Constructively Dealing with Homosexuality

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"Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle, you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone means that you agree with everything they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate."

-Phil Robertson

Preface

I claim no special knowledge or expertise in dealing with the subject of homosexuality. The material in this lesson is compiled from several different sermons, class notes, and articles (both mine and others) done on the issue over the years. Like many other preachers, elders, and fathers, I have sought to be able to both understand and explain to others what God's Word has to say on the subject.

Homosexuality has been around throughout most of man's history. And within that span, it has been variously treated as a scourge on society to be shunned or outlawed and punished, as well as a socially accepted common practice that, at least at some points in history, has enjoyed admiration among many "enlightened" heterosexuals. Even during my lifetime, the occurrence of homosexuality has gone from sparse to commonplace, and the practice has gone from generally disdained and detested to accepted and even lauded.

God's word on the subject has not changed, but society's attitude toward both biblical teaching on homosexuality, and toward the practice itself, has changed monumentally. To be able to constructively and effectively influence people's hearts and minds on this subject is certainly no small task. I do NOT have "all the answers" to being able to do so.

However, in trying to do my part to reverse this trend, I've had two primary concerns regarding being able to constructively convey God's views and words on this subject:

1. How to teach young people to respect what the Bible says in spite of the growing societal pressure toward acceptance and legitimization of homosexuality; and,
2. How to constructively deal with the subject to those already influenced either by "the science," or the "nature" argument that is so prevalently believed and accepted.

To meet these objectives, I also realized the need to more fully understand the motivations for homosexuality- especially in adolescents. In part at least, this study is the product of those concerns and objectives.* It is my hope and prayer that it will help us lead souls- both the yet innocent as well as the guilty, to Christ.

Philip C. Strong

*This is not, nor is it intended to be, a "scientific" study. I am a preacher of the Gospel, not a scientist. The thoughts put forth herein are my own- gained by the study of God's Word and thoughtful observation and consideration of the world in which I live in comparison to it. Surely others can and have done more scientifically and scholarly based works on this subject. To the degree that they shed the light of God's will on human hearts, I commend them to you. If this work helps in that endeavor, it will have served its purpose.

(Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture references and quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.)

Introduction

Consider the following quote:

"It is easy to tell someone they're wrong,
if you don't care whether or not they become right.
It is a far different matter to tell them they're wrong,
but to do so in a way that will help them to become right."

Is this what we've historically done with homosexuality? Doesn't Col.4:5-6 apply here as well?

Consider also this question:

Which has done more to
corrupt traditional marriage,
destroy the family,
and erode society:
homosexuality, or adultery?

If someone tells you that they don't believe in God, or that the Bible is His inspired word, do you relegate them to the pen of *spiritual swine* unworthy of the *pearls* of your time and effort, cf. Matt.7:6? Or, do you seek to convince them- even through *natural* and *logical* means, that God does exist, that He did create the world and all things in it, and that He did leave His word to guide us? The latter, right?

Then why do we consider ourselves out of *pearls,* or them *spiritual swine,* when homosexuals (or those justifying the practice) reject Rom.1:24-26; 1Cor.6:9-11; and 1Tim.1:10? Is our only option left to tell them about Sodom and Gomorrah, or show them passages in the Law of Moses where those practicing homosexuality were to be put to death? By the way, remember that adulterers were to be put death under the Law also- as were *stubborn, rebellious, gluttonous, drunkard* sons*,* Deut.21:21.

The purpose of these questions is NOT to in any way discredit what the Bible has to say about homosexuality. Instead, their purpose is to highlight a couple of relative points:

1. Sodom and Gomorrah, the Law of Moses, and the NT passages dealing with homosexuality have been taught and emphasized for years, but homosexuality has increased dramatically. This fact does not lessen the importance of these biblical passages and perspectives, but it does indicate that to be effective, we may have to first do some *soil tilling/preparation* prior to planting the *seed* of God's word.
2. Neither *hypocrisy* nor *naiveté* help in dealing with homosexuality. Charging that homosexuality has destroyed traditional marriage, the family, the home, or society when heterosexual adultery has done far more toward these ends doesn't help. So-called "Christians" parading and protesting (or posting) with slogans containing false charges, or other ignorant, malicious, or hateful messages doesn't help convert homosexuals either. And such things certainly do not further the Cause of Christ or *"make known"* the *"manifold wisdom of God,"* Eph.3:10.

This study has as its objective to help us- whether preachers, elders, fathers, or just Christian men, to be able to *constructively* and *effectively* deal with homosexuality in a way that produces changed hearts, minds, and lives, all to the salvation of souls and the ultimate glory of God.

Table of Contents

Session 1- Thinking Through Homosexuality

A. Understanding how homosexuality came to be accepted in one generation.

Introduction and Progression

Step 1: Access to Awareness. About forty years ago, when I was just a youngster, homosexuality was just beginning to make it to the forefront of our culture- though it encountered mostly negative pressures and stereotypes. By the time I was in Junior High, "homo" was a derogatory slang term used to insult someone, though they weren't necessarily thought to be actually homosexual. It was just an insult used, in some cases, by those too young, innocent, or naïve to even really know what the term actually meant. But the term, and its synonyms, was becoming part of the vernacular- even if in a very negative way. This put homosexuality in our conversation, and thus at least occasionally, on our minds. Slowly and gradually, the word "gay" began to mean something entirely different than it had in the past.

Step 2: Laugh at it. The first glimpse most of us got of "homosexuality" was through mainstream television. The portrayals of homosexuals were typically of the "flaming" sort. They were limp-wristed men who lisped when they talked, pranced when they walked, and wore, said, and did outrageous things- all with excessive color and flare. Thus, we became conditioned to laugh at the outrageousness of the person.

Step 3: Sympathize with Tragedy. Then AIDS became a worldwide crisis. The disease's homosexual link was somewhat muted by the graphic and widespread pictures of human suffering we saw on the news, and by the disease's expansion into the heterosexual but "free love" offspring of the Sixties and early Seventies. The fact that AIDS was virtually non-existent in heterosexual monogamous relationships took a back seat to the overall tragedy of it all.

In the mid 1990s, a heterosexual monogamous male member of the church where I preached at the time died of AIDS. He was a hemophiliac, and had unknowingly received infected blood during an elective knee surgery. He left a wife and two young girls behind. At the time, healthcare professionals told the family that every hemophiliac who received blood products during that time either currently had AIDS, or had already died from it. Donated blood was commonly "pooled" by type previously, and obviously was not specifically tested for AIDS.

Gradually, we were conditioned to sympathize with homosexuality through AIDS, and the deaths of high-profile artists, actors, entertainers, and athletes. Also adding to the sympathy factor were several highly publicized trials of abusers who brutally beat and murdered homosexuals. Then, Hollywood got involved both through activism and producing movies portraying homosexuality in a sympathetic and supportive way.

Please do not misunderstand: condemnation of being sympathetic to the plight of any human being, regardless of the cause of the circumstance, is not the point, cf. Matt.18:21-27; Mark 6:34; John 8:1-11. The only point here intended is to understand how basic human compassion and sympathy were involved in the overall acceptance of homosexuality by society as a whole.

Step 4: Re-educate. Next, children's stories and TV programming began to include and promote "understanding" (and through it, acceptance) of homosexuality. After

all, children were being forced to deal with homosexual relationships by the adults in their lives, and these adults needed resources to help acclimate them to these changes. Progressive communities and school districts began incorporating such resources in their libraries and curriculums. The re-education of society had begun, and it was assured for future generations through these efforts to "help" the children.

Step 5: Legislate Acceptance. We are now witnessing the final active step toward the societal acceptance of homosexuality. It comes through legal means- both legislatively (such as ratification to legal status of homosexual marriage) and judiciously (discrimination cases and lawsuits either based on or promoting changes in law regarding homosexuality).

The Results

In one generation (roughly forty years), homosexuality has gone from an *abhorrent sexual perversion* to an *alternative lifestyle choice* to "just being who you are" or being "true to yourself." In this progression, we've been conditioned to at least accept, if not condone, homosxuality.

The Evolution of the Progression

We need to understand the necessary evolution of this progression. At the center is the matter of "cause."

- An *abhorrent sexual behavior* was "perverse," and thus for progression, had to evolve into something less objectionable. Homosexuality's acceptance into mainstream consciousness, let alone society, would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, under such auspices. Thus, *alternative lifestyle choice* became the preferred description.
- But an *alternative lifestyle choice* was still a "choice" that the overwhelming majority of society rejected- personally and morally. Therefore, it could and would be continually condemned as the "wrong" *choice*. The *alternative lifestyle choice* was in the unenviable position of being in the moral *minority* according the *majority* who chose to live heterosexually. Thus, homosexuality, as a *choice,* still had association with guilt, and thus needed to evolve yet again to progress into mainstream acceptance.
- However, homosexuality, **as a product of genetics,** implied no guilt, and thus could not be condemned, only accepted. For the individual, this meant "just being who you are," or being "true to yourself." For society, how could it possibly condemn and reject an individual, or a group of them, for something that was beyond their control? Something that was "wired into" their genetic code?

This is, from my vantage point at least, the evolutionary progression by which homosexuality came to be accepted by mainstream society in one generation.

B. Logic and a Genetic Cause

As was made clear in the preface, this is not a "scientific" study. And I am not a scientist- neither are the overwhelming majority of those who claim "Science has proven homosexuality is genetic." But let's just take a step back for a moment and consider the *logic* of a genetic cause. For the moment, let's grant the premise that homosexuality has a genetic cause- that it is "wired into" the deoxyribonucleic acidic code of a person.

How do we then explain the dramatic increase in the occurrence over the past forty or so years?

- The typical reason given is that the increase is attributable to a decrease in negative societal pressure. That is, that through "enlightened and evolved thinking," homosexuality is more accepted. Therefore, people became more open and willing to admit their homosexuality.
- But such logic and reasoning is flawed because it deals with "practice" rather than "cause." Societal negative pressure would only alter the "practice," not the genetic "cause." Can societal pressure alter genetics? Certainly. If most women in a society came to prefer tall, blond, blue-eyed men as mates, there would be more of these types of offspring within a generation! However, there is a major obstacle withstanding the association of societal pressure with a genetic cause for homosexuality: Since homosexual pairings do not reproduce, their genetic codes are not perpetuated, at least not without the contribution of a heterosexual (or a homosexual of the opposite sex) partner for the purpose of reproduction. Though such has and does occur, it does not do so in sufficient numbers to account for the rapid and dramatic increase in the occurrence of homosexuality within a generation!
- Societal preferences, and therefore pressures, can affect the overall genetic code over time. But for dramatic changes in the aggregate code to occur within a short period of time, such as one generation, a significant portion (or perhaps even a *majority*) of that society would have to be not only genetically predisposed, but also reproducing. Since neither of those factors are nor have been present in this generation, the reduction of negative societal pressure cannot account for the rapid expansion of homosexuality.

So, how else are rapid changes perpetuated in the genetic code of a society?

- The only *logical* answer is *beneficial genetic mutation.* Here's why…
- If we are forced to a genetic cause for the rapid increase in homosexual occurrence, *mutation* is the only available *logical* explanation.
- But according to the evolutionary model, only *beneficial* genetic mutations are passed on- those that aid the *survival of the fittest* of the species.
- Since homosexuals do not reproduce as such, they cannot *benefit* the species toward survival.
- Thus, if homosexuality is caused by genetic mutation, it must be considered a *destructive* anomaly that will either: 1) pass out of the collective genetic code of the species naturally (via *natural selection*); or, 2) eventually doom the species to extinction.

Such is the logical conclusion of a genetic cause for homosexuality.

C. Conclusions for Thinking Through Homosexuality

1. There was a necessary, gradual, and evolving process that took place to bring us, as a society, to the acceptance of homosexuality that included *Vocabulary/Vernacular, Laughter, Sympathy, Re-education,* and *Legislative* and *Judicial Power.* Our

understanding of this process gives us insight into how other previously *abhorrent* behaviors will gain acceptance.

2. The reduction in "societal negative pressure" cannot explain the rapid increase in homosexuality if there is a genetic cause. From purely *logical* perspective, a genetic cause for homosexuality will make either homosexuality or the species extinct.

3. People are homosexuals, and no less guilty, for the same reason they are adulterers, drunkards, hot-heads, liars, abusive, etc. etc. etc. – because they choose to be so, 1Cor.6:9-10. And they can chose not to be so, 1Cor.6:11.

4. While there certainly may be genetic factors (predispositions) that make one more susceptible to some of the afore-mentioned sins, no one becomes a *"sinner"* by genetics, Ezk.18:20ff. We all choose to either *practice* or *reject the practice* of sin, 1John 3:4-10.

Session 2- Adolescent Motivations toward Homosexuality

A. What are the causal motivations for homosexuality in young people today?

First of all, it must be recognized that many, if not most, adolescents that *claim* to be homosexual (or bi-sexual for that matter) are doing just that- making a claim. To *claim* something does not make it so, 1Tim.1:7. Many *claimed* loudly and for a long time that the world was flat, but circumstances and evidence proved them wrong. **For a teenager to claim to be homosexual may indeed be nothing more than:**

1. **A desire for attention or notoriety** (in some cases, even negative attention is preferred to being *transparent* in teenage society). This point is reflected in the statement, "Some are famous; some are infamous; and some can't tell the difference."
2. **A form of rebellion that hopes to establish or gain some measure of control over his or her own person.** Thus, the *claim* of homosexuality becomes just a mechanism used to demonstrate control and/or elicit a reaction from the parents- *i.e.* those viewed as previously and currently *in control.*
3. **An effort to stake out their own *personal*, and to them, *special* identity.** It is indeed remarkable how often adolescents attempt to "be their own person" by emulating what they see in others. Through adopting and incorporating styles, vocabularies, habits, and overall personas of others, they attempt to "fit in" either with the common culture, or the current counter-culture. If "homosexuality" is viewed as being an opportunity to "fit in" or "fit out," it is an easy claim to make.
4. **A declaration that emanates from a sincerely confused self-image and self-expectation.** Given the barrage of mixed and complex messages with which they are being bombarded at an admittedly difficult and confusing age, it is somewhat surprising that more adolescents don't claim (or experiment with) homosexuality than currently do so. This is especially true given the *sources* of these messages of tolerance and acceptance from what should be respectable sources (government, academia, and even some religions). Homosexuality has been recently so lauded as *brave* and *courageous,* and so publically admired by those considering themselves *evolved* and *enlightened,* that it is a wonder that more adolescents don't at least *claim* homosexuality out of sheer pressure- whether they actually believe such about themselves or not!

So, just because a teenager *claims* to be a homosexual, doesn't make it so- nor does it necessarily even mean that he or she believes it to be so. But let's focus a little less on *claims* of homosexuality among adolescents, and concentrate more specifically on ***causal factors***. Generally speaking, and regarding both sexes, **what is the single most substantial contributing factor?**

Abuse and neglect. By this I do not mean that their fathers beat or sexually abused them, or that their mothers fail to love and care for them. Though such may indeed be the case, and these may even be contributing factors, this is not the type of *abuse* and *neglect* intended.

Instead, it is meant that the overall ***roles and responsibilities*** of the parents to the child have been abused and neglected. What are these *abused* and *neglected roles* and *responsibilities* that may become the primary causal factor for homosexuality in adolescents?

a. Failures to teach and demonstrate proper roles and responsibilities of the *husband/wife* relationship, Eph.5:22-31; Col.3:18-20; and 1Pet.3:1-9. Non-biblical models of this relationship that have been contorted and twisted over time by abuse and societal pressures must be overcome with proactive teaching and demonstration of biblical marriage by the parents.

b. Failures to teach and demonstrate the proper giving and receiving of love, Titus 2:4; Col.3:21. If parents fail to explain and show their children how to give and receive love in *appropriate* ways, Satan and society will teach and provide them with a plethora of ways and examples of how to give and receive what they think is love in *inappropriate* ways, Rom.1:18-32.

c. Failures to teach and require proper *parent/child* roles and responsibilities, Eph.6:1-4. Everything created of God not only has, but also has a need for, proper rules and boundaries in which to operate. This is true of everything from the *animals* to the *seas* and *stars*, even to *man* and *woman*- all must know and respect their appointed limitations, cf. Gen.1:26; Job 38:8-13,31-33; 1Cor.11:3. Such is obviously also true for *children,* Col.3:20*.* But when parents *abuse* and *neglect* their roles and responsibilities to both teach and enforce these boundaries and limitations, the children are obviously ill-equipped to find and respect *what is right* on their own. This certainly includes proper sexual relationships.

Thus, in my opinion at least, the single most important *causal* factor of homosexuality in adolescents is **parental abuse and neglect** to teach, demonstrate, and require proper roles and responsibilities within the family structure, Eph.6:4b.

Sinful behavior is always due to: 1) *ignorance*- lack of necessary knowledge of God's word; 2) *weakness*- lack of faith in God, His word, or in our ability to obey it; or, 3) *rebellion*- deliberately going against what we know to be true from God's word. When a society of people has, in the main, rejected and abandoned these biblical roles and responsibilities in the home, adolescents are deprived of the first and primary *foundational* platform from which they begin to learn how to make decisions that are right and proper themselves. Certainly this would include decisions about homosexuality. Jer.10:23 is true for adults certainly, but it is also true of children who are deprived of parents who understand, apply, teach, demonstrate, and require the proper roles and responsibilities of each member of the "family" as God ordered it.

But, **this is does not mean that adolescent** (or adult, for that matter) **homosexuality is always the result of poor parenting!** Remember that one of the causes of *sinful behavior* listed above is **rebellion**. Parents can teach and demonstrate the proper roles and responsibilities of the husband/wife relationship, the appropriate ways to give and receive true love, and also teach and maintain the *"discipline and instruction of the Lord"* in the parent/child relationship, **and the child can still rebel against these teachings and examples**. However, we cannot ignore the contribution that failures in these areas make to adolescent homosexuality.

Next, let's shift our focus more specifically to *causal motivations for homosexuality within adolescents* ***by gender,*** because the factors can differ between girls and boys.

B. What is the primary adolescent motivation toward homosexuality for girls?

Intense desire for acceptance.

Teenage girls have an intense desire to "fit in"- they feel the need to *have, wear*, and *do* whatever they think will get and keep them accepted by their perceived or desired peer group. Given the overwhelming importance our society puts on physical appearance, this can be the motivation for extreme behaviors such as bulimia, anorexia, and/or excessive devotion to fads regarding clothing, accessories, hairstyles, etc. This need to "fit in" also explains heterosexual activity- even extreme promiscuity, if the girl feels that it will help her achieve acceptance in a desired peer group. So, whatever is "popular" becomes "necessary" for them to feel that they can be accepted.

If this need for acceptance is unable to be met for some reason- such as body shape, type, weight, or the inability to have or attain whatever is "popular" due to financial restraints or other similar restrictions, then "homosexuality" can easily become an excuse. "The boys (or other girls) don't like me because I'm homosexual." It thus becomes an explanatory defense mechanism response.

Then too, homosexuality has, at least to some degree, become the "in" thing. This goes back to two factors: 1) the felt need of acceptance and attention; and, 2) the willingness to say, do, or "become" just about anything to be accepted or gain attention.

At least initially, I don't believe these girls are homosexual at all. They're "playing a role" in an effort to either gain much desired attention or acceptance, or they're using it as a defense mechanism to explain and/or justify why they don't "fit in" to more traditional roles.

Unfortunately, just like alcohol, drugs, heterosexual promiscuity, or other "roles" played to gain acceptance, they can become habit-forming. Thus a role played, or an explanatory defense mechanism repeatedly given, can become their reality.

What's the solution?

Teach your daughters (and any other adolescent girls you can):

1. The appropriate ways to give and receive love, Titus 2:4;
2. To view herself as God does, instead of how the/her world does, Jas.1:23-27; 4:1-4; 2Cor.6:14-18; and,
3. To concern herself with becoming the woman God, and *godly* men, want her to be, instead of the woman the world wants her to be, 1Pet.3:1-5; Prov.31; Eph.5:27.

C. What is the primary adolescent motivation toward homosexuality for boys?

Lack of proper male influences (fathers *primarily,* others *secondarily*).

Let's be clear: boys may have *less* of a desire for acceptance and to "fit in" than girls do in some ways- their concern with appearance, fads, etc. is typically more related to attracting the attention of girls than acceptance within a peer group, but this doesn't mean that they have *no* desire for acceptance! What is, after all, the *attraction* of a "gang" if not acceptance? Realize that their willingness to comply with extreme initiation requirements are motivated by a desire for acceptance.

Furthermore, it must be admitted that boys- again in some ways, have a more intense *defense mechanism* than girls when comes to explaining why they aren't attracting the

attention of the opposite sex, or fitting in with or being accepted by desired a peer group. So this, too, can be a strong motivation "claiming," or even actually gravitating toward, homosexuality.

However, boys have an additional causal motivation for homosexuality that is typically not present for girls. While few girls grow up in a home without a mother, many (if not *most* in some segments of society) boys grow up in a home without a father- or at least one without a consistent and positive male fulfilling the role of a father. Single, conscientious mothers can and certainly have raised godly, heterosexual boys to be good husbands and fathers, such is surely more difficult- especially when such rearing is done without the benefit of biblical training. Why is this?

It is very difficult for a mother to teach a male child how to be a good man- one who knows and understands his God-appointed role. Such is not meant as a condemnation or criticism, just a statement of obvious limitations. Consider:

1. She was not taught to be a good "man" herself- nor should she have been. Thus, she's had limited *education*, at best, on the subject.
2. She may have chosen (or accepted) a "bad" man to be the father of her children- likely as a result of a deficiency of training or example of what a "good" man was in her own rearing, and is therefore left to raise her children alone. This is not only limited *experience* on how to raise a "good" man, it's **bad** experience on how to raise one!
3. This *bad* experience can easily lead to contempt for men in general. And if those feelings of general contempt for men become the de facto environment to which her male child is exposed and in which he is reared, obviously his opportunities of becoming a "good" man are severely hampered.
4. If only her female influence (with its limited *education* and bad *experience* on/with men) is the sole experience her male child has, or if he is only exposed to a "sorry" father-figure, it is easy to see how he can fail to learn and grow into the God-appointed role of a "man."

The lack of positive role model of "manhood" from a present and active father is surely not the sole causal motivation for homosexuality in adolescent boys. But it, along with the desire for acceptance in a peer group, and/or the explanatory defense mechanism for failure of the same, can certainly be a disheartening combination of motivational factors.

What's the solution?

Teach your sons (and any adolescent boys you can):

1. The appropriate ways to give and receive love, Eph.5:25ff;
2. To view himself the way God does, instead of the way the/his world does, Jas.1:23-27; 4:1-4; 2Cor.6:14-18; and,
3. To concern himself with becoming the man God, and godly women, want him to be, instead of the man the world wants him to be, 1Pet.3:7; Titus 2:6-8.

D. Conclusions for Adolescent Motivations toward Homosexuality

Most adolescents are motivated toward homosexuality (or at least the pretense of homosexuality) by of a lack of proper parental education on:

1. The appropriate ways to give and receive love;
2. The appropriate ways to see and evaluate self; and
3. The appropriate roles God has determined for them according to their gender.

This failure, combined with an intense felt need for acceptance, or an explanatory defense mechanism for the lack of acceptance, can be all that is required as a causal motivation for homosexuality among adolescents.

If the explosive expansion of homosexuality is to be turned around, it will be accomplished in the home by parents who understand, demonstrate, and teach the God-appointed roles of each gender to their children, and by adolescent children who not only learn these roles and responsibilities, but who are willing to apply them against tremendous societal pressures to the contrary.

Session 3- Homosexuality and the Bible

A few points should probably be kept in mind when approaching the subject of homosexuality from a biblical perspective:

- Remember the goal is not to "win" the argument, but to evoke *"love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith,"* 1Tim.1:5.
- Remember that it's easy to tell someone they're wrong if you don't care whether or not they become right- so be sure to fulfill the requirements of Col.4:5-6.
- Understand that you might be fighting an uphill battle in that the person to whom you are speaking may be already prejudiced against what the Bible says on the subject. This may be due to a general but personal misunderstanding, or it may be due to someone addressing the subject with them previously with wrong motives or information- or both.

A. Answering Objections to Biblical Teaching

Though there are other passages that could be interjected, the overall perspective of the legitimacy/illegitimacy of homosexuality can be seen from the following:

- **Creation**- It is clear that *heterosexual* relations were nominative, both for higher animals and man, Gen.1-2. However, there is a danger in associating *heterosexual relations* to procreation purposes exclusively- despite the dictum to *"be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,"* Gen.1:28. If God ***only*** *chose heterosexuality* for the purpose of *procreation* and *filling the earth,* then once the earth was/is filled, would other forms of non-reproductive sexual expression become permissible? Like *homosexuality* or *bestiality?* Instead, we need to understand God's choice of *heterosexuality* as the nominative *natural* state for man whether he procreates or not. In other words, God created mankind to be *heterosexual.* If this were not true, there would have been no necessity of the creation of separate genders, and He would have either created humans that were capable of *asexual* reproduction, or made *homosexual* reproduction possible. But this wasn't the way God created man.
- **Codified OT Law**- Lev.18:22 and 20:13 make it clear that sex between members of the same gender was an *abominable* and *detestable* act to God; that such *defiled* both the *people* and the *land* is seen in 18:24-25, and that the prescribed punishment for such activity was *death,* 20:13.
- **Codified NT Law**- 1Cor.6:9-10, as a part of Christ's covenant for all mankind which superseded the OT Law that was given only to the Jews, likewise identifies the *act of homosexuality* as being part of a catalog of prohibitions that will, if violated, prevent entrance into heaven. Note that both the *effeminate* (Greek *malakos*- soft, indolent, effeminate, cf. Matt.11:8; by implication the *passive* participant) and the *homosexual* (Greek *arsenokoites = arsen* [male] + *koite* [bed- by implication, *sexual intercourse*, cf. Heb.13:4]) are included, cf. 1Tim.1:10.
- **Divine Description**- Notice Paul's divinely-inspired (see 1Cor.14:37) description of homosexuality in Rom.1:24-27 as: *dishonorable,* v.24; *degrading,* v.26a; *unnatural* (review the first point above regarding Gen.1-2), vv.26b-27a; *indecent,* v.27b; and, *depraved,* v.28.

It is indeed difficult to determine how such divinely given descriptions of homosexuality can be ignored or diminished. But, we must remember that the context of these verses begins with a statement regarding those who *"suppress truth in unrighteousness"* and *"became futile in their speculations"* to the point of *rejecting God* for *idolatry,* vv.18-23.

From these, we clearly see the divine perspective of homosexuality. But, there are certainly objections made to these and other passages by those who either advocate for or practice homosexuality. So, let's consider at least some of the more prominent objections along these lines.

1. **Genesis 1-2 is an account of *creation,* and includes God's *procreational purposes* for heterosexual relations, but does not condemn *homosexual relations*.** These contentions ignore the fundamental fact that Gen.1-2 also demonstrates that God provided for the proper *foundation* of human society- the marriage of *man* and *woman,* 2:18-25. This *coupling* not only reflects His intentions for the creation of the separate genders- *i.e.* to become *one* in a way impossible in homosexuality, but also provides the basis of the later image of the spiritual marriage of Christ (the bridegroom) and the Church (His bride), Eph.5:22-33. But there are other problems with this contention:

    a. By the logic of this particular objection, all sexual behaviors outside of married heterosexual ones could also be justified. After all, in fairness, bestiality, pedophilia, and pre or extra-marital relations are not specifically condemned either. What this contention fails to recognize is the exclusivity of specification. When God, by both creation and by pronouncement, declared the purpose of gender differentiation and marriage, it necessarily excluded other forms and types of relationships from approval.

    b. Additionally, the notion that heterosexual marriage is *necessarily advantageous* to God's intention for man to *populate* and *fill the earth* is somewhat absurd. Which cattleman seeks to *build his herd* with one exclusive (monogamous) mating pair when one bull can easily service 15-20 cows? An assumed exclusively *procreative purpose* for heterosexual marriage, as in the objection, is just as counter-intuitive and counter-productive! If God's purpose for *heterosexual* and *monogamous* marriage was **just** *procreative*- to populate the world, realize that such could be (and is being) accomplished without marriage at all! Instead, the purpose for *heterosexual monogamous marriage* was the betterment of the world population by building it through the mechanism best suited to produce it- God's creation of separate genders, and His intentions for them in *heterosexual* and *monogamous marriage!*

2. **Genesis 18-19 reflects a condemnation of either *rape* or being *inhospitable,* but not of *homosexuality.*** Some contend that "real sin" of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the one for which they were destroyed, was being inhospitable. It should be noted that Ezk.16:48-49 support the idea that these cities were indeed inhospitable. But, v.50 of that same text concludes that they *"committed abominations,"* and being *inhospitable* is, to my knowledge, no where described as an *abomination* to God- but *homosexuality* and other sexual perversions are so described, Lev.18:22; 20:13. These cities were *inhospitable,* but such wasn't their only sin, nor was it the one for which they were destroyed according to Jude 7.

As to the contention that *rape* was condemned rather than mere *consensual homosexual relations,* then why was Lot willing to offer his *virgin* daughters in lieu of his male guests, vv.7-8? Would these virgin daughters not also have been *non-consensually* raped by the mob? While this is not said to justify Lot's offer, it does point out that *homosexual relations* were sins he feared rather than just *rape* (non-consensual sex).

From this passage, some have also attempted to deny that the men of the city intended to have *homosexual relations; i.e. "that we may **know** them"* (KJV) necessarily implied sex. It is true that the term *yada* is translated in a sexual sense only some 16 times out of 943 occurrences in the Hebrew bible, but if the men's intention was only to "get acquainted with" these visitors, why would Lot clearly offer his daughters *"who have not had relations with man,"* v.8? Such an interpretation of *yada* in v.5 makes no sense in light of v.8! Besides, Jude 7 clearly dispels such a notion.

3. **Lev.18:22 and 20:13 were laws given only to Jews at that time and in that religious system- they were not intended to be God's law for men today.** This is entirely correct! However, the point of using these passages was not to establish God's law for man today, but to demonstrate God's willingness to *codify* His rejection of homosexuality. Thus, the point becomes that God rejected homosexuality *before, during,* and *after* the Law of Moses, cp. Gen.18-19; Lev.18:22; 20:13; and 1Cor.6:9-11; 1Tim.1:9-11. No person who understands the abrogation of the Law of Moses is advocating capital punishment for homosexual behavior today!

4. **1Cor.6:9-11 simply reflects a Pauline personal or cultural bias against homosexuality.** First, Paul claimed to be writing *"the Lord's command,"* 1Cor.14:37. Second, Paul was very careful to specifically state when he was giving *his own opinion* apart from divine revelation, cf. 1Cor.7:10,12. This he clearly did not do in 1Cor.6:9-11 leading to the unmistakable conclusion that he was writing by inspiration on this text. Third, wouldn't such an argument mean that Paul was also culturally or personally biased against *thieves,* the *covetous, drunkards, etc.?* Or at least leave it open to speculation as to which practices in these verses were really a sins that would prevent the attainment of heaven, v.11, and which were just reflections of Paul's personal or cultural bias? This argument ignores the very basis of inspiration, 1Cor.2:11-14; 2Pet.1:16-21. And last, it must be realized that the inspired writers of the NT did have *biases* they had to overcome- Paul was surely *biased* against Christians, but overcame it through revelation, cp. Acts 8:1; 9:1-2 with 9:3-39; compare also Acts 11:19 with 15:5-29 (bias against Gentiles overcome).

5. **Rom.1:26-27 only condemns behavior that is *against nature*- thus *homosexuality* is only wrong for those who *naturally heterosexual.*** This objection is based on the idea that *homosexuality* is "natural" for some and "unnatural" for others. Obviously, it is thought that this relieves the individual from responsibility if he is acting *according to his nature.* But such contradicts the context of these verses: v.18 speaks of willful *suppression of truth;* vv.19-21a declare that despite *knowledge of God,* there was no *honoring of God;* v.21b says that *futile speculations* and *darkened hearts* resulted in a *foolish exchange* of *God* for *idolatry* in vv.22-23. This hardly sounds like one who is *being true to his nature!* Instead, it is describing one who has cast off all *natural revelation* of God and rejected all *specific*

revelation of God to go his own way, and is, therefore, abandoned by God to suffer the consequences of his choices, vv.27-28,32.

6. **Passages such as Rom.1:24-32 are actually condemning only homosexual acts that are associated with idolatry.** If this is so, then are the other sins listed in the same context (vv.29-32) also only wrong if practiced in connection with idolatry? Surely not. Besides, 1Cor.6:9-11 has no connection to idolatry, and yet still lists *homosexuality* among others sins which will prevent the attainment of heaven. There is no doubt or argument that all kinds of *sexual immorality* were often practiced in conjunction with idolatry. This included both *heterosexual* and *homosexual* activities. But, these activities were sinful whether or not they were practiced as a part of idolatrous worship, cf. Heb.13:4. Canaanites, and in some instances, Jews, killed their own children in sacrifice to Molech, Jer.32:35. Was it only wrong for parents to kill their children if such was done in conjunction with idolatrous worship?

B. Answering "Support" Passages and Principles

For the purposes addressed in this study, arguments made in support of homosexuality fall into three categories:

- The use of biblical *passages* in an effort to support or legitimize homosexuality; and,
- The use of biblical *principles* in an effort to support or legitimize homosexuality; and,
- The use of non-biblical and "scientific" *principles* in an effort to support or legitimize homosexuality.

Certainly there are other categories of arguments made in support of homosexuality, but those fall outside the scope of this particular study. So, let's deal with these three categories that are within our purview in the same order as they are listed.

1. Passages used to support homosexuality:

    a. **Luke 7:1-10 is used to suggest that Jesus condoned a homosexual relationship.** The "support" is presumed from the Greek word *pais*- which is correctly translated as *"servant"* by all major translations, but is said to indicate a homosexual relationship between the centurion and his servant. The problem is that while *pais* can be and is sometimes translated as *boy,* it never carries the connotation of a *sexual relationship* component. In fact, the same term is used relative to: *male children* two years and under in Matt.2:16; Jesus in Matt.12:18; Luke 2:43; Acts 3:13,26; 4:27; David (who was apparently not homosexual), Acts 4:25; a girl, Luke 8:51,54; and children generally, Matt.21:15. But no reputable dictionary or lexicon renders *pais* as a *homosexual* of any age, gender, or servant-master relationship. The word simply means *servant* or *child,* but is not specific to gender, and certainly does not imply a *sexual relationship* of any kind.

    Furthermore, it should be noted that Jewish elders are recommending this particular centurion to Jesus, Luke 7:3-5. They, as leaders of Israel and fastidious keepers of the Law (cf. Matt.23:23ff), certainly would not have done so under such circumstances, Lev.18:22; 20:13.

b. **Matt.7:1 is used to say that the Bible condemns "judging" other people, and therefore other people's lifestyles.** First, there is a *grain* of truth in this otherwise false statement, though this verse is not the one from which it sprouts. Matt 7:1-5 is obviously condemning *hypocritical* judgment of someone else. That is, *condemning* someone else for a particular sin in which you are yourself a participant- perhaps even so to a greater degree. However, the *grain of truth* concealed within the misuse and misapplication of this passage, perhaps somewhat ironically, to condemn all judging of one another, is that no human being actually "judges" the eternal destiny of another person. Though the larger context of Rom.14 regards judgments we tend to make of one another's opinions (rather than revealed truth), vv.10-12 also make it clear that God *alone* judges every person's *eternity*. In truth, the only *judgment* we can make of one another is to the applications of the standards given by God regarding each other's choices and conduct. This does not, therefore, equate to a moratorium against identifying and refusing to fellowship *sinful behavior,* cf. Matt.18:15-17; John 7:24; 1Cor.5; Gal.6:1-2; *et al.* Consider the illogical position in which such an application of Matt.7:1ff places one. Despite the love and concern you have for someone's soul, you cannot tell him that his conduct places his eternal destiny in jeopardy according to the Word of God because of a prohibition against such by the Word of God? Such makes no sense whatsoever! Jesus *"felt compassion"* for sinful mankind, and because of His love for them, *"began to teach them many things,"* Mark 6:34. We should, by the same motivation, do the same thing in an effort to *prevent* their eternal condemnation by God, Luke 19:10. Surely, such is not accomplished by refusing to identify behavior that God says is sinful and will keep one from heaven, 1Cor.6:9-11; 1Tim.1:8-11.

c. **Matt.22:34-40 is used to suggest that *loving God* and *loving your neighbor* are the only real commands- that as long as we fulfill these two, everything else is, at best, debatable.** There is no debate or argument regarding the importance of these two commands. However, as was demonstrated in the preceding paragraph, *true love* for your neighbor/fellowman is shown by being willing to *educate* him on what God's will says, and *encourage* his obedience to it that his soul might be saved, cf. Matt.16:24-27; Titus 2:11-15. Additionally, *true love* for God is shown by adherence to His commands, John 14:15,21,23; 15:6-14.

2. Principles, supposedly biblically based, used to support homosexuality:

a. **Passages condemning homosexuality are referring to *uncontrolled lust* and *violence*- sex for the sake of sex, not a loving relationship.** By this logic, any sexual perversion of married, heterosexual, and monogamous sexual activity could be accepted provided it was *controlled* and *loving*- such as bestiality, incest, adultery, fornication, polygamy, pederasty, pedophilia, etc. In truth, God has designated the proper place for human sexuality, and determined its limitations, 1Cor.7:1-5; Heb.13:4. There was no need for the Bible to address *loving, committed, homosexual* relations specifically in the text precisely because such was outside the bounds of approved *loving* and *committed* relationships in the first place.

b. **Jesus never condemned homosexuality.** It is sometimes argued that only the *prejudiced* and *culturally biased/influenced* "human writers" of the NT condemned homosexuality- not Jesus. There are four primary and obvious flaws in this reasoning: 1) Jesus did claim to be in accord with the OT, which *condemned* homosexuality, Matt.5:17-17; Lev.18:21-25; 20:13; 2) Jesus did affirm God's intent for *heterosexual, married,* and *monogamous* relations, Matt.19:4-6; 3) Such argumentation denies the inspiration of other writers of the NT, which is in direct contradiction to the Scriptures, 1Cor.2:10-13; 14:37; Eph.3:3-5; 2Tim.3:16-17; and, 4) The absence of Jesus' direct condemnation does not equal commendation, or even acceptance. Jesus didn't directly condemn bestiality or pedophilia either, but these are certainly included in lists that do condemn sexual perversions, Rom.13:13; 1Cor.5:11; 6:9; Eph.5:5; 1Tim.1:10.

c. **The Bible only reflects the morals of ancient societies with regard to homosexuality.** The same concept is sometimes repackaged as "Sexual orientation is a new concept, one the Christian tradition hasn't addressed." Or even, "The term homosexual didn't even exist until 1892." (The Gay Debate: The Bible and Homosexuality" by Matthew Vines.) The basic problems with this type of rationale is as follows: 1) It denies the inspiration of the Scriptures, 1Cor.2:10-13; 2) It ignores the OT record, Gen.19; Lev.18:21-25; 3) It denies the *"living and abiding"* aspects of God's Word, 1Pet.1:22-25; 2:9-12.

d. **Celibacy is a gift, not a mandate.** This dictum is supposedly drawn from Matt.19:10-12. Jesus has just reaffirmed God's intent for *heterosexual, married,* and *monogamous* sexual relations, vv.4-6. Such was done to correct misconceptions regarding *heterosexual divorce* and *remarriage,* vv.1-2,7-9, not *homosexuality* and *celibacy.* Therefore, the *choice* presented by this text is *married, heterosexual,* and *monogamous relations* or *celibacy*- and nothing else. It is true that celibacy is not *mandated,* but it is also true that the other choice for *sexual expression* given by God is according to these dictates. Anything, and everything thing else is sin. If one cannot accept *celibacy,* God has given *heterosexual, married,* and *monogamous* sex.

e. **Marriage is about commitment.** True. But "marriage" is of *divine origin* and must be *arranged* and *practiced* as God ordained, Matt.19:4-6. Man is not at liberty to *change the arrangement* of God's institution any more than he is free to change the arrangement of *spiritual marriage* between Christ- the *Bridegroom,* and the Church- His *bride,* Eph.5:23-33; Rev.19:7; 21:2,9.

3. Principles (non-biblical) used to support homosexuality:

a. **Only *bigoted, insensitive,* and *homophobic* people are critical of homosexuality.** No one calling himself a "Christian" should be *bigoted, insensitive,* or *homophobic.* But, opposition to homosexuality on biblical grounds does not make one *bigoted, insensitive,* or *homophobic* anymore than supporting homosexuality on any grounds makes one *bigoted* (or *open-minded*), *insensitive* (or *sensitive*), or *unafraid* (or *heterophobic*). This argument is nothing more than glorified name-calling, and is irrelevant to the discussion. However, we must face the fact that some who considered themselves "Christians" have acted with *bigotry, insensitivity,* and *homophobia* out in ignorance of or rebellion to clear biblical teaching. Abuses born of

bigotry, insensitivity, and *fear* are wrong from either side of the debate, and certainly do nothing to further progress toward understanding and obedience to God's will.

b. **Scientific evidence has shown that homosexuals are born that way, and therefore cannot help or change their condition.** Though there have been more recent studies (see the appendix for some "news" articles which purport to report on them), the appeal to "science" that "proves" homosexuality is genetic, and therefore not a "choice," is largely based on one study done by Dr. Simon LeVay in 1991. There are, however, some things that should be noted:

- LeVay was homosexual, and therefore at least potentially biased. He left the Salk Institute, where he worked as a neurobiologist, in 1992 to found the Institute of Gay and Lesbian Education.
- The study was on a very limited scale since only 41 brains (19 homosexual males, 16 heterosexual males, and 6 females) were used (postmortem) to determine if homosexuality was congenital. However, over 1/3 (six) of the heterosexual males had died of AIDS- indicating that they *may* have had *homosexual* relations, and, therefore, may not have actually been heterosexual. LeVay assumed *heterosexuality* unless their medical chart specifically stated that they were *homosexual,* but had no empirical substantiating data. Before their deaths, only two of the "heterosexual" males denied having had *homosexual* relations. Such a *blurring* of the *homo/heterosexual* distinction is obviously significant in such a study.
- The focus of the study- specifically, the size of a region of the hypothalamus known as INAH3 (a region of the brain supposedly connected with sexual behavior) did not provide conclusive results, despite how it was portrayed in the media. LeVay concluded that INAH3 was twice as large in the "heterosexual" males as it was in the homosexual males and the females. However, if all six of the "heterosexual" males who died of AIDS actually had homosexual experiences, then the differences between the two groups would not be as significant. Also, the study DID NOT confirm that ALL homosexuals had a smaller INAH3. In fact, 3 of the 19 homosexuals had INAH3 regions that were **larger** than the average heterosexual males; and 3 of the "heterosexual" males had INAH3 regions that were smaller than that of the average homosexual males. Such is hardly "conclusive" evidence- even if the premise of the study (significant size differences in the hypothalamus cause homosexuality) is granted!
- This study is not repeatable with animals, since animals do not have a comparable *hypothalamic nucleus* governing sexual orientation. This is problematic given the small sample size of the *human* study- only 41 brains were utilized, which is hardly representative of the populace at large.
- This was a *single author* study, and more than one observer did not make the measurements.
- Note also that these were all *adult* brains that were studied, rather than newborn or prenatal. As such, this study does not eliminate the possibility that whatever size differences may exist in INAH3 regions of *homo* versus

heterosexual males- even if such actually is connected to sexual orientation, are caused by *adult* developmental factors, disease or trauma (such as AIDS, or the drugs used to treat it), or *behavioral factors* such as sexual practice (level of promiscuity, or even contact with fecal matter).

- A *blind,* and more carefully *scientific* study done by William Byne did not find a difference between *homosexual* and *heterosexual* INAH3 size. (The analysis of this study can be viewed at the internet address: aculty.bennington.edu/~sherman/sex/byne article.pdf.)
- To date (and my admittedly limited knowledge), there is no conclusive evidence that INAH3 actually has any bearing on human sexual behavior, let alone sexual orientation.
- But the most damning evidence of all with regards to this study "proving a genetic cause for homosexuality" came from LeVay himself. In a 1994 interview, published in Discover Magazine, LeVay cautioned against the very conclusions that were drawn and trumpeted from his study: *"It's important to stress what I didn't find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake that people make in interpreting my work."* (Dr. Simon LeVay interview as quoted in the article, "Sex and the Brain" by David Nimmons, March 1, 1994; Discover Magazine)
- LeVay also admitted, within the study itself, that *"the results do not allow one to decide if the size of the INAH3 in an individual is the cause or consequence of that individual's orientation."* Such is a remarkable admission given the way the results of the study were perceived and reported- *i.e.* that "science" had "proven" homosexuality was genetically caused.

And yet, despite these *scientific* problems with the study itself, and LeVay's own admissions and cautions regarding it, this is considered to be the "proof" that homosexuality has a genetic cause.

Much of the material in this section regarding scientific evidence is attributable to the excellent book, "The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Text and Hermeneutics" by Robert A. J. Gagnon, pp.397-399. I highly recommend this book, though I admit to only recently acquiring a copy, and only reading portions of it in preparation for this study. This same work does a much more thorough job of examining and refuting the "science" that "proves" a genetic cause for homosexuality, and a much more thorough job of considering biblical "proofs" and arguments typically made for homosexuality than is possible by me personally, or in this particular study.

Please also note that a few articles are included in the Appendix on a *genetic cause* for homosexuality- both for and against. They are included for the purposes of example and instruction, rather than as evidence. The Bible alone must be our standard. God says of *homosexuality* and other sins, *"And such **were** some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God,"* 1Cor.6:11. This proves that whatever the *cause* of homosexuality, it can be overcome through Jesus Christ!

Session 4- Constructively Dealing with Homosexuality

A. The Right Heart and Purpose

Jesus saw humanity as *"sheep without a shepherd"* (lost and in danger of perishing eternally), and His *compassion* led Him to *"teach them many things,"* Mark 6:34. His donning of humanity was, therefore, in accordance with the mission to *"seek and save that which is lost,"* Luke 19:10. To that purpose He did not shun sinners, or consider them beyond or unworthy of reconciliation, but instead, *went to* and *ministered to* them as a spiritual *physician,* Matt.9:10-13.

Likewise, the ultimate purpose of the gospel is to *save* souls*,* Rom.1:16. It is supposed to be "good news." The short-term, or here and now objective of the proclamation of this gospel is the production of *"love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith,"* 1Tim.1:5. The long-term, or hereafter objective is the salvation of souls- any and all of them.

If and when lay Christians, their leadership, and their preachers and teachers lose sight of the goals and objectives of Christ and His gospel, it will be used to *condemn* rather than *consecrate,* and *denounce* rather than *deliver.* We will decide *beforehand* who is worthy of its redemption power, and subsequently retreat to platitudinous usage of it only to show sinners how "sinful" and "unworthy" they are of salvation. We will reserve the good news for those morally upright individuals whom we think will "make good Christians" because "they really don't have to change much about their lives"- obviously forgetting how much it has transformed our own courses and where we might be with it, cf. Eph.4:32; 2Pet.1:9. In essence, we will decide in advance who the *"spiritual swine"* will be without ever giving them the *"pearl"* of truth and allowing them to decide what to do with it, Matt.7:6.

There is, perhaps, no area in which we are more likely to forget these purposes of Christ, and these objectives of His gospel, than in regards to homosexuality. It is imperative that we *know* and *remember* that **apart from the gospel message**, there is little to no hope that a person of this day and age will reach a conclusion other than that "homosexuality is genetic," and as such, it is merely the product of one "being who he is" or "true to himself." Thus, the practice becomes merely the rightful expression of these things rather than a sinful behavior that is a choice, and can and must be changed to be pleasing to God. **Apart from the gospel**, what other conclusion would our society allow them to believe?

So, we must get a *broader* understanding of Matt.16:26ff with regard to the *value* of the soul. Though this passage is in regards to the *personal commitment* (v.24) and *personal sacrifice* (v.25) involved with *personal salvation* (v.26)*,* such should **not** be understood or applied in a way that *devalues* the souls of others. Thus, we must not just *value* our *own* souls, or souls of *those we love,* but ***everyone's*** *soul!* God *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,"* 1Tim.2:4! We must therefore ***feel*** about **all men's souls** the way God does, and **act accordingly**.

Thus, to borrow from Matt.16:26's question, and refocus it a bit, "What would you give in exchange for *someone else's* soul?" Specifically, the soul of someone who has been led astray by society, and has bought into the "science" and "political correctness" that homosexuality is either an acceptable alternative lifestyle choice, or something that is genetic and can't be helped, only embraced and celebrated- what would you give in

exchange for *their* soul? The answer all depends on if you *think* and *feel* about their souls the way God and Jesus *thought/think* and *felt/feel* about all men's souls, cf. John 3:16; Rom.5:8-10.

B. The Right Approach to the Subject.

Obviously, the *right approach* to the subject of homosexuality is dependent upon the *right heart* and *purpose.* I've often said:

"It's easy to tell someone they're wrong,
if you don't care whether or not they become right."

It is a far different matter to show someone that he's wrong in such a way as to: 1) make him want to become right; and, 2) help him to become right.

Spouting platitudes of condemnation without any compassion for the individual or genuine concern for his correction has been the "norm" or "rule" rather than the "exception" for too many for too long. Col.4:4-5 speaks well to a better way, *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how to respond to each person."*

Let a couple of thoughts guide your *heart* and *mind* toward the desired objectives of *genuine repentance* (a change of *heart/mind* that leads to a change of conduct) and *salvation:*

1. Think of *homosexuals* rather than *homosexuality.* The latter is nameless and faceless; the former is a real person with a real soul that is jeopardy. It is easy to "attack" *homosexuality* from a pulpit (or computer keyboard) when lecturing people who think/feel as do you on the subject. It is another matter entirely to address a real person who has perhaps been disillusioned on the subject that affects not only his life here in dramatic ways, but also his eternal destiny. Sure, there are radical and rabid supporters of *homosexuality* who will use any means available to further their "cause"- false "science," the intimidation of "political correctness," or even legislation and the judiciary. But we must also remember that most people in the pews on Sunday morning or Sunday evening have a friend or family member that has fallen prey to either the rhetoric or sentiments of our current society on this matter.
2. Think of your own children or family. What if the *homosexual* were your own son or daughter? Would your *heart, mind,* and *approach* be different? It shouldn't, because every homosexual is *someone's* son or daughter. And certainly, they are all **God's** sons and daughters, cf. Jonah 4:1-11. We are often critical and condemning of other people's children, while being much more concerned and conciliatory toward our own. Apply the principle of Matt.7:12 to the situation. What if it were your son or daughter who was caught up in homosexuality, how would you want others to think, feel, and approach them? Think, feel, and approach them in that way yourself.
3. Think of, and emulate, the *compassionate response* of Jesus. Mark 6:34 should be emblazoned in our minds. Jesus saw the *disillusioned* multitude as *"sheep without a shepherd"*- surely most homosexuals fit this category. He felt *compassion* for them- many homosexuals haven't experienced this emotional response from the religious leaders they've encountered. And because of these things, He *"taught*

them many things." The right *assessment* of the need, and the right *mental* and *emotional reaction* to it, led to the proper *response* to correct it.

So, what is the "right approach" to constructively deal with homosexuality? Here are my thoughts, for whatever they are worth.

1. **Properly prepare your own mind and heart by:** (as also covered above)
    a. Thinking of *homosexuality* as an *individual* issue- one involving *individuals* who have souls rather than a nameless, faceless *movement* (or *scourge* or *plague* on society), cf. Luke 19:1-10. There was a *multitude* present, but Jesus saw, spoke to, visited with, and influenced an *individual* named Zaccheus. This simple attention paid to an *individual* completely changed his life.
    b. Think and feel about a homosexual as you would your own son or daughter, or that of a friend or loved one, who became disillusioned or misinformed and was and caught up in this sin, cf. Gal.6:1-2 (this passage is used to emphasize that sin can *catch* [or more literally *take before*] one without his knowledge or acquiescence).
    c. Respond to a homosexual from a place of *compassion*, and keep in mind the ultimate goal of *conversion* over mere *condemnation,* Mark 6:34; Matt.9:10-13.
2. **Be clear that the *practice of homosexuality* is a *sin,* 1Cor.6:9.** As such, it will keep one from attaining the eternal reward of heaven. Since there are only two eternal destinies, John 5:28-29, everlasting punishment is the *eternal effect* of its practice.
3. **But also be clear that *all* sins are a *choice,* 1Cor.6:9-10; 10:12-13.** We all choose to either do *right* according to God's will, or we choose to do *wrong* according to our own will. God did not create us as *sinners,* Gen.1:26-27; but neither did He create us with the ability to decide these things *in, of,* or *for* ourselves, Jer.10:23. He did, however, create us with the *ability* to choose for ourselves which path to take, and will subsequently hold us accountable for those choices, Ezk.18:20ff; 2Cor.5:6-11.
4. **Homosexuality, in regard to its *earthly cause* or its *eternal effect*, is no different from any other sexual sin** (or any other kind or type of sin for that matter)**.** Its *earthly cause* is the same as that of *heterosexual pre-martial* or *heterosexual extra-marital* relations- a failure to control the desires and a willingness to express them in ways that are not approved by God. Likewise, its *eternal effects* are no different that *heterosexual pre-marital* or *heterosexual extra-martial* relations- they all lead to condemnation, 1Cor.6:9-10; Jas.2:11; Matt.5:27-32.
5. **Be consistent in *emphasis* and *application*.** The pious hypocrisy of those (or *we?*) who assume themselves "godly" toward homosexuality, but who are guilty of sinful *lusts, fornication,* and *adultery* needs to stop. It isn't helping. Hypocrisy never does, cf. Matthew 7:1-5. Those addicted to pornography, or practicing unmarried sex, or living in adulterous marriages (those divorced for reasons other than adultery who are remarried, cf. Matthew 19:1-5) are spiritually no different from homosexuals- all are condemned for their behavior. Such doesn't

make homosexuality right, it just means that it, along with these other sexual sins are all wrong- always have been, always will be. It is hypocritical to give undue weight (of condemnation) to homosexuality from the pulpit or in fellowship *while* ignoring or minimizing these other *heterosexual* sins. This underminea the ability to teach and convert homosexuals. It is also hypocritical to tell the homosexual that he must repress and deny his *homosexual urges* and *desires* while excusing or minimizing the sinful expression of *heterosexual* urges and desires in *pre* or *extra-marital* sex, 1Cor.5. *Lust* and its expression are just as wrong *heterosexually* as *homosexually.*

6. **Don't make truth *relative,* or allow it to be made *relative.*** Truth is neither *relative* nor *temporary.* Truth does *change* to be more relative to *me* in *my* situation, generation, time, or society, 1Pet.1:22-25; 2Pet.1:20-21. As such, two people do not "understand the Bible differently." One may *understand* and the other *misunderstand;* or, both may *misunderstand,* but both do not *understand* it differently. Anything less than this indicts the power and sovereignty of God, and makes each one his own god. Therefore, the application of truth is the same for everyone, for God is no respecter of individuals, Acts 10:34-35.
7. **Don't call "sinful behavior" by other *more* or *less* favorable terms.** Homosexuality is not merely an "alternative lifestyle choice" or "just who I am," but neither is it any more of a "plague on our society" or the "scourge of civilization" than heterosexual fornication or adultery. Sin is "sin"- no matter *who* commits it in *what* time, 1John 3:4.
8. **Don't confuse *compassion* and *patience* with *tolerance* and *acceptance.*** We can and should be *compassionate* toward and *patient* with homosexuals enough to *teach* and *lead* them to obedient conversion in Christ. But this does not equate to *tolerance* or *acceptance* of their sinful behavior. No one is *converted* (made into something *new*) through *tolerating* and *accepting* old and sinful behaviors, cf. 2Cor.5:17; Col.3:5-10. The churches at Corinth and Thyatira were rebuked for their *toleration* of, and *fellowship* with, those practicing sin, 1Cor.5:1-2; Rev.2:20. Think about it: When we *tolerate* and *accept* bad behavior in our children, we become just as guilty as they are, and certainly do not help them to do and be better. Such does not remove *compassion* and *patience* from the equation; it utilizes them both to produce a different effect!
9. **Never forget that homosexuality is a "sinful behavior" that can be changed/converted, 1Cor.6:11**. Even if homosexuality was/is *genetically caused,* this passage eliminates the assumption that genetics dictate behavior, and therefore, necessarily eliminates personal responsibility for conduct. While not specifically addressing the *cause,* the passage affirms that *homosexuals* (by their inclusion in v.9) ceased to be homosexuals through conversion to Christ, v.11. Every person- *hetero* or *homosexual,* must learn to control their sinful sexual desires and eliminate the sinful expression of them.
10. **Be *logical*.** If homosexuality has a genetic cause, it must be a considered a disadvantageous mutation, and, as such, will be eliminated from the population by *natural selection* and *survival of the fittest* (this is, of course, unless God is right and Darwin and atheists are wrong).

11. **Be *fair.*** Homosexuality is no better and no worse than other *heterosexual* or other sins, as all will prevent eternal salvation.
12. And finally, **Be *firm.*** Homosexuality is a choice to behave contrary to God's will, but can and must be abandoned through submission and conversion to Christ if one is to be pleasing to God, and thereby attain heaven. We do no spiritual favors to homosexuals by kowtowing to societal pressures and denying or minimizing God's word on this, or any other, subject. We are saved by obedience to the Truth, not by bending and distorting it to meet our wants and desires.

May those who claim to wear the name "Christian" ever be the *"pillar and support of truth"* both by the faithful proclamation of its principles, as well as by the diligent display of them through their behavior in all things, 1Tim.3:15; Eph.3:10.

Appendices

The following articles are included for their illustrative and educational purposes, but are NOT endorsed as being necessarily true or accurate. In them you may find helpful information, as well as false, inaccurate, and misleading statements and conclusions. Please read and use them as you find them beneficial, but understand that their inclusion is in no way to be considered an endorsement. –PCS

Male sexual orientation influenced by genes, study shows

Genes examined in study are not sufficient or necessary to make men gay but do play some role in sexuality, say US researchers

A study of gay men in the US has found fresh evidence that male sexual orientation is influenced by genes. Scientists tested the DNA of 400 gay men and found that genes on at least two chromosomes affected whether a man was gay or straight.

A region of the X chromosome called Xq28 had some impact on men's sexual behaviour – though scientists have no idea which of the many genes in the region are involved, nor how many lie elsewhere in the genome.

Another stretch of DNA on chromosome 8 also played a role in male sexual orientation – though again the precise mechanism is unclear.

Researchers have speculated in the past that genes linked to homosexuality in men may have survived evolution because they happened to make women who carried them more fertile. This may be the case for genes in the Xq28 region, as the X chromosome is passed down to men exclusively from their mothers.

Michael Bailey, a psychologist at Northwestern University in Illinois, set out the findings at a discussion event held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Chicago on Thursday. "The study shows that there are genes involved in male sexual orientation," he said. The work has yet to be published, but confirms the findings of a smaller study that sparked widespread controversy in 1993, when Dean Hamer, a scientist at the US National Cancer Institute, investigated the family histories of more than 100 gay men and found homosexuality tended to be inherited. More than 10% of brothers of gay men were gay themselves, compared to around 3% of the general population. Uncles and male cousins on the mother's side had a greater than average chance of being gay, too.

The link with the mother's side of the family led Hamer to look more closely at the X chromosome. In follow-up work, he found that 33 out of 40 gay brothers inherited similar genetic markers on the Xq28 region of the X chromosome, suggesting key genes resided there.

Hamer faced a firestorm when his study was published. The fuss centred on the influences of nature and nurture on sexual orientation. But the work also raised the more dubious prospect of a prenatal test for sexual orientation. The Daily Mail headlined the story "Abortion hope after 'gay genes findings' ". Hamer warned that any attempt to develop a test for homosexuality would be "wrong, unethical and a terrible abuse of research".

The gene or genes in the Xq28 region that influence sexual orientation have a limited and variable impact. Not all of the gay men in Bailey's study inherited the same Xq28 region. The genes were neither sufficient, nor necessary, to make any of the men gay.

The flawed thinking behind a genetic test for sexual orientation is clear from studies of twins, which show that the identical twin of a gay man, who carries an exact replica of his brother's DNA, is more likely to be straight than gay. That means even a perfect genetic test that picked up every gene linked to sexual orientation would still be less effective than flipping a coin.

While genes do contribute to sexual orientation, other multiple factors play a greater role, perhaps including the levels of hormones a baby is exposed to in the womb. "Sexual orientation has nothing to do with choice," said Bailey. "We found evidence for two sets [of genes] that affect whether a man is gay or straight. But it is not completely determinative; there are certainly other environmental factors involved."

Last year, before the latest results were made public, one of Bailey's colleagues, Alan Sanders, said the findings could not and should not be used to develop a test for sexual orientation.

"When people say there's a gay gene, it's an oversimplification," Sanders said. "There's more than one gene, and genetics is not the whole story. Whatever gene contributes to sexual orientation, you can think of it as much as contributing to heterosexuality as much as you can think of it contributing to homosexuality. It contributes to a variation in the trait."

Qazi Rahman, a psychologist at King's College London, said the results were valuable for further understanding the biology of sexual orientation. "This is not controversial or surprising and is nothing people should worry about. All human psychological traits are heritable, that is, they have a genetic component," he said. "Genetic factors explain 30 to 40% of the variation between people's sexual orientation. However, we don't know where these genetic factors are located in the genome. So we need to do 'gene finding' studies, like this one by Sanders, Bailey and others, to have a better idea where potential genes for sexual orientation may lie."

Rahman rejected the idea that genetics research could be used to discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation. "I don't see how genetics would contribute more to the persecution, discrimination and stigmatisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people any more than social, cultural or learning explanations. Historically, the persecution and awful treatment of LGBT groups has been because politicians, religious leaders and societies have viewed sexual orientation as 'choice' or due to poor upbringing."

Steven Rose, of the Open University, said: "What worries me is not the extent, if at all, to which our genetic, epigenetic or neural constitution and development affect our sexual preferences, but the huge moral panic and religious and political agenda which surrounds the question."

(http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/feb/14/genes-influence-male-sexual-orientation-study)

Homosexual vs. Gay

Written by Brian Messerli

Over the last few decades, there has been a surge of people in our society "coming out" as gay. Considering what the Bible teaches about homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7), it is natural for us to be disturbed. However, there is an unhealthy temptation among Christians to push away in horror from homosexuals. There is a tendency to think there is a hotter place in Hell reserved for people like that. If Jesus walked the earth in our day, some might cry out, "Why does this man eat and drink with homosexuals?" (cf. Mark 2:16-17). The proper attitude as Christians should be, "How can we help?" not, "How can we get as far away as possible from these people?" Helping begins with education, and since it doesn't seem like the gay issue is going away, we might as well start educating ourselves now.

The term "homosexual" is a psychological term. A homosexual is a person who has a tendency to direct his or her sexual desires toward members of the same gender. In other words, homosexuals struggle with same sex attraction (SSA). They are aware of those attractions, but there is a major point to consider: they do not necessarily accept those attractions as part of their identity. Many homosexuals are frustrated, confused, and sometimes disgusted by their same sex attraction because they realize it is not natural. On the other hand, the term "gay" is a social, political term. Those who call themselves gay have accepted their same sex attractions as a part of their identity. Many gay people have accepted that they were born that way, that it is a good and desirable, and so they are proud of their homosexuality. Hence, the "gay pride" movement, the big to-do about "coming out," gay rights activist groups, and rainbow Oreo's. A key point to remember is that all gay people are homosexuals, but not all homosexuals are gay. In fact, many homosexuals would feel insulted if someone called them gay.

Understanding the distinction between homosexuals and gay people is crucial in the church. It will help us remember that it is possible for Christians to have homosexual tendencies, just like it's possible for Christians to struggle with using bad language, controlling their anger, or lying. What would we do if a Christian brother or sister came to us wanting help with their homosexual struggle? Without educating ourselves, we might say something like, "I can't believe you're gay! God says it's a sin to be gay, so unless you stop being gay we're going to withdraw from you." Two things: First, if they're coming to us for help, they are not gay (since they obviously haven't accepted homosexuality as a natural part of their identity). Second, if they are not welcome in the church because no one has compassion for their struggle, they will turn somewhere else to find compassion: the gay community.

(http://psdchurchofchrist.org/index.php/component/content/article/35-most-viewed/329-homosexual-vs-gay)

Genetics and Homosexuality: Are People Born Gay? The Biological Basis for Sexual Orientation

by Rich Deem

Introduction

Born Gay?

There is a common belief among liberals that people are born either gay or straight. Conservatives tend to believe that sexual orientation is actually sexual preference, which is chosen by the individual. This page represents a review of the scientific literature on the basis for homosexual orientation.

Rich Deem

Are people born gay or straight? Much of the current media sources assume the question is a solved scientific problem with all the evidence pointing toward a biological (probably genetic) basis for a homosexual orientation. Contrary to this perception, the question has been poorly studied (or studied poorly), although there is some evidence on both sides of question. In addition, many of the initial studies, which were highly touted by the media as "proof" for a biological basis for homosexuality, have been contradicted by later, more thorough studies. This evidence falls into four basic categories:

1. Brain structure
2. Possible hormonal influences
3. Concordance of homosexuality in twins
4. Concordance of genetic markers in siblings
5. Real genetic studies (GWAS)

Why does it matter?

Until a few years ago, sexual orientation used to be called sexual preference. Obviously, the two terms denote significant differences in the the manner by which sexuality develops. A preference is something that is chosen, whereas orientation is merely something that defines us. The differences are potentially important regarding how the law applies to those who are gay. If homosexuality is not chosen, but actually is a biologically-determined characteristic over which we have no choice, then laws should not treat gays and straights differently, since homosexuality would be equivalent to one's race, over which we have no control.

Sexual orientation—brain studies

Since sexual attraction begins in the brain, researchers first examined the question of sexual orientation by comparing the anatomy of brains from males and females. These studies showed that male and female brains showed sexual dimorphism in the pre-optic area of the hypothalamus, where males demonstrated a greater than two-fold difference in cell number and size compared to females.[1] A second study found that two of four Interstitial Nuclei of the Anterior Hypothalamus (INAH) were at least twice as large in males as females.[2] Since the INAH was involved in sexual dimorphism, it was hypothesized by Simon LeVay that there might be differences in this region in heterosexual *vs*. homosexual men. Postmortem examination of the brains of AIDS patients *vs*. control male subjects (presumed to be heterosexual) showed that the

presumably heterosexual men exhibited INAH3 that were twice the size of both females and presumably homosexual men who had died of AIDS.[3] The study has been criticized for its uncertainty of sexual orientation of the subjects, and potential complications caused by the AIDS virus (which does infect the human brain), and also by lowered testosterone levels found in AIDS patients. A popularized *Newsweek* cover story, "Is This Child Gay?"[4] characterized LeVay as a "champion for the genetic side," even though the study involved *no* genetic data at all.

A subsequent study by Byne, *et al*. examined the question of INAH3 size on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and HIV status.[5] The study found large differences in INAH3 volume on the basis of sex (with the male INAH3 being larger than the female INAH3). However, the volume of IHAH3 was decreased in male heterosexual men who had contracted AIDS (0.108 mm^3 compared with 0.123 mm^3 in male controls). There was no statistically significant difference between IHAH3 sizes of male heterosexuals *vs*. male homosexuals who had contracted AIDS (0.108 mm^3 and 0.096 mm^3, respectively). The study also found that there were no differences in the number of neurons in the INAH3 based upon sexual orientation, although researchers found significant differences between males and females, as in other studies.[5] It was obvious from this study that LeVay's study was fatally flawed due to the AIDS complication, and that there were no differences in the INAH3 based upon sexual orientation.

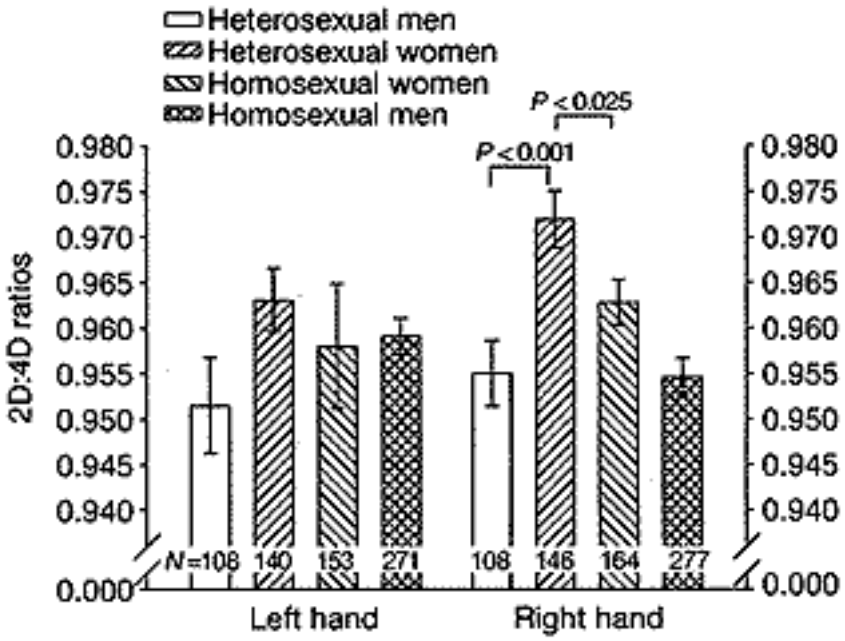
The role of the hypothalamus in sexual orientation was further studied by Swaab, *et al*. Other researchers had hypothesized that differentiation of the hypothalamus occurred before birth. However, Swaab's study showed that the sexually dimorphic nucleus (SDN) of more than 100 subjects decreased in volume and cell number in the females only 2-4 years postnatal. This finding complicated the findings of the brain studies, since not only chemical and hormonal factors, but also social factors, might have influenced this process.[6]

A study by Allen and Gorski examined the anterior commissure of the brain, finding that females and homosexual males exhibited a larger size than heterosexual males.[7] However, later studies using larger sample sizes found no such differences.[8]

Complicating the issue of brain differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals is the problem that sexual experiences themselves can affect brain structure.[9] So, the question will always be whether homosexual practice changes the brain or whether the brain results in homosexual practice.

Hormonal influences

Since sexual differentiation occurs within the womb, as a result of hormonal influences, it has been hypothesized that homosexuality may result from a differential hormone balance in the wombs of those who eventually exhibit a homosexual orientation. Since hormonal levels within the womb are not available, proxies for hormonal influences have been used to examine the question of how hormonal influences might impact sexual orientation. These proxies include differences in skeletal size and shape, including the ratio of the long bones of the arms and legs relative to arm span or stature and the hand bones of adults (the ratio of the length of the various phalanges).



Digit ratio *vs*. orientation

Studies have shown that ratios of digit length are predictors of several hormones, including testosterone, luteinizing hormone and estrogen.[10] In women, the index finger (2D, second digit) is almost the same length as the fourth digit (4D). However, in men, the index finger is usually shorter than the fourth. It has been shown that this greater 2D:4D ratio in females is established in two-year-olds. It has been hypothesized that the sex difference in the 2D:4D ratio reflects the prenatal influence of androgen on males. A study by Williams, *et al*. showed that the 2D:4D ratio of homosexual men was not significantly different from that of heterosexual men for either hand.[11] However, homosexual women displayed significantly smaller 2D:4D ratios compared with heterosexual women (see figure to right). It has been hypothesized that women exposed to more androgens in the womb tend to express a homosexual orientation. However, since these hormone levels were never measured, one is left with the proxy of finger lengths as a substitute. Studies have found that the more older brothers a boy has, the more likely he is to develop a homosexual orientation.[12] This study also found that homosexual men had a greater than expected proportion of brothers among their older siblings (229 brothers: 163 sisters) compared with the general population (106 males: 100 females). Males who had two or more older brothers were found to have lower 2D:4D ratios,[11] suggesting that they had experienced increased androgens in the womb. Why increased androgens would predispose both males and females to be homosexual was not explained in the study.

Another study examined the length of long bones in the arms, legs and hands. Both homosexual males and heterosexual females had less long bone growth in the arms, legs and hands, than heterosexual males or homosexual females.[13] Accordingly, the researchers hypothesized that male homosexuals had less androgen exposure during development than male heterosexuals, while female homosexuals had greater steroid exposure during development than their heterosexual counterparts. Of course, with regard to male homosexuality, this study directly contradicted the presumed results of the Williams study above, which "showed" that males with multiple older brothers (who tended to be homosexual) experienced *increased* androgen exposure.

A study of one homosexual *vs*. two heterosexual male triplets found that the homosexual triplets scored more on the female side of the Masculinity-Femininity scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory,[14] suggesting a possible hormonal influence (decreased androgens) involved in male homosexual orientation.

All of the studies reporting possible hormonal influence on homosexuality suffer from the lack of any real evidence that hormones actually play any role in sexual orientation. The fact that contradictory studies report increased[11,15] vs. decreased[13-14] androgens as a basis for homosexuality doesn't provoke confidence that the proxies are really true. Obviously, a study that documented real hormone levels, as opposed to proxies, would probably provide more definitive data.

Studies involving a rare hormonal imbalance, congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), caused by defective 21-hydroxylase enzyme, suggest that hormonal abnormalities can influence sexual orientation. CAH results in increased production of male hormones during development. In males, increased androgens has little effect. However, female fetuses that develop in this environment develop ambiguous external genitalia, which complicates subsequent development. In utero treatment with dexamethasone reduces the androgen imbalance, resulting in an individual who is genetically *and* phenotypically female. However, dexamethasone treatment also results in reduced homosexual orientation among treated females,[16] suggesting that *some* homosexuality may result from hormonal influences during development. Homosexual rights groups have suggested that dexamethasone treatment not be given, because it reduces homosexual orientation in females affected by CAH.

Twin studies

The observation that familial factors influence the prevalence of homosexuality led to a the initiation of number of twin studies, which are a proxy for the presence of possible genetic factors. Most of these early studies suffered from methodological flaws. Kallmann sampled subjects from correctional and psychiatric institutions—not exactly representative "normal" populations.[17] Bailey *et al*. published a number of studies in the early 1990's, examining familial factors involved in both male and female homosexuality. These studies suffered from the manner in which subjects were recruited, since the investigators advertised in openly gay publications, resulting in skewed populations.[18] Later studies by the same group did not suffer from this selection bias, and found the heritability of homosexuality in Australia was up to 50 and 60% in females but only 30% in males.[19]

A study by Kendler *et al*. in 2000 examined 1,588 twins selected by a random survey of 50,000 households in the United States.[20] The study found 3% of the population consisted of non-heterosexuals (homosexuals and bisexuals) and a genetic concordance rate of 32%, somewhat lower than found in the Australian studies. The study lost statistical significance when twins were broken down into male and female pairs, because of the low rate (3%) of non-heterosexuals in the general U.S. population.

A Finnish twin study reported the "potential for homosexual response," not just overt homosexual behavior, as having a genetic component.[21]

On a twist on homosexual twin studies, an Australian research group examined the question of whether homophobia was the result of nature or nurture.[22] Surprisingly, both familial/environmental and genetic factors seemed to play a role as to whether or not a person was homophobic. Even more surprising, a separate research group in the U.S. confirmed these results (also adding that attitudes towards abortion were also partly genetic).[23] Now, even homophobes can claim that they were born that way!

Twin studies suffer from the problem of trying to distinguish between environmental and genetic factors, since twins tend to live within the same family unit. A study examining the effect of birth order on homosexual preference concluded, "The lack of relationship between the strength of the effect and degree of homosexual feelings in the men and women suggests the influence of birth order on homosexual feelings was not due to a biological, but a social process in the subjects studied."[12] So, although the twin studies suggest a possible genetic component for homosexual orientation, the results are certainly not definitive.

Genetic studies—the "gay gene"

An examination of family pedigrees revealed that gay men had more homosexual male relatives through maternal than through paternal lineages, suggesting a linkage to the X chromosome. Dean Hamer[24] found such an association at region Xq28. If male sexual orientation was influenced by a gene on Xq28, then gay brothers should share more than 50% of their alleles at this region, whereas their heterosexual brothers should share less than 50% of their alleles. In the absence of such an association, then both types of brothers should display 50% allele sharing. An analysis of 40 pairs of gay brothers and found that they shared 82% of their alleles in the Xq28 region, which was much greater than the 50% allele sharing that would be expected by chance.[25] However, a follow-up study by the same research group, using 32 pairs of gay brothers and found only 67% allele sharing, which was much closer to the 50% expected by chance.[26] Attempts by Rice *et al*. to repeat the Hamer study resulted in only 46% allele sharing, insignificantly different from chance, contradicting the Hamer results.[27] At the same time, an unpublished study by Alan Sanders (University of Chicago) corroborated the Rice results.[28] Ultimately, no gene or gene product from the Xq28 region was ever identified that affected sexual orientation. When Jonathan Marks (an evolutionary biologist) asked Hamer what percentage of homosexuality he thought his results explained, his answer was that he thought it explained 5% of *male* homosexuality. Marks' response was, "There is no science other than behavioral genetics in which you can leave 97.5% of a phenomenon unexplained and get headlines."[29]

Abusive childhood experiences

A study of 13,000 New Zealand adults (age 16+) examined sexual orientation as a function of childhood history.[30] The study found a 3-fold higher prevalence of childhood abuse for those who subsequently engaged in same sex sexual activity. However, childhood abuse was not a *major factor* in homosexuality, since only 15% of homosexuals had experienced abuse as children (compared with 5% among heterosexuals).[30] So, it would appear from this population that only a small percentage of homosexuality (~10%) might be explained by early childhood abusive experiences.

Sexual preference or orientation?

If homosexual orientation were completely genetic, one would expect that it would not change over the course of one's life. For females, sexual preference does seem to change over time. A 5-year study of lesbians found that over a quarter of these women relinquished their lesbian/bisexual identities during this period: half reclaimed heterosexual identities and half gave up all identity labels.[31] In a survey of young minority women (16-23 years of age), half of the participants changed their sexual identities more than once during the two-year survey period.[32] In another study of subjects who were recruited from organizations that serve lesbian/gay/bisexual youths (ages 14 to 21 years) in New York City, the percentage that changed from a lesbian/gay/bisexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation was 5% over the period of just 12 months (the length of the survey).[33] Other studies have confirmed that sexual orientation is not fixed in all individuals, but can change over time, especially in women.[34] A recent example of an orientation change occurred with *The Advocate's* "Person of the Year" for 2005. Kerry Pacer was the youngest gay advocate, chosen for her initiation of a "gay-straight alliance" at White County High School in Cleveland, Georgia. However, four years later, she is raising her one year old daughter, along with the baby's father.[35] Another former lesbian, British comedienne Jackie Clune, spent 12 years in lesbian relationships before marrying a man and producing 4 children.[36] Michael Glatze came out at age 20 and went on to be a leader in the homosexual rights movement. At age 30, he came out in the opposite direction, saying, "In my experience, "coming out" from under the influence of the homosexual mindset was the most liberating, beautiful and astonishing thing I've ever experienced in my entire life."[37] A 2011 study of Christian gays who *wanted* to change their sexual orientation found that 23% of the subjects

reported a successful "conversion" to heterosexual orientation and functioning, while an additional 30% reported stable behavioral chastity with substantive dis-identification with homosexual orientation.[38] However, 20% of the subjects reported giving up on the process and fully embraced a gay identity, while another 27% fell in between the two extremes.[38] Obviously, for at least some individuals, being gay or straight is something they *can* choose.

The question of nature vs. nurture can also be seen by examining children of homosexual vs. heterosexual parents. If homosexuality were purely biological, one would expect that parenting would not influence it. Paul Cameron published a study in 2006 that claimed that the children of homosexual parents expressed a homosexual orientation much more frequently than the general population.[39] Although claims of bias were made against the study, another study by Walter Schuum in 2010 confirmed Cameron's results by statistically examining the results of 10 other studies that addressed the question.[40] In total, 262 children raised by homosexual parents were included in the analysis. The results showed that 16-57% of such children adopted a homosexual lifestyle. The results were even more striking in daughters of lesbian mothers, 33% to 57% of whom became lesbians themselves. Since homosexuals makeup only ~5% of the population, it is clear that parenting does influence sexual orientation.

It always amazes me when people say that they were born gay. Looking back on my own experience, I would never say that I was "born straight." I really didn't have any interest in females until about the seventh grade. Before that time, they weren't really interesting, since they weren't interested in sports or riding bikes or anything else I liked to do.

Homosexuality and Darwinism

I am not a huge fan of Neo Darwinian evolution. Nevertheless, there is some clear evidence that natural selection (and sexual selection) does act upon populations and has acted on our own species to produce racial differences.[41] Natural selection postulates that those genetic mutations that favor survival and reproduction will be selected, whereas those that compromise survival and reproduction will be eliminated. Obviously, a gene or series of genes that produce non-reproducing individuals (i.e., those who express pure homosexual behavior) will be rapidly eliminated from any population. So, it would be expected that any "gay gene" would be efficiently removed from a population. However, it is possible that a gene favoring *male* homosexuality could "hide" within the human genome if it were located on the X-chromosome, where it could be carried by reproducing females, and not be subject to negative selection by non-reproducing males. In order to survive, the gene(s) would be expected to be associated with *higher* reproductive capacity in women who carry it (compensating for the generation of non-reproducing males). I can't imagine a genetic scenario in which female homosexuality would ever persist within a population.

Real genetic studies?

Within the last decade, genetic analysis of heritable traits has taken a huge step forward with the advent of DNA microarray technology. Using this technology, it is possible to scan large lengths of the human genome (even an entire genome wide scan—GWAS) for numerous individuals, at quite reasonable costs. This DNA microarray technology has led to the discovery of genes that are associated with complex diseases, such as Crohn's Disease, which is the topic of my research. If homosexuality truly has a genetic component, DNA microarray studies would not only definitively prove the point, but would identify specific gene(s) or loci that might be associated with those who express a homosexual orientation. The first attempt to do genome wide scans on homosexual males was done by Mustanski et al. in 2005.[42] The results suggested possible linkage near microsatellite D7S798 on chromosome 7q36. However, an attempt to repeat the finding (along with ~6000 well-defined SNPs spread comparatively evenly across the human genome) failed to find *any* significant SNPs.[43] However, a third study using Chinese subjects found a weak

association at the SHH rs9333613 polymorphism of 7q36.[44] A more general study, examining mate choice among different populations, found no genetic link, prompting the investigators to speculate that such choices were "culturally driven."[45] The largest genome wide scan was conducted by 23andMe. 7887 unrelated men and 5570 unrelated women of European ancestry were analyzed by GWAS. Although unpublished, the data was presented at the American Society of Human Genetics annual meeting in San Francisco, showing that there were no loci associated with sexual orientation, including Xq28 on the X chromosome.[46] So, the preliminary studies on possible genetic causes of homosexual orientation tends to rule out any dramatic genetic component to sexual orientation.

Conclusion

Why are people gay? The question of how homosexual orientation originates has been the subject of much press, with the general impression being promoted that homosexuality is largely a matter of genes, rather than environmental factors. However, if one examines the scientific literature, one finds that it's not quite as clear as the news bytes would suggest. The early studies that reported differences in the brains of homosexuals were complicated by HIV infection and were not substantiated by larger, better controlled studies. Numerous studies reported that possible hormonal differences affected homosexual orientation. However, these studies were often directly contradictory, and *never* actually measured any hormone levels, but just used proxies for hormonal influences, without direct evidence that the proxies were actually indicative of true hormone levels or imbalances. Twin studies showed that there likely are genetic influences for homosexuality, although similar studies have shown some genetic influences for homophobia and even opposition to abortion. Early childhood abuse has been associated with homosexuality, but, at most, only explains about 10% of those who express a homosexual orientation. The fact that sexual orientation is not constant for many individuals, but can change over time suggests that at least part of sexual orientation is actually sexual preference. Attempts to find a "gay gene" have never identified any gene or gene product that is actually associated with homosexual orientation, with studies failing to confirm early suggestions of linkage of homosexuality to region Xq28 on the X chromosome. The question of genetic influences on sexual orientation has been recently examined using DNA microarray technology, although, the results have largely failed to pinpoint any specific genes as a factor in sexual orientation.

(http://www.godandscience.org/evolution/genetics_of_homosexuality.html)

Tragedy, Tradition, and Opportunity in the Homosexuality Debate

We need a better approach to the traditional biblical ethic on sexuality.
Ronald J. Sider/ November 18, 2014

As 2014 comes to a close, many believe the question of the legal, public status of gay marriage has been effectively settled—even before the Supreme Court finally pronounces on the matter. Fierce battles over religious freedom will continue, but already about 60 percent of all Americans now live in states where gay marriage is legal. In those states, and perhaps soon in the entire country, the public policy issue is largely settled at least for a generation or two.

But the change in public policy need not—and should not—settle the issue for the church. Instead all of us are being compelled to examine our beliefs and practices. This is a good thing. We deeply need a new approach to our neighbors and our churches' own members, especially those who live with a same-sex attraction or orientation. To find this will require acknowledging the tragedy of our recent history, the continuity of Christian teaching, and the opportunity for a new kind of ministry.

The Tragedy

We must start with the tragedy that evangelical Christians who long to be biblical are widely perceived as hostile to gays. And it is largely our own fault. Many of us have actually been homophobic. Most of us tolerated gay bashers. Many of us were largely silent when bigots in the society battered or even killed gay people. Very often, we did not deal sensitively and lovingly with young people in our churches struggling with their sexual orientation. Instead of taking the lead in ministering to people with AIDS, some of our leaders even opposed government funding for research to discover medicine to help them.

At times, we even had the gall to blame gay people for the tragic collapse of marriage in our society, ignoring the obvious fact that the main problem by far is that many of the 95 percent of the people who are heterosexual do not keep their marriage vows. In fact, self-described evangelicals get divorced at higher rates than Catholics and Mainline Protestants! We have frequently failed to distinguish gay orientation from gay sexual activity—even though if any of us were judged by the persistent inclinations of our hearts, on sexual matters or otherwise, none of us could stand.

If the devil had designed a strategy to discredit the historic Christian position on sexuality, he could not have done much better than what the evangelical community has actually done in the last several decades.

Some believe that the track record of evangelicals is so bad that we should just remain silent on this issue. But that would mean abandoning our submission to what finally I believe is clear biblical teaching. It would mean forgetting the nearly unanimous teaching of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians over two millennia. And it would mean failing to listen to the vast majority of contemporary Christians (who now live in the global South).p

Biblical Consistency

The primary biblical case against homosexual practice is not the few texts that explicitly mention it. Rather, it is the fact that again and again the Bible affirms the goodness and beauty of sexual intercourse—and everywhere, without exception, the norm is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman committed to each other for life. Although this is familiar ground, and less and less contested even by those who advocate for a revision of Christian ethics, it is important to state just how strongly and consistently the

Bible speaks to the goodness of marriage between a man and a woman, and equally consistently to the immorality of sexual acts (heterosexual and homosexual) that do not honor that bond.

In the creation account in Genesis, the "man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame" (Gen. 2:25). Their sexual attraction is good and beautiful. A whole book of the Bible—Song of Solomon—celebrates the sexual love of a man and woman. There are many, many Old Testament laws and proverbs that discuss the proper boundaries for sexual intercourse. In every case it must be between a man and a woman. Jesus celebrates marriage (John 2:1-11) and tightens the restrictions on divorce—again always in the context of a man and a woman. Paul affirms the goodness of sexual intercourse by urging a husband and wife to satisfy each others' sexual desires (1 Corinthians 7:1-7).

This widespread biblical affirmation of the goodness of sexual intercourse when it occurs within the life-long commitment of a man and a woman provides the context for understanding the few biblical texts that explicitly mention same-sex intercourse (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10). Notably, none of these texts address motives or specific types of homosexual acts. Instead, they pronounce a sweeping condemnation of same-sex intercourse—whether female with female or male with male.

The truth is that many revisionist as well as all traditionalist scholars agree with the conclusion Richard Hays drew in his careful study, in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament,* in 1996: Paul (and Jesus, and the rest of the New Testament) "presupposes and reaffirms the … [Levitical] condemnation of homosexual acts." Even scholars who defend homosexual practice by Christians today (like Dan O. Via, John McNeill, and Walter Wink) agree that wherever the Bible refers to homosexual practice, it condemns it as contrary to God's will.

To be sure, evangelicals today do not take everything taught in the New Testament as normative for today. Not many of us require women to cover their heads in church, for example, as Paul urged for the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11). Some Christians today advance a number of arguments to claim that (at least in the case of a monogamous, life-long commitment) same-sex intercourse should be morally acceptable in our churches:

- A great deal of homosexual intercourse in Greco-Roman society was pederastic (a dominant older male with a passive younger male) and not infrequently involved slavery and rape;
- The ancient Greco-Roman world knew nothing about a permanent life-long orientation or a long term male-male sexual partnership;
- Many people in Paul's time condemned homosexual intercourse because it required a male to play the role of a woman which in that time was considered a disgrace because males were superior to women;
- Some Greco-Roman and Jewish writers condemned homosexual intercourse because it could not lead to procreation.

Obviously a mutually supportive life-long caring same-sex relationship is very different from the often temporary and oppressive relationships described above. And we do not believe that sexual intercourse must be for the purpose of procreation to be legitimate.

But two things are important about these arguments. First, Paul never argues that homosexual practice is wrong because it is pederastic or oppressive or wrong for a male to play the role of a woman. He simply says, in agreement with the unanimous Jewish tradition, that it is wrong. And second, there are in fact examples in ancient literature of long term (even life-long) homosexual partnerships. A number of ancient figures, including Plato's Aristophanes in the *Symposium,* also talk about a life-long same-sex orientation.

Some argue for abandoning the historic Christian teaching on same-sex intercourse by pointing out that Christians today no longer accept what the Bible says about slavery and the inferiority of women. But in the case of both, there is a trajectory within the canonical Scriptures that pointed toward a very different viewpoint. What Paul asked the slave-master Philemon to do when his runaway slave Onesimus (now a Christian) returned was so radical that its wide implementation would—and eventually did—end slavery.

On women, Jesus defied the male prejudices of his day and treated women as equals. Women were apostles (Rom 16:7) and prophets (Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5) in the early church. When contemporary Christians totally reject slavery and affirm the full equality of women in church and society, they are extending a trajectory clearly begun in the biblical canon. In the case of same-sex intercourse, on the other hand, there is nothing in the biblical canon that even hints at such a change.

If the biblical teaching on sexual intercourse is decisive for the church today, then celibacy is the only option for those who are not in a heterosexual marriage. But many today argue that celibacy is impossible for most gays. Dan Via, a proponent of same-sex practice, argues that a homosexual orientation is the "unifying center of consciousness" for a gay person, and that God's promise of "abundant life" must include "the specific actualization of whatever bodily-sexual orientation one has been given by creation."

Such an argument would have astonished Jesus and Paul—both unmarried celibates who went out of their way to praise the celibate life. It is profoundly unbiblical to argue that one's sexual orientation is the defining aspect of one's identity (the "unifying center of consciousness" as Via insists). For Christians, our relationship to God and the new community of Christ's church provide our fundamental identity, not our sexual orientation. That is not to claim that our identity as men and women with particular sexual orientations is irrelevant or unimportant for who we are. But that sexual orientation dare never be as important to us as our commitment to Christ and his call to live according to kingdom ethics.

Indeed, the historic position that sexual intercourse must be limited to married heterosexuals demands celibacy for vastly more people than just the relatively small number with a same-sex orientation. Widows and widowers, along with tens of millions of heterosexuals who long for marriage but cannot find a partner, are also called to celibacy.

In addition to the unanimous biblical teaching, church history's nearly unanimous condemnation of same-sex practice and the same teaching on the part of the churches that represent the overwhelming majority of Christians in the world (Catholics, Orthodox and churches in the global South) today ought to give us great pause before we bless same-sex intercourse.

A New Approach

However, simply repeating biblical truth (no matter how strong our exegesis or how sound our theology), listening to two millennia of church history, and dialoguing carefully with other Christians everywhere are not enough. We need a substantially new approach.

For starters, we must do whatever it takes to nurture a generation of Christian men and women who keep their marriage vows and model healthy family life.

Second, we need to find ways to love and listen to gay people, especially gay Christians, in a way that most of us have not done.

In addition to living faithful marriages and engaging in loving conversation, I believe evangelicals must take the lead in a cluster of additional vigorous activities related to gay people.

We ought to take the lead in condemning and combating verbal or physical abuse of gay people.

We need much better teaching on how evangelical parents should respond if children say they are gay. Christian families should *never* reject a child, throw her out of their home, or refuse to see him if a child announces that he is gay. One can and should disapprove of unbiblical behavior without refusing to love and cherish a child who engages in it. Christian families should be the most loving places for children—even when they disagree with and act contrary to what parents believe. Please, God, may we never hear another story of evangelical parents rejecting children who "come out of the closet."

We ought to develop model programs so that our congregations are known as the best place in the world for gay and questioning youth (and adults) to seek God's will in a context that embraces, loves, and listens rather than shames, denounces, and excludes. Surely, we can ask the Holy Spirit to show us how to teach and nurture biblical sexual practice without ignoring, marginalizing, and driving away from Christ those who struggle with biblical norms.

Our evangelical churches should be widely known as places where people with a gay orientation can be open about their orientation and feel truly welcomed and embraced. Of course, Christians who engage in unbiblical sexual practices (whether heterosexual or gay Christians) should be discipled (and disciplined) by the church and not allowed to be leaders or members in good standing if they persist in their sin. (The same should be said for those who engage in unbiblical practices of any kind, including greed and racism.) However, Christians who openly acknowledge a gay orientation but commit themselves to celibacy should be eligible for any role in the church that their spiritual gifts suggest.

Imagine the impact if evangelical churches were widely known to be the best place in the world to find love, support, and full affirmation of gifts if one is an openly, unabashedly gay, celibate Christian.

I have no illusions that this approach will be easy. To live this way will be highly countercultural—contrasting both with our society at large and our own past history. Above all, it will require patience. Restoring our compromised witness on the biblical vision for marriage will be a matter of generations, not a few years. But if evangelicals can choose this countercultural, biblical way for several generations, we may regain our credibility to speak to the larger society. I hope and pray that the Lord of the church and the world will weave love, truth, and fidelity out of the tangled strands of tragedy, tradition, and failure we have inherited—and that the next generation will be wise and faithful leaders in that task.

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What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality

One night I was reading the stories of people who had left the church because they thought God hated them simply because they were attracted to the same sex. I was so overcome with emotion that I put the book down, got alone in another room, fell to my knees and wept. The pain of these men and women for whom Jesus died was palpable and heartbreaking.

Could it be that we have been misinterpreting Scripture when it comes to their salvation? Could it be that there is some new understanding of the Bible that would allow us to affirm committed, same-sex relationships?

If not, does that mean that we tell a 15 year-old girl who identifies as lesbian, "If you want to follow Jesus, you'll have to be celibate for the rest of your life, never enjoying the companionship of a spouse and abstaining from sex for life"? Do we tell her, "If you do want to be married, you'll have to find a way to be attracted to men"? Is that the good news of the gospel?

A spate of books, videos, articles and blogs would tell us that, indeed, that is not the gospel and that the good news of Jesus is that you can follow Him and enjoy a committed, homosexual relationship too. And some of the authors of these books, videos, articles and blogs claim to be committed Christians themselves.

How do we sort this out?

It's really not that difficult. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105). It is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12-13).

If we will humble ourselves before the Lord, keeping our focus on Jesus and asking the Father to give us His heart for those who identify as LGBT, letting the unequivocal testimony of Scripture guide us, we will find clarity.

So what does the Word of God say about homosexual practice?

Here are five simple truths that will help separate truth from error and biblical revelation from emotion. (For those wanting a more in-depth treatment, please see my newest book, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*)

1) The testimony of Scripture remains unchanged: The Bible forbids homosexual practice.

It's clear that the vast majority of those who have changed their views on what the Bible says about homosexuality and now believe in "gay Christianity" have done so based on either their own same-sex desires and attractions or their interaction with "gay Christians" (or with any gay or lesbian person who challenges their assumptions).

In other words, they have not changed their thinking based on study of the Scriptures alone, since no new textual, archeological, sociological, anthropological or philological discoveries have been made in the last 50 years that would cause us to read any of these biblical texts differently.

Put another way, it is not that we have gained some new insights into what the biblical text means based on the study of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Instead, people's interaction with the LGBT community has

caused them to understand the biblical text differently. This means that, rather than interpreting their sexuality through the lens of the Scriptures, they are interpreting the Scriptures through the lens of their sexuality. This is a guaranteed path to deception.

The Word of God, which represents His heart and will for His creation, is absolutely clear on the subject, prohibiting all forms of homosexual practice. This is so clear that a number of leading gay and lesbian theologians acknowledge that they can only justify "gay Christianity" by rejecting the full authority of Scripture.

2) The Bible is a heterosexual book.

Gay theologians often make reference to the so-called "clobber passages" in the Scriptures, by which they mean the main verses the church has used to clobber them over the head with the Bible.

They raise two main arguments against the use of these verses.

First, they claim that the verses have been mistranslated, misinterpreted or misused and so, in reality, these Scriptures do not prohibit monogamous, committed, homosexual relationships. Yet they cannot offer any new evidence to back this claim, since none exists.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, they point out that out of more than 31,000 verses in the Bible, there are between six and eight "clobber passages" consisting of a total of less than 25 verses.

How important can it actually be? And why does the church make such a big deal about something that God's Word hardly addresses? Isn't this evidence of homophobic attitudes in the church rather than a careful representation of God's heart as expressed in His Word?

My friend Larry Tomzcak, an author and cultural commentator, offers a helpful illustration that puts the so-called "clobber passages" in a larger context.

Let's say you buy a new cookbook featuring healthy dessert recipes, none of which use sugar. In the introduction to the book, the author explains her reasons for avoiding sugar products, telling you that you will find sumptuous, sweet dessert recipes, but all without sugar. And so, throughout the rest of the book, the word *sugar* is not found a single time.

Would it be right to conclude that avoiding sugar was not important to the author? To the contrary, it was so important that every single recipe in the book makes no mention of sugar.

It is exactly the same when it comes to the Bible and homosexuality.

There are a few, very strong, very clear, references to homosexual practice—every one of them decidedly negative—and then not a single reference to homosexual practice throughout the rest of the Bible. It is not part of God's "recipe" for humanity.

Throughout the Word, the only relationships that were acceptable in God's sight or considered normal for society were heterosexual relationships, and so homosexual practice was either irrelevant (because it had nothing to do with the God-ordained relationships of marriage and family and society) or, if mentioned, explicitly condemned.

To give just one example out of hundreds, when a gay couple reads the Word and they come to Paul's words in Ephesians 5:22, 25, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," they cannot possibly relate to those words the way a heterosexual couple relates to them, since they do not have a true husband-wife relationship.

Yet those are the only kinds of romantic and sexual relationships that God speaks of, and that is the only kind of marriage He recognizes or blesses: a man and woman coming together in a lifetime commitment before Him.

3) Gender complementarity is of foundational importance.

Despite recent attempts to downplay this truth, male-female complementarity is part of God's foundational design.

As we see in Genesis 1-2, it is out of Adam that God forms Eve, the two of them uniquely complementing each other, to the point that when Adam sees his helper and counterpart, he exclaims, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [Hebrew *'ishah*], because she was taken out of Man [*'ish]*" (Gen. 2:23).

As Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham notes, "In ecstasy man bursts into poetry on meeting his perfect helpmeet."

And this is what we cannot miss: It is because the woman was taken out of the man that the very next verse says this: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

Genesis is teaching us that because the woman was taken out of the man, the two are now joined back together as one in marital union, each one uniquely complementing the other. And notice: There's not a word here yet about reproduction or procreation, simply about union (even if procreation is the presupposed outcome).

Only a man and a woman can be joined (rejoined!) together in this way.

A man plus a man or a woman plus a woman cannot possibly share the same union as a man and a woman, since they do not share the essential of fundamental sameness and difference.

To rephrase the famous axiom of John Gray, namely, that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, Mars + Mars or Venus + Venus cannot ever equal Mars + Venus.

And in the words of a man who lived as a homosexual all his life (he's now past 70) but has recently found the Lord, "Even an atheist can understand the lack of anatomical complementarity and therefore biological purpose in male-to-male or female-to-female sexuality."

4) Jesus knew exactly what was inside people, including their "sexual orientation."

We are told today that biblical authors did not understand sexual orientation and that they had no concept of committed, long-term same-sex relationships. What the biblical authors rejected, we are told, was man-boy relationships, or male prostitution, or homosexual promiscuity.

All these sinful practices were certainly rejected, but biblical authors like Paul were certainly aware of long-term, male-male relationships.

More importantly, Hebrews 4:13 states that "no creature is hidden from [God's] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." And it is this God who inspired the writers of the Scriptures. Are gay theologians willing to say that the Lord Himself didn't understand modern-day, still-evolving concepts like "sexual orientation"?

And are they willing to say that the Lord Jesus, who literally looked into the hearts and souls of human beings—John 2:25 says that He knew what was in man—didn't understand that certain people were "gay"? We're not talking about the writers of Scripture understanding modern science. We're talking about them—including Jesus Himself—understanding human nature.

To everyone who professes to be a gay Christian, I ask you to get alone with God and ask yourself, "Did God create and design me to be with the same-sex or the opposite sex?"

5) The gospel brings good news to homosexual men and women.

Gay theologians tell us that the traditional gospel message is a "bad tree," bringing forth the bad fruit of depression, apostasy and even suicide among gay men and women.

To the contrary, the message of the gospel brings forgiveness, freedom, hope and deliverance, as countless thousands of ex-gays can attest, by which I mean followers of Jesus who no longer practice homosexuality. Some of them have even become heterosexual, but even those who have not found a change in their sexual desires have found wholeness and satisfaction in the Lord.

In the words of Sam Allberry, a British pastor who is still same-sex attracted but is living a celibate, holy life: "Every Christian is called to costly sacrifice. Denying yourself does not mean tweaking your behavior here and there. It is saying 'No' to your deepest sense of who you are, for the sake of Christ. To take up a cross is to declare your life (as you have known it) forfeit. It is laying down your life for the very reason that your life, it turns out, is not yours at all. It belongs to Jesus. He made it. And through His death he has bought it."

Allberry is frequently asked, "But isn't it harder for someone who is gay?"

His answer is clear: "The gospel demands everything of all of us. If someone thinks the gospel has somehow slotted into their life quite easily, without causing any major adjustments to their lifestyle or aspirations, it is likely that they have not really started following Jesus at all. And just as the cost is the same for all of us, so too are the blessings." (For more from Allberry, read *Is God Anti-Gay?*)

To every reader who is same-sex attracted, I encourage you not to define yourself by your desires but to put all your effort into knowing the Lord and finding intimacy with Him one day at a time, not rewriting the Bible to suit your sexual attractions but casting yourself on God's goodness and mercy. You will find Him to be absolutely trustworthy, totally understanding and more than enough to meet your every need.

Let us, then, not waver in our biblical stance, knowing that is the truth that sets people free (John 8:31-32).

Michael L. Brown *is author of* Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality *and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show* The Line of Fire on the Salem Radio Network. *He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience. Follow him at* AskDrBrown *on Facebook or at* @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.

10 Theses about Christianity and Homosexuality

I was recently asked to present a short talk about Christianity and homosexuality at The Nines. Below is a summary of that talk. You can view the video here. Make sure to watch Dustin's video below as well for a powerful testimony.

Here are the 10 theses I presented about Christianity and homosexuality:

1. The point is really not homosexuality; the point is the Lordship of Jesus.

We're not the first generation to be offended by some biblical teaching. If you had been alive in Charleston in 1851, you'd find the Bible's teaching on the equality of the races offensive. Muslims today find the Bible's teaching on forgiveness for adulterers abhorrent. The Bible is an "equal opportunity offender." The question we have to ask is, "Do we get to judge the word of God does it judge us?" *Jesus wasn't a politician who gave us a platform to ratify; he was a Lord who commanded us to obey.*

2. Our stance on this issue may be one of the most important tests of faithfulness in our generation.

Martin Luther said that the courage of the soldier is tested in how well he stands where the battle is the hottest, not in how brave he postures where the battle is no longer being fought. It takes little courage to decry the evils of racism or the greed of Wall Street. Almost anyone would say "Amen" to decrying those. Our faithfulness to Jesus is tested in whether we maintain His decrees in things our culture finds offensive.

3. The loss of gender identity has devastating consequences for society.

For more information on this, see Kathy Keller in *The Meaning of Marriage* or Wayne Grudem in *Politics According to the Bible*, or books by Mark Yarhouse. They explain why homosexuality is harmful to the individual, children, and society.

4. God loves the homosexual.

I don't know too many people who would object to this, but is this what people "carry away" from our teaching? Remember, *error is often just truth out of proportion*. Do people leave our talks on this issue thinking more about the sinfulness of homosexuality or more about the love of God for the homosexual?

5. God doesn't send people to hell for homosexuality.

Here's how I know that: *He doesn't send people to heaven for heterosexuality*. He sends people to hell for self-rule and self-righteousness. This includes ***both*** the homosexual who rejects God's words for his own preferences, and the self-righteous churchgoer who thinks he's fundamentally better than the homosexual. God gives the gospel to people who recognize their sinfulness and fall upon His mercy in repentance and faith. *When we treat homosexuals as beyond redemption, we lie about the gospel.*

6. We speak as redeemed sinners, not saints.

The gospel leads us to speak with deep humility and without a drop of hostility. We are not waging a war against homosexuals; Jesus fought and won the only war that matters—the war against sin and death. And

he fought it for all of us, homosexual or not. This means that judgmentalism, hatred, and exclusion have no place in our demeanor. The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and that includes our gay neighbors.

7. Just because you're ticking people off doesn't mean you are doing something wrong.

People got so mad at John the Baptist for preaching against open marriage that they cut his head off. Jesus didn't say, "John, you are putting obstacles in my way. If you'd just stick with poverty, corporate greed, and the need to recycle, you'd make it easy for me." No, he said that John was the greatest prophet ever to live.

8. Avoid pat answers or simplistic statements.

A lot of harm has been done by Christian leaders who speak from ignorance, saying things like, "All homosexuals have been abused." This sort of thing brings shame on our testimony. Again, Mark Yarhouse has a lot of helpful resources here.We should also recognize that sexual struggles are not limited to men—women struggle with homosexuality and pornography too. We tend to talk about these issues as if it only had to do with guys, and when we do we make a lot of women feel like their struggles make them completely irregular and unclean.

9. We can and should be friends with people who are homosexuals.

Jesus befriended sinners, *starting with us*. So we welcome people to our church—and into our lives—who are homosexuals. Homosexuals are made in the image of God, and they honor us by being willing to be friends with us! While we can't stand in "Christian fellowship" with someone who openly embraces what we believe put Him on the cross (1 Cor 5:1-13), we can love and befriend them.

We recognize that many homosexuals are hurting, and if you are involved at all in your community you know that. Many of them need the touch of grace that Jesus extended to us. When our homosexual neighbors are in pain, we are to be the first to befriend them, protect them, and to lay down our lives for them.

10. Sexual ethics are not the center of Christianity.

The gospel is. C.S. Lewis said that if they stumbled over the sexual teaching of the Bible, they should "punt" them for a while. Instead, study Jesus. If you conclude, as I have, that He is Lord, then you can and should surrender to Him in all things, whether you agree with Him or not. Take time to consider that first. Don't be distracted by secondary issues.

Sexual mores were not the center of Jesus' message, and they are not the center of ours. Start with what Jesus did for you on the cross, and then move your way out from that to the less important matters. Jesus welcomed into His presence all manner of people struggling to figure out who He is, and we welcome them to our church as well.

(http://betweenthetimes.com/index.php/2013/05/30/10-theses-about-christianity-and-homosexuality/)

J. D. Greear

A Christ-like Response to Homosexuality

A Christ-like Response to Homosexuality - How do we be faithful to the unchanging truth of Scripture as we understand it and relevant to a dramatically changing culture as we see it?

By Stuart Briscoe

A little over a hundred years ago England was rocked by a major scandal. Oscar Wilde, the flamboyant, iconoclastic playwright, was charged with "gross indecency" – a Victorian way of referring to his homosexual liaison with Lord Alfred Douglas, the son of the Marquess of Queensberry - and sentenced to two years of "hard labor."

His painful experience in prison and the anguish and sorrow he suffered there are vividly portrayed in his "A Ballad of Reading Gaol" and "De Profundis." He wrote, "Prison makes a man a pariah. I, and such as I am, have hardly any right to air and sun. Our presence taints the pleasures of others." Humiliated, ostracized, and broken, on his release after serving his sentence, he left England never to return.

Fifty years later, at the age of 17, I spent part of my first paycheck purchasing a pair of brown suede shoes. My mother, horrified, announced with considerable force, "I always said no son of mine would ever wear suede shoes." When I inquired what she had against that brand of footwear she replied, "Homosexuals wear them!" To the best of my knowledge that was the first time I ever heard my mother refer to "homosexuals" and so I asked her, "Why do you dislike homosexuals ?" and she replied, "I don't know and I don't want to know!" There is no doubt that my mother, a godly upright lady, had a visceral reaction against certain people she knew little about, but I'm sure she would never have wished to see them treated like Oscar Wilde.

Attitudes were changing.

Fast forward another 30 years to a dinner conversation with my teenage children. The topic, to my amazement, was whether or not one of their high school teachers was "gay." As a small girl my daughter had once asked in horror over some incident or other, "What would Gwandma say!?" Listening to my children on that occasion I wondered the same thing! In a handful of decades the recognition of the homosexual lifestyle and varying degrees of acceptance of it had gone through rapid change and I'm not sure how my mother and her generation would have coped.

Now my three children have children of their own – teenagers and young adults – and the general consensus among many young people in their age group seems to be that homosexual proclivities, preferences, and lifestyles are with us, they're not going away and so we should ensure that everybody, regardless of their "sexual preferences" ought to be treated equally. That, they see, as a right. So if homosexuals want to be "married" we should change the definition of marriage to accommodate them. If they want to serve in the military they should not be deprived of the privilege. If they would like to be bishops in the Anglican Church or ministers in some other mainline church, why should their "sexual preference" stop them?

A couple of years ago on a vacation cruise to Antarctica we met many interesting fellow adventure passengers, including two sharp young Wall Street professionals who told us they were on their honeymoon. Did I say they were both *male*? The majority of the passengers were enthusiastic in their congratulations to the "happy couple" and they were quickly afforded celebrity status.

"The times they are a' changing."

Undoubtedly the hardest moment in my 30-year pastorate arrived when one of my young associates was accused of improper behavior with some of his charges. Tragically, he responded by committing suicide. The event generated an enormous amount of publicity and I received a huge amount of mail. One letter demanded that I publicly accept responsibility for the young man's death because of my "homophobia." The letter was signed by two of the leading members of the homosexual community in our city, so I wrote back and requested a meeting with them to discuss their accusation and demands. They agreed to meet and on arrival in my office said, "We hope you're loaded for bear, Stuart. We are!!" I assured them I had no interest in fighting with them and in fact I had come unarmed! We talked for about a-half-an-hour concerning my perceived homophobia and their perceptions (actually assumptions) of what had transpired. Slowly, the heat disappeared from the discussion and light made a welcome appearance. During a pause I said quietly, "I would love to hear your stories because I see pain on your faces and anger in your hearts." To my surprise both men began to cry and one of them said, "Those are the first kind words I've ever heard from an evangelical." Their stories were sad and they told them gladly – delighted someone really wanted to know. But their words troubled me – not least as I heard of their experiences at the hands of professing believers.

After I had listened to their sad stories they listened to "my story." I explained to them the dilemma facing evangelical Christians such as myself. I acknowledged that they saw me as unloving, prejudiced, and homophobic – without knowing me - but I added that it would be helpful if they could see that evangelicals have a problem. Not that there is anything new about the problem – it's just more acute in the modern era. *It's the age-old problem of how to be faithful to the unchanging truth of Scripture as we understand it and relevant to a dramatically changing culture as we see it*. Or, more specifically, "*how to love the sinner and hate the sin?"* Incidentally they saw this as a cliché and dismissed it! But they were willing to accept they were sinners because I freely admitted I was one too. However, they were not as willing to see their homosexual behavior as a contravention of God's principles. And they said that loving the sinner and hating the sin looked to them more like hating who they were as well as what they did!

For some believers and unbelievers alike, the problem is resolved by simply changing unchanging truth to conform to the contemporary *zeitgeist*. The rationale usually being that love is all that matters and the only loving thing to do is to treat the homosexual person as I would wish to be treated myself. That means giving them all the "rights" that others enjoy and regarding their lifestyle as valid as any other and perfectly normative. And as there is no such thing as objective truth - things always change - there cannot be an unchanging truth. On the other hand, most conservative believers are convinced that the Bible is true in all that it affirms, so it in no way allows the homosexual lifestyle to be regarded as normative. In fact, it describes it as a gross perversion of divine standards of sexual behavior. I genuinely cared about these men's temporal and eternal well-being, but I could not in good conscience go against what I saw as the clear teaching of Scripture. That in a nutshell was my problem! I told them that they should respect my right to hold certain convictions as I must respect their right. God, after all, gives us all the right to be wrong! But neither of us had the right to denigrate or demean the other because we are all created in the divine image, all are fallen, but all are redeemable. In fact what we have in common far outweighs the differences upon which we so frequently major.

By this time – far from hunting bear – we were making a genuine attempt to bear one another's burdens. Their burden was their bitterness towards believers whom they believed had abused and denigrated them; mine was the burden of loving people realistically with whose lifestyle I disagreed profoundly.

Eventually they asked me two questions. "Would we be welcome in your church?" I replied immediately, "Of course you would be welcome provided you were willing to observe appropriate behavior in a place of worship." Then they asked – and I'd been expecting this one –"Would you employ a practicing gay on your staff." My reply was equally prompt, "Of course not. For the same reason I would not knowingly employ an adulterous hetersexual, a single person addicted to pornography, or a young couple cohabiting outside wedlock, because they all contravene God's standards of sexual behavior that we expect from a person accepting leadership responsibility in the church." They seemed satisfied with my response and after welcoming my suggestion that I pray with and for them, they left with lots to think about.

Me too.

A good case could be made that Oscar Wilde was treated inhumanely and fortunately attitudes have changed. I'm glad about that. In the days when suede shoes were suspect it appears that attitudes were divorced from understanding and some steps have been made in the right direction in this regard as well. That's good. And while "Gwandma" would have died rather than discuss the high school teacher with her grandchildren, but for them the topic was on the table for discussion. For my mother's generation it was swept under the carpet in the fond hope it would go away. The modern way is much better. But joining in the celebrations of the honeymooning couple? Unfortunately, it's not something I can do.

So here's my position on this tricky issue.

1. *I do not know what causes homosexual tendencies*. Some instances suggest perversion of some kind; the more difficult ones suggest inversion on which there seems to be no agreement with regard to causes. Tendencies may be beyond our control; acting on them is our responsibility.

2. *I do not believe that homosexual behavior can be regarded as normative when, along with other types of sexual behavior, it falls outside the divinely ordained confines of monogamous, heterosexual marriage*.

3. *I believe that the call to "love our neighbor" obviously applies to those whose lifestyles we find unacceptable for the simple reason that those who live this way are loved by God and they share our humanity*.

4. *This being the case acts of civility, friendship, and kindness should be normative for Christians and actions and attitudes that suggest otherwise should be rejected and avoided*.

5. Human sexuality is such a powerful dynamic and is subject to such exploitation and misrepresentation in contemporary society that the church must speak out with love, grace, understanding, and encouragement on the subject.

6. *The aggressive agendas of some homosexual groups – and their allies – are such that their methods and tactics are not above reproach*. The temptation is for the church - often the target of their aggression - to respond in like manner. This should be avoided at all costs.

7. *Change comes in various packages*. It may be for the better or the worse. A knee jerk reaction against it or a headlong rush to embrace it are equally misguided. Some things we must change, others we dare not change. We need wisdom to know the difference and courage to do what is necessary.

http://www.justbetweenus.org/christ-like-response-to-homosexuality

COMING OUT STRAIGHT by Bruce James

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Can a person change his or her sexual orientation, or is it something you are born with, something that you have no power to do anything about? A growing army of psychotherapists, counselors, and psychiatrists are saying, "You can change!" and because of it many of them are finding themselves targets of hatred and discrimination. Take, for example, Columbia University psychiatrist Dr. Robert Spitzer. In 1973, Spitzer was the primary voice that convinced the American Psychiatric Association that homosexuality was not a disorder but an orientation which some are born with.

In 1999, Dr. Spitzer proposed a symposium on reparative therapy. Haven't heard of that term? Simply put, it's an approach to counseling based on the premise that individuals can change their sexual orientation, specifically that those who are gay can go straight.

And what happened to Spitzer? Count out religious conversion, because Spitzer is an atheist; but Spitzer conducted extensive research demonstrating that people can and do change. Of those who were in his study, he says, "It's clear to me that many of them have sustained very significant changes." And how were his findings received? They were rejected, and he was treated as a traitor who had crossed lines to the camp of the enemy. Now he's blacklisted by most mental health and professional associations. He's convinced it is politics over science and he disdains it.

Spitzer isn't alone, either. Take, for example, psychotherapist Richard Cohen, who is now married and the father of three children. Cohen, a former homosexual who struggled with same-sex attractions, desperately tried to find professionals who could help him. Finding none he eventually became a psychotherapist himself. Eventually he changed, and, feeling that he understands the problem facing many, has helped hundred of others to change as well. In his book *Coming Out Straight* he tells how his life changed. "No one is born with same-sex attractions," he writes, adding, "therefore, anyone can choose to change. What was learned can be unlearned."

In my possession is a set of gold cuff links. One of them is monogrammed with my initials and the other is a small watch. I cherish these--not because of their intrinsic value, but what they represent. You see, the cuff links were a gift of a friend who listened to Guidelines on the radio, and became convinced that I would listen to him and could help him. After practicing a gay lifestyle for more than thirty years, his life had become more and more lonely, and he longed for relationships that would embrace children and families.

For months he boarded a plane on Fridays and flew five hundred miles to keep an appointment with me. And what happened? He changed! No, better put, God changed him and his desires. No, it didn't happen overnight or in a month, but it did eventually happen.

My time presently doesn't allow my working with many people, but I can tell you for a fact that I have seen at least five individuals who considered themselves to have been born gay, find God and change their sexual orientation. Some are married and with families, but all of them eventually were restored and became renewed emotionally and spiritually. Columbia's Robert Spitzer is an atheist and he believes people can change. I, for one, believe that God, the Holy Spirit, is the agent of behavioral change, and that what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, a society that embraced the gay lifestyle much as it is accepted today, is still true. Paul observed, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2Corinthians 5:17). That's reparative therapy, the kind that helps you come out straight and set your sights on heaven's gate. It's the original kind.
Resource reading: 2 Corinthians 5.