions out of the region of the brain that controls emotion. So they are easily swayed to make dangerous and irresponsible choices, like engaging in any kind of sexual behavior.

Teens need to be encouraged to face the sexual pressures and stand against them.

Gender Insecurity

At a conference I attended, author and ministry leader Andy Comiskey{5} shared a painful experience in junior high where one day, out of the blue, the whole school was abuzz with the rumor that Andy was gay. There was even graffiti about it on the wall. He struggled with his sexual identity, but he had never acted out. He walked into a classroom on an errand and on his way out, two boys called “Faggot!” He was crushed and humiliated. Later on, he made it into a self-fulfilling prophecy and immersed himself in the gay lifestyle.

I went up to him and asked, “If you could rewrite the script of that incident, knowing what you do today, what would it look like?” He said, “Oh, I wish there had been some sensitive adults, especially in the church, to talk freely with me and other kids about ‘gender insecurity.’ They wouldn’t even have to talk about homosexuality or use the word—many kids can

relate to the idea of 'gender insecurity.' It would have been so freeing for me to have someone acknowledge that it's a real thing, but it didn't mean I was gay. I wish there were people who could have spoken truth into my life at that point."

One kind of truth that kids should hear is that around age ten, attraction for the same sex begins. This attraction is emotional, non-sexual, and involuntary. It doesn't mean teens are gay or lesbian; it means they are transitioning through normal adolescent development. We have to learn to attach to people of our same sex before we can learn to attach to people of the opposite sex. But most teens don't know this.

Some kids don't feel secure in their masculinity or femininity for a variety of reasons, usually having to do with not being affirmed by parents and peers. God gives each of us needs for attention, approval and affection. When those needs are not met, the onset of hormones can sexualize this "hole in the heart." Some teens can find themselves longing for the attention, approval and affection of people of their same gender. When others put on them the false and hurtful labels of "homo," "fag," or "lez," they can easily find themselves believing the lies.

When teens are not secure in their gender, they *don't* need to be pointed to gay groups at school. They need to be affirmed and encouraged to develop their innate, God-given masculinity or femininity, to see their gender as good. They need to have other kids reach out to make them feel "one of the guys" or "one of the girls." They need time to finish growing up.

Teens Who Identify as Gay or Lesbian

Growing numbers of teens are self-identifying as gay or lesbian. In many circles, being gay—or claiming to be gay—is now considered cool, especially among girls.

Teenagers experiment with same-sex relationships for a variety

of reasons. Some experience normal crushes on same-sex peers and think this means they are gay—or their friends *inform* them that's what it means. What it really means is that they are learning to form deep and intense attachments which is a necessary precursor to maintaining long-term adult relationships like marriage.

Others experiment with same-sex relationships out of a legitimate need to belong. Some kids are simply curious; they just want to try it out like a new shade of lipstick.

Some teens experiment with same-sex relationships because others have labeled them gay or lesbian, and they wonder, "Am I? Do they know something I don't know? Maybe I am and I need to go in that direction." This is one reason it's so important to impress on all kids the absolute unacceptability of name-calling and other cruelties. It's not only bullying behavior, it can have terrible emotional consequences.

Some adolescents pursue same-sex relationships because they are anxious about growing into adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood. So they hide behind immature and emotionally volatile same-sex feelings and behaviors.

Often, what teens are attracted to in same-sex peers are the characteristics they wish they had in themselves: popularity, good looks, a winsome personality, a strong physique. This kind of jealousy doesn't mean they are gay or lesbian; it means there is an area they need to build confidence in!

Most girls who get involved in same-sex relationships start out in friendships that grow increasingly controlling and needy. In these emotionally dependent relationships, girls can get so enmeshed with each other that their relationship turns physical.

Many people who later identify as gay or lesbian report feeling different from others, feeling like they don't fit in or belong. Girls can feel like they don't belong to the world

of girls, and guys almost always feel like they can't measure up in the world of males. This is gender insecurity, not homosexuality, but teens usually don't hear this message. They need to.

Labels such as "gay" and "lesbian" and "homo" and "dyke" are incredibly hurtful, and it is easy for those who are slapped with those labels to believe them. But God doesn't call anyone homosexual or lesbian; those labels are man's invention, not biblical truth. It's essential for teens to know who they are in God's sight—beloved, precious, and stamped with the imprint of His acceptance and delight.

When Teens Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction

If you know teens who are struggling with feelings of same-sex attraction, or who seem to be experiencing gender insecurity, let me make some suggestions on how to minister to them.

First, don't address the issue of homosexuality head-on. Same-sex strugglers are always wrestling with feelings of inferiority, rejection, shame and fear, so it's extremely uncomfortable for anyone to bring up the subject. The heart of the issue for kids who find themselves attracted to others of the same sex are these dark and negative feelings. It's much better to ask indirect questions that encourage them to talk about the underlying feelings of disconnection with a parent, or the ridicule of their peers, or depression and sadness.

Second, don't use any labels. Teens who struggle with their gender identity already have a huge struggle with feeling that the rest of the world has put an unwelcome label on them. The false, man-made labels of "gay" and "lesbian" are hurtful, false, and restricting.

Consider what it would be like if we created a label such as "angro" for people who are easily ticked off and walk around

in a continual low-level state of hostility. What if people went around saying, “I’m an angry person. That’s just the way I am—that’s WHO I am. I’m an angro.” They might believe they were born angry, that they have an “angro gene.” Not only is the label of “angro” false and misleading, but it can lead people to believe the lie that it is a permanent state or condition rather than a description of one’s current feelings.

That’s what happened with the relatively recent labels of “gay” and “lesbian.” They can become like jail cells, making people feel hopelessly trapped in a state or condition. It’s much better to help teens deal with the fact that they are experiencing some attractions to their same gender, and those feelings are like the red light on the dashboard of a car. They mean there’s something going on inside that needs some attention. And that’s literally true: God creates all of us with the need for attention, affection and approval, and those are the things adolescents are craving when they have feelings for people of the same sex. The needs are legitimate; we need to help them be met in healthy ways. This is where the church and other Christian youth organizations can make all the difference in the world.

Third, communicate to kids who struggle that God did not make them gay. God doesn’t make anyone gay, and there is no scientific evidence that there is a biological basis for homosexual feelings or behavior. Even if they feel that they were born gay, this is the result of being told a fairy tale. Were American kids born English speakers? That’s all they ever knew, right? No, they weren’t *born* English speakers, they were born *language* speakers. Which language they speak is a matter of the shaping influences of their upbringing. Kids who experience same-sex attraction were born to be relational creatures, but how those relationships shape their souls is a function of their temperaments, their home life, and how they relate to other kids.

Fourth, give them a safe place to process their feelings

without being shamed or condemned. For many teens, this unfortunately rules out their home, school, or church. I'm sure it grieves God's heart that for many people, church is the most unsafe place on the planet for those who struggle with various life-controlling sins and urges. But there is a great free, online support group for struggling youth, moderated by an experienced and understanding youth pastor, at www.livehope.org. Kids can safely talk to others like themselves and learn how intimacy with Jesus Christ brings healing and change to broken and wounded hearts.

Fifth, many students who experience same sex attraction often feel fake if they don't choose to identify with or act on their feelings. They have believed the lie that gay or lesbian is what they are. They want to be real. But getting real is becoming who God created them to be, despite their feelings of what whose around them might say.{6} Finding out who God says they are is the true path to being real and not fake.

The Call to Understanding and Compassion

Many teens feel, "I just don't get this whole gay/lesbian thing." That's perfectly understandable. Only 2-3% of the population deals with same gender attraction. The fact that it's such a huge issue in our culture is completely out of proportion to the actual number of people experiencing it.

Kids need to know a few things about those who do struggle with same-sex attractions and feelings. First, they didn't choose it. It's something people *discover*, not something they *decide on*. And almost every single person who discovers they have strong feelings and fantasies about the same sex is horrified and terrified by this discovery. It's a very painful part of their life, so it's important for others to be respectful and kind.

Second, having crushes and strong feelings for friends and teachers of the same sex is a normal part of adolescent

development. It doesn't mean a teen is gay or lesbian. When other kids assure them that it does, it is slapping a false and hurtful label on them that they may find almost impossible to take off. If someone walked up to you and put a "Hi, My Name Is" nametag on you that had someone else's name on it, you probably wouldn't have any trouble taking it off and saying, "There's a mistake here—that's not who I am." But when kids do the same thing with the "nametag" of "gay" or "lesbian," they usually put it on kids who don't have the security and self-confidence to realize that's not who they are, and they can go through the rest of their lives believing a lie.

Third, be compassionate. People don't know who around them is struggling, either with their own same-sex desires and attractions, or the painful burden of knowing a family member or loved one has them. They only have to show contempt once for those who experience same-sex feelings to show that they're not a safe person.

Fourth, be respectful. That means cutting phrases like "Oh, that's so gay" out of their vocabulary. It means not throwing around words like "homo" or "fag" or "queer." Every gay joke or insult is like sticking a dagger in the heart of those who carry a painful secret.

The bottom line for helping teens understand homosexuality is to call them to see God's design as good, and show grace and compassion to those who don't see it. Be "Jesus with skin on" in both His holiness *and* His kindness.

Notes

1. Peter Freiberg, "Study: Alcohol Use More Prevalent for Lesbians," *The Washington Blade*, January 12, 2001, p. 21. Karen Paige Erickson, Karen F. Trocki, "Sex, Alcohol and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A National Survey," *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (December 1994): 261. Robert S. Hogg

et al., “Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men,” *International Journal of Epidemiology* 26 (1997): 657. Also note this article by Dr. John R. Diggs, Jr.: The Health Risks of Gay Sex (catholiceducation.org).
2. Read a few of the testimonies at the Living Hope Ministries website, www.livehope.org.
3. www.freetobeme.com/yw_minn.htm
4. Homosexuality and Teens: An Interview with Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, Massachusetts Family Institute. www.mafamily.org/Marriage%20Hearing%202003/satinover2.htm
5. Founder and Director of Desert Stream Ministries, author of *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness and Strength in Weakness*.
6. www.becomingreal.org

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See also: answers to many questions in **“Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Homosexuality”**

What I’d Love to Say to Bruce Jenner

In Bruce Jenner’s recent TV interview with Diane Sawyer, the world-famous former athlete disclosed that “For all intents and purposes, I am a woman.” He’s being widely praised as a courageous hero for normalizing the T in LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender).

I have a few thoughts I would love to share with him over a cup of coffee:

Bruce, you said you’ve known since you were young that you felt a mismatch between your insides and your outsides: “My

brain is much more female than it is male . . . that's what my soul is." I have no doubt this was confusing for you, as a boy so clearly athletically gifted.

May I share a different interpretation of your experience?

Most people think there is a single gender spectrum or continuum that runs from masculinity to femininity. Since God's Word says that in the beginning, He created humankind male and female (Genesis 1:27), I think there is one spectrum for masculinity and a separate spectrum for femininity, and God chooses what kind of masculine or feminine each baby starts out as. On one end of the masculinity spectrum are the rough-and-tumble, athletic boys who tend to emotional insensitivity—the ones often called "All-American boys." On the other end, equally masculine albeit a different kind of masculinity, are the creative, artistic, musical, emotionally sensitive boys. Boys and men can be anywhere along that spectrum. And with emotional and especially spiritual growth, they can start taking up more bandwidth. The athletic ones can learn to listen well and show empathy to others; the sensitive ones can learn to be more comfortable with their bodies and feel more like they actually belong to the world of males.

Some, like you, are given the rare gift of possessing almost the whole spectrum at once (like Jesus, I think—a "man's man" who drew other men to Himself, and the ultimate in creative, artistic and sensitive, since He was the Creator of the universe, of sunsets, and of women!). You were crazy-gifted physically, becoming arguably the world's best athlete in the 1976 Olympics. And at the same time, you said that you believed God gave you "the soul of a female."

I don't think your creative, sensitive soul is that of a female, but of a sensitive, gifted kind of male. This was understood better in earlier days. During the Civil War, General Joshua Chamberlain showed uncommon courage and leadership during the battle of Gettysburg, complemented by

deep compassion and respect for others. He would walk the battlefield, seeking out and caring for the casualties. He sat down with the wounded General Sickles to try and cheer him up, who whispered, “General, you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman.” Chamberlain, clearly honored by this praise, returned the blessing to the one who gave it.

Bruce, I don’t think God gave you the soul of a female. I think He gave you a body and soul very much like His Son. I think it would be fair to say you have the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman, and that does not detract one whit from your masculinity.

One Christian to another, I want to encourage you to develop an eternal perspective rather than only thinking about the here-and-now earthly life. In your interview, you said, “I couldn’t take the walls constantly closing in on me. If I die. . . I’d be so mad at myself that I didn’t explore that side of me.” But the end of your earthly life is only the last step before entering the glory of eternity. We need to always put more weight on the unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Your unhappiness with your gender identity qualifies as “momentary, light affliction” according to the standard God uses. You will spend the rest of your (eternal) life in your new body, a resurrection body similar to the Lord Jesus’. God chose for you to be male, just as His Son was male, and is still male. So will you be, for all eternity. That should help put your earthly life into perspective.

Bruce, I say this really, really gently: your sense that you are male on the outside and female on the inside is an error of thinking and feeling, not an error based in reality. Dr. Paul McHugh is the psychiatrist who shut down the sex-change

surgery program at Johns Hopkins University because they discovered that patients were actually no better off after surgery. According to Dr. McHugh, those who identify as transgender, like you, are like the 78-pound anorexic girl who looks in the mirror and sees a morbidly obese cow. It's your *thinking* that needs to be adjusted, not your body. You look in the mirror with your male eyes in a male body, a body that has fathered six children, and you say, "I am really a female." But Bruce, you're not. God chose to create you as a male. He made you to be a man.

Like the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, brother, you are fooling yourself. You can't change your gender, you can only amputate perfectly healthy, functioning organs and tissue. If you move forward with surgery and continued hormone treatments, everyone will always know that you are Bruce Jenner The Once-Uber Male Athlete, trying to look like a woman.

I recently learned from a computer animator that due to the different bone structures of males and females, men can never walk like women because your hips don't move like ours do—male hips and pelvis were not created for pregnancy and childbirth. It's yet another evidence that true sex change is not biologically possible.

Please, Bruce, before going any further down this path, talk to those who have gone down the path you are on, and who deeply regret it. People like Walt Heyer of sexchangeregret.com. People like the very tall female-looking man who told me through tears, in a very long conversation, that he would give anything to go back to the day before his surgery because he now feels like a fraud.

Bruce, our Bible says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Since God chose to give you the gift of maleness, and He calls you to be a good steward of every gift

He places in your hand (1 Corinthians 4:2), please reconsider how you can reject His gift of masculinity to the glory of God.

You can have "the soul of the lion and the heart of the woman"—and be the man God made you to be.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/what-id-love-to-say-to-bruce-jenner/ on May 5, 2015.

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/

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Same Sex Marriage: A Facade of Normalcy

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—*not* because they want to participate in the institution of marriage.

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 *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.{5} The average length of homosexual relationships is two to three years.{6} Only 5% of them last 20 years.{7}

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.{8} Most sexually active gay men are promiscuous, engaging hundreds of sexual partners over a lifetime.{9}

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.{10} 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."{11}

In Holland, which legalized gay marriage in 2001, the average is eight outside partners.{12} One study of gay men who had been together for over five years could not find one single monogamous relationship.{13} 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,{14} and much more promiscuity and domestic violence than the straight world.{15} Gay men can expect to live twenty years less than their straight neighbors.{16}

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.{17}

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

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 *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 *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

1. Glenn T. Stanton and Dr. Bill Maier, *Marriage on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 22.
2. Stanton and Maier, 24.
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4. Joe Dallas, *When Homosexuality Hits Home* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 164-165.
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13. This study by McWhirter and Mattison lasted five years, studying 156 male couples (312 individuals). Cited in "Long-term Gay Relationships" by Louis Berman, Ph.D., http://www.narth.com/docs/1996papers/berman.html

14. Peter Freiberg, “Study: Alcohol Use More Prevalent for Lesbians,” *The Washington Blade*, January 12, 2001, p. 21. Karen Paige Erickson, Karen F. Trocki, “Sex, Alcohol and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A National Survey,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 26 (December 1994): 261.
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16. Robert S. Hogg et al., “Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men,” *International Journal of Epidemiology* 26 (1997): 657.
17. http://www.acpeds.org/?CONTEXT=art&cat=22&art=50&BISKIT=2920801063
18. Dallas, p. 162-165.

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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

Responding To President Obama's Same-Sex Approval

President Obama recently gave public support to gay marriage. How do we respond from within a biblical worldview?

Some Christians have used this news event to highlight the way the church is blowing it on the opportunity to be "Jesus with skin on" to the GLBT (gay | lesbian | bi-sexual | transgender) community. This sentiment is especially prominent among people under forty who often have good friends who identify as gay.

There are two different issues that need to be kept separate: how the church treats gay-identifying *people*, and the church's position on the culture-affecting issue of gay identity and so-called gay marriage. The first provides an opportunity to display a welcoming attitude of grace, which says, "We're glad you're here like the rest of us messed-up sinners who desperately need Jesus. He loves you and accepts you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay that way. Come embrace holiness with us as we learn it together." (And this message is just as true for drug and porn addicts, as well as Pharisaical holier-than-thou folks addicted to judgmental moralism.)

The other is about refusing to budge on what God has said about sexual sin, which does not change. Homosexuality is no more right, holy or acceptable today than it ever was in Bible times. Neither is heterosexual fornication, adultery, or pornography-driven lust. It's not just that sex outside of God's plan for marriage (which is limited to one man and one woman, per the created intent in Genesis 1 and 2) breaks His law-His rules are given as a gift to keep us from breaking our hearts.

Jesus said He came to bring a sword (Matt. 10:34), and this

issue is one of the areas of conflict He was bound to cause because His standard of holiness, and His call to live in it, is at odds with the human desire to do what we want regardless of what God thinks. Is homosexuality a sin? This is a simple question, but it needs a complex answer. Same-sex attraction (SSA) is usually not a choice; it's something people discover, usually with pain and horror. (Females, naturally more relational, can cultivate it and be emotionally seduced toward lesbianism, though, even with no previous leanings that way.)

But does it "fall short of the glory of God," one way Scripture defines sin (Rom 3:23)?

Certainly.

Same-sex attractions are a corruption of God's intention for healthy personal and sexual development, the result of the Fall and of living in a fallen world. I get this. I have lived with polio ever since I was six months old. I didn't choose this disability, but is it a sin? It certainly falls short of the glory of God, and polio is part of living in a fallen world. It's one of the ways I experience the infection of sin. I did not choose the fallen-creation consequence of polio, yet I have to deal with it. My *responses* to it can be sinful, just as those who experience unwanted SSA have to deal with the fallen-creation consequence of homosexuality, but their responses to it can be sinful.

(By the way, there is no evidence of a genetic cause for homosexuality. The "born that way" myth cannot be supported biologically. But there are good reasons that many people end up with same-sex feelings; for more information, please read my articles in the homosexuality section of the Probe website, as well as articles on the Living Hope Ministries website at www.livehope.org.)

When people give in to the temptations of SSA and engage sexually with other men or other women, God's word has a very

serious word for it: *abomination* (Lev. 18:22). But it's important to understand that the abomination is the act, not the people.

President Obama referred to the golden rule (treat others as you want them to treat you) as his rationale for supporting gay marriage:

> *[Michelle and I] are both practicing Christians and obviously this position may be considered to put us at odds with the views of others but, you know, when we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule, you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated. And I think that's what we try to impart to our kids and that's what motivates me as president and I figure the most consistent I can be in being true to those precepts, the better I'll be as a as a dad and a husband and, hopefully, the better I'll be as president.*{1}

In 2008, in defending his current position against same-sex marriage but for civil unions, he said concerning people who might find his position controversial, "I would just refer them to the Sermon on the Mount, which I think is, in my mind, for my faith, more central than an obscure passage in Romans." {2}

Two things strike me about this. First, he's not consistent about his application of the golden rule; he's pro-abortion-but of course he doesn't want to be hacked to pieces without anesthesia, which is precisely what certain abortion procedures entail.

Second, choosing the golden rule over "an obscure passage in Romans" shows he doesn't understand that "the entirety of [God's] word is truth" (Ps. 119:160). Both the Golden Rule and the Romans 1 passage are true; it's not a choice between the two. Since he used to give lectures on Constitutional law at

the University of Chicago, I doubt that he would ever use the term "an obscure phrase in the Constitution," because obscurity is about one's perception of importance, not the actual importance of a matter. To a Constitutional lawyer who respects the document, every phrase of the document is important. To a serious [true] Christ-follower, every word of His scriptures is important.

The issue of same-sex marriage isn't about people's right to live in committed relationships, to do life together. It's about demanding society's approval for "the façade of normalcy." It's about demanding approval for what God has called an abomination (the sexual act, not the people engaged in it).

Ryan Anderson wrote in the *National Review Online*,

> *"What's at issue is whether the government will recognize such unions as marriages – and then force every citizen and business to do so as well. This isn't the legalization of something, this is the coercion and compulsion of others to recognize and affirm same-sex unions as marriages."{3}*

American culture is definitely moving toward normalizing homosexuality, but from God's perspective it will never be normal or natural (Rom. 1:26-27). And it's God's perspective that matters.

Notes

1. www.dennyburk.com/president-obamas-scriptural-defense-of-gay-marriage/
2. www.wnd.com/2008/03/57975/
3. bit.ly/LGZ1z1

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DWTS and the T in GLBT



The big controversy in the current season of Dancing With the Stars is the presence of Chaz Bono, born Chastity, the daughter of pop icons Sonny and Cher. The media has documented Chaz' transition from female to male, bringing "transgender" into people's living rooms and water cooler conversations.

For over a decade, I have loved and walked with people struggling with their gender identity and unwanted same-sex attractions. When I see Chaz, my heart just aches deeply.

How should we wisely, biblically, and compassionately think about those who feel trapped in the body of the opposite sex? [I am not talking about those who were born with chromosomal abnormalities or an endocrine imbalance, which results in hermaphroditism, or—the new term—intersex. These are biological effects of living in a fallen world, and are in a different category from those born with normal, functioning bodies who want to change those bodies.]

People who identify as transgender report feeling different from a young age, which is easy to describe as feeling "born that way," especially when that is the new banner cry of the marginalized, thanks to Lady Gaga's mega-hit of the same name. But it's a big (and, I would respectfully suggest, tragic) step from "I have always felt different from the other boys/girls" to "I am a girl in a boy's body" or "I am a boy in a girl's body."

I would suggest that the core misunderstanding of those in the

GLBT (gay | lesbian | bi-sexual | transgendered) community is the same core misunderstanding of the vast majority of people: a too-narrow understanding of God-designed variations in masculinity and femininity. (Please see my blog post "The Gender Spectrum.") Many of my friends who struggle with same-sex attraction confess that they've often thought how much better life would be if they were the other gender, but transgender-identifying folks take the fantasy to a new level.

The fantasy that "becoming something other than what I am will make me happy" marks transgender. It's wrapped up in a deep-seated envy of the opposite sex, and a hatred of one's own gender. That's why so many believe that surgery to remove the offending body parts will kill what they detest in themselves, their own gender, and transform them into what they admire and believe will give them life.

Fantasy and pretending are part of childhood, but now thanks to advances in technology, an adult can gain access to medical treatments that will feed the fantasy and turn it into reality—or at least the promise of it. Our post-modern culture invents words and redefines language in ways that adds layers of confusion to the issue: instead of the dual simplicity of God creating male and female, we are now told that there is a difference between sex, gender, and sexual identity. No wonder there is so much confusion about this issue!

"I am a man in a woman's body, and I need to bring my outsides into alignment with my insides." (Or the opposite.) This feeling may be strong, but it is not accurate, and it is not trustworthy. We are fallen people living in a fallen world with fallen understanding, and we should not trust our conclusions when they vary so much with what God has said. He declares Himself as our Creator; when God creates a female, which we know by the female body He creates, He is making a statement about His intention for that girl. When God gives us the stewardship over His creation, which includes our bodies, that precludes mutilating them by amputating healthy body

parts because we hate them.

Our culture looks at life through a purely naturalistic, materialistic lens that excludes the spiritual. Our feelings are part of that total focus on the temporal and transitory. When they are particularly strong, they can be all-consuming, and it's easy to say they are true—regardless of what God says in His word. Some people insist that their brains and bodies are mismatched, that transgender is a purely biological issue that, thanks to modern medicine, can be addressed instead of leaving them feeling miserable.

We are broken people, and we try to fix our own brokenness with our own broken methods: enter sex-change clinics. One of the heartbreaking aspects of this issue is what is NOT told to those putting their eggs in the sex-change basket. I had a very long talk one night with a MtF (male to female) post-op transgender woman who blessed me with her heart-wrenching honesty. She was so sure than she would get affirmation and praise as a woman, that the hole in her heart would be filled by what she would see in the mirror. Many surgeries later, from penis amputation to cosmetic surgery to reduce her adam's apple, when she looked in the mirror she saw a man trying unsuccessfully to be what God did not make him to be, and it broke her heart. She said she would give anything to go back to the way God had made her as a him, but now she felt stuck maintaining the charade because that was her identity, both personally and professionally.

This story is one of the reasons psychiatrist Dr. Paul McHugh shut down the sex-change program at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. In his extraordinary article "Surgical Sex," he wrote, "When I became psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins, I realized that by doing sex-change operations the hospital was fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness. We would do better for these patients, I thought, by concentrating on trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia."

I am grateful for the voices of those who have walked deep in the transgender waters and then decided to listen to God (mainly from the helpful website help4families.com): "I remember reading in the Word that our bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I wondered, 'What have I done to myself?' After reading Psalm 139, I began to cry because it spoke of how God had created me and how He had known me from the beginning."

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"I had a hard time having fun, because when I was out with my friends I was jealous of the girls and fun they were having. That started to become a theme in my life, I was jealous of females; their curves, softness, and what I perceived as superiority over men. I hated everything about my masculinity; I had fantasies at times of castrating myself and ending the control of testosterone over my life."

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"I told my wife I was leaving and wanted to divorce and transition to becoming a woman. I went out and bought supplies and women's clothing that night, and went to hotel room. I won't go into all the details, but as I sat there in all my 'feminine glory,' reading on my computer the stories of other TS folks I remember praying 'God what am I doing???' And I remember this still small voice ask, 'Is this what you really want?' My response was 'No, what should I do?' and what I heard still rings in my head to this day: 'Run!! Run back to your wife.' So I did, my wife being the faithful, loving, and godly woman that she is accepted me back, and forgave me. . . .

"[Later on] I again told my wife that I could no longer live this life and that I needed to leave to pursue my 'true life' as a female. I left my wife that night and told her that I wanted to separate. As I left to go back out and check into a

hotel, I was feeling really angry with God. I was yelling on the drive, 'God, this is bigger than You. I can't do this anymore, I am so tired of fighting and I just want to live the way that my mind wants me to live.' I remember God distinctly telling me, 'I am your Father and you are My son. You do not need to do this; you need to get your significance from Me.' I yelled back, 'No God I am done with this crap, this is ridiculous, I am living a lie and I need to be female.' I wrestled and wrestled with this for hours. Finally I was worn down and just asked God, 'What do I need to do?' The answer I got was, 'Get your significance from Me, not from being female. You need to follow Me and love Me more than this.'

"I was worshiping femininity and was ready to sacrifice myself, my wife and my children on that altar. After searching my heart I also realized that I was angry with God, I think mostly for not 'fixing me' the way I wanted. I wanted to pray the prayer and any desire to be female would be gone and I would be some sort of super-man. When God did not fix me this way after years of praying for it, I became bitter."

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"If He had intended me to be a woman, He wouldn't have made me male in the first place."

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May those who struggle with the lie that they are not okay as they are, find their significance in God who made them the way He wanted them, who delights in them, who loves them with a tender, compassionate love, and says, "Come to Me. Don't try to fix this on your own. Let Me pour truth and grace, love and life into your heart."

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/dwts_and_the_t_in_glbt on

Sept. 27, 2011

Homosexuality: Questions and Answers from a Biblical Perspective

Sue Bohlin provides distinctly biblical answers to your questions about homosexuality. As a Christian, it is important to understand what the Bible says and to be able to communicate this message of compassion.

Q. Some people say homosexuality is natural and moral; others say it is unnatural and immoral. How do we know?

A. Our standard can only be what God says. In Romans 1 we read,

> 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 (Romans 1:26-27).

So even though homosexual desires *feel* natural, they are actually *un*natural, because God says they are. He also calls all sexual involvement outside of marriage immoral. (There are 44 references to fornication—sexual immorality—in the Bible.) Therefore, any form of homosexual activity, whether a one-night stand or a long-term monogamous relationship, is by definition immoral—just as any abuse of heterosexuality

outside of marriage is immoral.

Q. Is homosexuality an orientation God intended for some people, or is it a perversion of normal sexuality?

A. If God had intended homosexuality to be a viable sexual alternative for some people, He would not have condemned it as an abomination. It is never mentioned in Scripture in anything but negative terms, and nowhere does the Bible even hint at approving or giving instruction for homosexual relationships. Some theologians have argued that David and Jonathan's relationship was a homosexual one, but this claim has no basis in Scripture. David and Jonathan's deep friendship was not sexual; it was one of godly emotional intimacy that truly glorified the Lord.

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the sin nature that all people share. At the fall of man (Genesis 3), God's perfect creation was spoiled, and the taint of sin affected us physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually—and sexually. Homosexuality is a perversion of heterosexuality, which is God's plan for His creation. The Lord Jesus said,

> In the beginning the Creator made them male and female. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh (Matthew 19:4, 5).

Homosexual activity and pre-marital or extra-marital heterosexual activity are all sinful attempts to find sexual and emotional expression in ways God never intended. God's desire for the person caught in the trap of homosexuality is the same as for every other person caught in the trap of the sin nature; that we submit every area of our lives to Him and be transformed from the inside out by the renewing of our minds and the purifying of our hearts.

Q. What causes a homosexual orientation?

A. This is a complex issue, and it is unfair to give simplistic answers or explanations. (However, for insight on this issue please consider our articles Answers to Questions Most Asked by Gay-Identifying Youth and "Why Doesn't God Answer Prayers to Take Away Gay Feelings?") Some people start out as heterosexuals, but they rebel against God with such passionate self-indulgence that they end up embracing the gay lifestyle as another form of sexual expression. As one entertainer put it, "I'm not going to go through life with one arm tied behind my back!"

But the majority of those who experience same-sex attraction sense they are "different" or "other than" from very early in life, and at some point they are encouraged to identify this difference as being gay. These people may experience "pre-conditions" that dispose them toward homosexuality, such as a sensitive and gentle temperament in boys, which is not recognized as acceptably masculine in our culture. Another may be poor eye-hand coordination that prevents a boy from doing well at sports, which is a sure way to invite shame and taunting from other boys (and, most unfortunately, from some of their own fathers and family members). Family relationships are usually very important in the development of homosexuality; the vast majority of those who struggle with same-sex attraction experienced a hurtful relationship with the same-sex parent in childhood. The presence of abuse is a recurring theme in the early lives of many homosexual strugglers. In one study, 91% of lesbian women reported childhood and adolescent abuse, 2/3 of them victims of sexual abuse.{1} There is a huge difference, however, between predispositions that affects gender identity, and the choices we make in how we handle a predisposition. Because we are made in the image of God, we can choose how we respond to the various factors that may contribute to a homosexual orientation.

Q. Wouldn't the presence of pre-conditions let homosexuals

“off the hook,” so to speak?

A. Preconditions make it easier to sin in a particular area. They do not excuse the sin. We can draw a parallel with alcoholism. Alcoholics often experience a genetic or environmental pre-condition, which makes it easier for them to fall into the sin of drunkenness. Is it a sin to want a drink? No. It’s a sin to drink to excess.

All of us experience various predispositions that make it easier for us to fall into certain sins. For example, highly intelligent people find it easier to fall into the sin of intellectual pride. People who were physically abused as children may fall into the sins of rage and violence more easily than others.

Current popular thinking says that our behavior is determined by our environment or our genes, or both. But the Bible gives us the dignity and responsibility missing from that mechanistic view of life. God has invested us with free will—the ability to make real, significant choices. We can choose our responses to the influences on our lives, or we can choose to let them control us.

Someone with a predisposition for homosexuality may fall into the sin of the homosexual behavior much more easily than a person without it. But each of us alone is responsible for giving ourselves permission to cross over from temptation into sin.

Q. What’s the difference between homosexual temptation and sin?

A. Unasked-for, uncultivated sexual desires for a person of the same sex constitute temptation, not sin. Since the Lord Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15),” He fully knows the intensity and nature of the temptations we face. But He never gave in to them.

The line between sexual temptation and sexual sin is the same for both heterosexuals and homosexuals. It is the point at which our conscious will gets involved. Sin begins with the internal acts of lusting and creating sexual fantasies. Lust is indulging one's sexual desires by deliberately choosing to feed sexual attraction—you might say it is the sinful opposite of meditation. Sexual fantasies are conscious acts of the imagination. It is creating mental pornographic home movies. Just as the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, all sexual sin starts in the mind long before it gets to the point of physical expression.

Many homosexuals claim, "I never asked for these feelings. I did not choose them," and this may be true. That is why it is significant to note that the Bible specifically condemns homosexual *practices*, but not undeveloped homosexual feelings (temptation). There is a difference between having sexual feelings and letting them grow into lust. When Martin Luther was talking about impure thoughts, he said, "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

Q. Isn't it true that "Once gay, always gay?"

A. It is certainly true that most homosexuals never become heterosexual—some because they don't want to, but most others because their efforts to change were unsuccessful. It takes spiritual submission and much emotional work to repent of sexual sin and achieve a healthy self-concept that glorifies God.

But for the person caught in the trap of homosexual desires who wants sexual and emotional wholeness, there is hope in Christ. In addressing the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul lists an assortment of deep sins, including homosexual offenses. He says,

> And that is what some of you *were*. But you were washed,

> you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11).

This means there were former homosexuals in the church at Corinth! The Lord's loving redemption includes eventual freedom for *all* sin that is yielded to Him. Some (rare) people experience no homosexual temptations ever again. But for most others who *are* able to achieve change, homosexual desires are gradually reduced from a major problem to a minor nuisance that no longer dominates their lives. The probability of heterosexual desires returning or emerging depends on a person's sexual history.

But the potential for heterosexuality is present in everyone because God put it there.

See our article "Can Homosexuals Change?" at www.probe.org/can-homosexuals-change/.

Q. If homosexuality is such an abomination to God, why doesn't it disappear when someone becomes a Christian?

A. When we are born again, we bring with us all of our emotional needs and all of our old ways of relating. Homosexuality is a relational problem of meeting emotional needs the wrong way; it is not an isolated problem of mere sexual preference. With the power of the indwelling Spirit, a Christian can cooperate with God to change this unacceptable part of life. Some people—a very few—are miraculously delivered from homosexual struggles. But for the majority, real change is slow. As in dealing with any besetting sin, it is a process, not an event. Sin's power over us is broken at the moment we are born again, but learning to depend on the Holy Spirit to say no to sin and yes to godliness takes time. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "We…are being transformed into His likeness from glory to glory." Transformation (*this* side of eternity!) is a process that takes a while. Life in a fallen world is a painful struggle. It is not a pleasant thing to

have two oppositional natures at war within us!

Homosexuality is not one problem; it is symptomatic of other, deeper problems involving emotional needs and an unhealthy self-concept. Salvation is only the beginning of emotional health. It allows us to experience human intimacy as God intended us to, finding healing for our damaged emotions. It isn't that faith in Christ isn't enough; faith in Christ is the *beginning*.

Q. Does the fact that I had an early homosexual experience mean I'm gay?

A. Sex is strictly meant for adults. The Song of Solomon says three times, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." This is a warning not to raise sexual feelings until the time is right. Early sexual experience can be painful or pleasurable, but either way, it constitutes child abuse. It traumatizes a child or teen. This loss of innocence does need to be addressed and perhaps even grieved through, but *doesn't* mean you're gay.

Sexual experimentation is something many children and teens do as a part of growing up. You may have enjoyed the feelings you experienced, but that is because God created our bodies to respond to pleasure. It probably made you feel confused and ashamed, which is an appropriate response to an inappropriate behavior. Don't let anyone tell you it means you're gay: it means you're human.

Even apart from the sexual aspect, though, our culture has come to view close friendships with a certain amount of suspicion. If you enjoy emotional intimacy with a friend of the same sex, especially if it is accompanied by the presence of sexual feelings that emerge in adolescence, you can find yourself very confused. But it doesn't mean you're gay.

It is a tragic myth that once a person has a homosexual experience, or even *thinks* about one, that he or she is gay

for life.

Q. Are homosexuals condemned to hell?

A. Homosexuality is not a "heaven or hell" issue. The *only* determining factor is whether a person has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says that homosexual offenders and a whole list of other sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God. But then he reminds the Corinthians that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in Jesus' name. Paul makes a distinction between unchristian behavior and Christian behavior. He's saying, "You're not pagans anymore, you are a holy people belonging to King Jesus. Now *act* like it!"

If homosexuality doesn't send anyone to hell, then can the believer indulge in homosexual behavior, safe in his or her eternal security? As Paul said, "May it never be!" If someone is truly a child of God, he or she cannot continue sinful behavior that offends and grieves the Father without suffering the consequences. God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). This means that ultimately, no believer gets away with continued, unrepented sin. The discipline may not come immediately, but it will come.

Q. How do I respond when someone in my life tells me he or she is gay?

A. Take your cue from the Lord Jesus. He didn't avoid sinners; He ministered grace and compassion to them—without ever compromising His commitment to holiness. Start by cultivating a humble heart, especially concerning the temptation to react with judgmental condescension. As Billy Graham said, "Never take credit for not falling into a temptation that never tempted you in the first place."

Seek to understand your gay friends' feelings. Are they comfortable with their gayness, or bewildered and resentful of

it? Understanding people doesn't mean that you have to agree with them—but it *is* the best way to minister grace and love in a difficult time. Accept the fact that, to this person, these feelings are normal. You can't change their minds or their feelings. Too often, parents will send their gay child to a counselor and say, "Fix him." It just doesn't work that way.

As a Christian, you are a light shining in a dark place. Be a friend with a tender heart and a winsome spirit; the biggest problem of homosexuals is not their sexuality, but their need for Jesus Christ. At the same time, pre-decide what your boundaries will be about what behavior you just cannot condone in your presence. One college student I know excuses herself from a group when the affection becomes physical; she just gets up and leaves. It is all right to be uncomfortable around blatant sin; you do not have to subject yourself—and the Holy Spirit within you—to what grieves Him. Consider how you would be a friend to people who are living promiscuous heterosexual lives. Like the Lord, we need to value and esteem the person without condoning the sin.

Note

1. Anne Paulk, *Restoring Sexual Identity* (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2003), p. 246.

For further reading:

• Bergner, Mario. *Setting Love in Order: Hope and Healing for the Homosexual.* Baker, 1995.

• Paulk, Anne. *Restoring Sexual Identity*. Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2003.

• Dallas, Joe. *Desires in Conflict*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991. (Particularly good!)

• Konrad, Jeff. *You Don't Have to Be Gay*. Pacific Publishing, 1987. (This is directed at young men. I can't recommend this

one highly enough.)

• Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Baker, 1996.

• Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight & Narrow? : Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*. Intervarsity Press, 1995.

• Worthen, Anita and Bob Davies. *Someone I Love is Gay: How Family and Friends Can Respond*. Intervarsity Press, 1996.

• The website of Living Hope Ministries, an outreach in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Of particular interest are the online testimonies and especially an excellent online support group, a confidential, free, moderated message board for strugglers, overcomers and those who seek to encourage and uplift. www.livehope.org

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