

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

A BIBLICAL PARADIGM FOR MINISTERING TO THOSE IMPACTED BY HOMOSEXUALITY

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Abstract: Homosexuality is no longer relegated to whispers and avoidance; it has become part and parcel of almost every sphere of life today. In order for those who classify themselves as “Evangelical” to be prepared in our day and time to minister effectively and Biblically to those impacted by homosexuality, it is necessary to properly define our options and to establish a baseline from which to respond. This paper will ask and answer five foundational questions: 1) What is homosexuality? 2) What do Society and personal experience say about homosexuality? 3) What do the Scriptures teach about homosexuality? 4) What do we believe to be true about homosexuality? 5) What do we do about those within our fellowship who have been impacted by SSA and gender-confusion? The paper seeks to establish a Biblical paradigm for the 21st Century while offering practical approaches being employed successfully today. It concludes with a call to balance grace and truth as we evangelize and disciple those in our midst affected by homosexuality.

3 Options for Believers

1. Viable Alternative Lifestyle
2. Demon Possession
3. Conduct Disorder

Questions

- I. What is homosexuality?
- II. What do our society and my personal experience say about homosexuality?
- III. What do the Scriptures teach about homosexuality?
- IV. What do we believe to be true about homosexuality?
- V. What do we do about those within our fellowship who have been impacted by SSA and gender confusion?

I. What is Homosexuality? Words Matter

A Simple Definition: Homosexuality is:

- Same-Sex Attraction —SSA (SGA/SSP/SGP).
- “An enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to members of the same gender.” (APA, “Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality”)

Breaking it Down: Homosexuality is:

- Multi-causal
- Developmental
- 3-Tiered

Multi-Causal (Environmental, relational, early sexualization, temperament, parental bonds)

- Social/Environmental
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Overly Sensitive
- Same-Gender Detachment
- Poor Peer Attachment
- Abuse
- Puberty

3 TIERS: Homosexuality is 3-tiered; it has three different “levels” or dimensions.

- I. Condition/orientation
- II. Behavior
- III. Identity

3 Tiers — Tier 1

- CONDITION/ORIENTATION
 - Involuntary; “discovered”
 - Appears early and is deeply ingrained

3 Tiers — Tier 2

- BEHAVIOR
 - Sexual involvement with a member of the same gender
 - Can be actual or vicarious

3 Tiers — Tier 3

- IDENTITY
 - Primary identifying life characteristic
 - Acceptance of homosexuality as normal and morally correct

Words Matter

- Normal
 - Inborn or genetic
 - God-ordained
 - Morally acceptable/promotable

A Word About Gender

- Gender is a biological reality
- Gender is a core identifier
- Our culture has exacerbated the issue

A Word About G.I.D.

- Gender Identity Disorder affects hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions
- GID is more complex and complicated than SSA
- There is no quick fix

II. What do Society and personal experience say about homosexuality? Our Context

Worldview Matters: Our Anthropology

- What is man?
- Who is man?
- What is the purpose of man?

Worldview Matters: Our Theology

- Does God exist?
- Whose version of God is correct?
- What does God require?

Worldview Matters: Our Morality

- Who or what determines right and wrong, good and bad?
- Is there a transcendent “ought”, or are we left to self-determine?
- Do we accept the mores of others?

Fact or Fiction? On average, 10% of the population is homosexual, with a much higher number being male than female.

- **FICTION:** The last part is true, but the first part, based upon US Census numbers, is less than 1% of the population self-identifies as homosexual and 3% (+/1) of households

Fact or Fiction? Homosexuality is genetic. Researchers have found the equivalent of a “gay gene”.

- **FICTION:** No scientifically accepted, replicable studies exist that clearly demonstrate that homosexuality is genetic.

Fact or Fiction? Jesus never addressed homosexuality and the Bible never teaches anything against healthy, loving same-sex unions.

- **FICTION:** There is a great deal that the Bible says about homosexual conduct.

Fact or Fiction? Homosexuality is a personal matter and it really isn’t anyone else’s business.

- **FICTION:** The impact of sexual activity on those involved has always been a matter of responsible concern to society.

Our Context

The general context that we are living in today accepts and affirms homosexuality as normal, good, and right. This view is repeatedly endorsed in the media, entertainment, music, and literature—even that of our children.

Every Story Relates

Like divorce, homosexuality touches every person in our society.

- “My [loved one] is gay; how can I say that they are condemned by God?”

Stage of Truth

Sources of Truth

1. Tradition
2. Reason
3. Experience
4. Emotions
5. General Revelation
6. Special Revelation (Scripture)

Biblical Stage of Truth: 3 Options for Believers

1. What the Culture Says
2. What my Experience Says
3. What the Scriptures Say

III. What do the Scriptures teach about homosexuality? The Truth

A Few Passages

Old Testament

Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

New Testament

Romans 1:22-29

- o Very clearly speaks about men being sexually intimate with men and women being sexually intimate with women.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

- o Those engaged in sexual immorality (homosexual conduct specifically named) is part of a list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Other passages included Leviticus 20:23; 1 Timothy 1:9-11; Jude 1:7.)

The Scriptures

1. Creation/Created Intent
 - a. Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 23-24
2. The Destruction of Sodom
 - a. Genesis 19:4-9
3. The Levitical Law
 - a. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13
4. Paul on "Natural" and "Unnatural"
 - a. Romans 1:26-27
5. Paul and 'Arsenokoite'
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10;
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:9-10

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 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.

False Dichotomies

- o Many in the Church believe that there is a hotter place in Hell for homosexuals than for most other sinners and that no one can be Christian and gay.
- o Many in the Church believe that the opposite of homosexuality is heterosexuality.

Resolution

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (*John 3:36*)

The Wrath of God

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (*Romans 1:18*)

2 Questions

1. Can you be gay and be a Christian?
2. Do gays go to hell?

2 Better Questions

3. Can you be guilty of any of the list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and be a Christian?
4. If you are any one or all of those things, will you go to hell?

IV. What do we believe to be true about homosexuality? Our Paradigm

You Decide

- As a part of the Body of Christ, each fellowship must determine where it will come down on these matters.
- Will we accept the Scriptural teaching about homosexuality and respond honestly and compassionately?
- Will we respond as the culture demands?

Ideas Have Consequences

- When we take any stand, we set up “dominoes of consequence”.
- Paying close attention to the last falling domino is critical.

V. What do we do about those within our fellowship who have been impacted by SSA and gender-confusion? Our Response

Our Response

- Must be Biblical: Holds fast to the clear teaching of Scripture
- Must be Christ-like: Combines grace and truth
- Must be authentic: Combines humility and compassion

ACTION STEPS: A CHURCH PREPARED FOR MINISTRY

Pray, Plan, Act

- **Pray** for opportunities;
- **Plan** for the wounded to come;
- **Act** with bold love and no compromise.

3 Groups: Militant, Moderate, Struggling

Militant

- Aggressive agenda
- Intolerant of opposition
- Raging
- Theatrical

Moderate

- Socially responsible
- Morally upright
- Private
- Defensive

Struggler

- Deep shame and guilt
- Confused about “really right” and “really wrong”
- Often rejected and defensive

Ministry Philosophy: Needs to be defined and clearly articulated:

- Statement of Faith
- Theological Distinctives
- Ministry Foci

Ministry Culture: Needs to be defined and clearly articulated

- Who are we?
- What is our mission?
- How will we live this out with same-sex attracted and the gender confused?

EDUCATION—Who

- Leadership
- Congregation
- Specific Ministry Personnel

EDUCATION—What

- Standard and Pro-Gay Theology
- Studies/science
- Causalities (Ministering to the underlying brokenness is the key.)
- Current laws and pending legislation

Myths

- Homosexuality is the worst sin of all;
- Homosexuality is a choice;
- Homosexuality is about sex;
- Homosexuals are pedophiles;
- Heterosexuality is the opposite of homosexuality.

Evangelize & Disciple

- Develop a relationship:
 - Invite to your home;
 - Invite to activities;
 - Invest regular personal time;
 - Pray with often—no matter the issue.

Evangelize & Disciple

- Be vulnerable:
 - Share your own challenges;
 - Admit to doubts and ignorance;
 - Laugh easily;
 - Cry effortlessly;
 - Repent often.

Evangelize & Disciple

- Be focused:
 - Gospel-centric, not issue-centric;
 - Christian vs. non-Christian;
 - Center on Christ-likeness;
 - Be fearless.

Be A Safe Place

- There are Christians in your midst who
 - Struggle with unwanted SSA
 - Have a friend or family member who self-identifies as gay or has SSA

Be Unashamed

- Speak openly and without ridicule about homosexuality
 - Helps them not feel isolated
 - Helps them feel loved in spite of their struggles

Be Available

- Listen openly and courageously
 - Let them tell about all of their struggles
 - No pat answers, no Christian-ese

Be a Toucher

- Non-sexualized touch shouts "Acceptance!"
 - Hand on shoulder, hand shake, even a hug
 - Ask permission first - help establish and maintain safe boundaries

Be Accessible

- When they open up, they need to know they haven't been rejected
 - Call them, send a card or note
 - Invite and accept their phone calls
 - Be seen with them

Be Bold

- They may not even be attracted to you
 - SSA does not mean "Attracted to Everyone of the Same Sex"
 - Homosexuality is not about sex, it's about relationship

Be Ready

- Healing is a process, not an event
 - They may even act out more before the real healing comes
 - As long as the struggle continues, there is hope

Be Encouraging

- Allow them to be involved
 - Attend Bible studies, small groups, prayer teams, church activities
 - Allow them to serve as they are gifted to serve

Pray, Plan, Act

- Bold Love
- Authentic Relationships
- Courageous Listening
- Be Consistent
- Be Patient

Resources

Books

The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics; Robert A. J. Gagnon

Dr. Gagnon offers the most thorough analysis to date of the biblical texts and ancient extra-biblical resources relating to homosexuality. His book is the most sophisticated and convincing examination of the biblical data for our time.

The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality: A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction; Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche

Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche have personal experience dealing with this problem. Joe is a former homosexual who found a new life in Christ. He is a past president of Exodus International, a network of Christian ministries dedicated to equipping Churches to minister to homosexuals. Nancy's husband was secretly living as a homosexual who contracted AIDS, while her daughter, actress Anne Heche, was for a time, the gay partner of Ellen DeGeneres.

Destiny Bridge: Frank Worthen

Destiny Bridge is an amazing account of the life of Frank Worthen (the father of the almost 40-year-old "ex-gay" movement/ Exodus International) and God's deep love and concern for those who struggle with same-sex attraction. Frank recounts his role in the birth and growth of the "ex-gay" movement, which began in the 70's and continues to this day. His honest description of the movement's successes, failures, and hardships paints a realist picture of the fledging movement, which has strengthened and grown over the last 45 years. Frank helped found "Restored Hope Network" in 2012, founded in response to dramatic changes in the doctrinal stance of Exodus International.

The Gay Gospel?: How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible; Joe Dallas

In this updated edition of A Strong Delusion, author and counselor Joe Dallas helps readers understand what pro-gay theology is and how to confront it.

Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic, Elizabeth R. Moberly

Presents a psychoanalytic interpretation that shifts the focus of the debate from symptoms to root causes. The crux of Elizabeth Moberly's argument is that 'the homosexual condition involves legitimate developmental needs, the fulfillment of which has been blocked by an underlying ambivalence to members of the same sex'.

My Daddy's Secret; Denise Schick

My Daddy's Secret the sensitive-often heartbreaking-true story of the effects of a father's secret sexual addictions on his family-particularly on his oldest daughter, whom he made his confidante when she was just nine years old.

When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay; Joe Dallas

In this straightforward book, Joe Dallas offers practical counsel, step by step, on how to deal with the many conflicts and emotions parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters or any family member will experience when learning of a loved one's homosexuality. Drawing from his own experience and from his many years of helping families work through this perplexing and unexpected situation, Joe offers scriptural and compassionate advice to both struggling gays and those who love them.

Websites

RestoredHopeNetwork.org | DesertStream.org | RobGagnon.org | ReachTruth.com

PortlandFellowship.com | TruthInLoveVancouver.com | VancouverBible.com

If you would like to schedule a presentation of this material (or any other subject from the list in the bio below) for your group or organization—either in this abbreviated form or in the unabridged version—or if you would like to discuss these matters more fully, please contact me. Our ministry is a charter member of Restored Hope Network and we are well-situated to be either first-hand help or to refer to other well qualified ministries and individuals.

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Pastor Lamb has been involved in pastoral ministry for over twenty-five years. He has extensive experience in Christian ministry, including teaching, conference speaking, and Biblical counseling. Abuse and sexual brokenness are significant areas of his counseling focus. He has pastored and been part of the pastoral team for several churches and speaks at various conferences throughout the country on a variety of subjects.

After completing the Nazarene Bible College Ministries Study Program, he pursued post-graduate studies at Trinity Theological Seminary, Alameda University, and Reformed Theology Seminary, receiving a Master of Theology (Biblical Studies) and a Master of Arts (Biblical Counseling).

Pastor Lamb currently serves as the Teaching Pastor of *Truth in Love Fellowship*, in Vancouver, Washington, and directs their counseling arm, *Truth in Love Biblical Counseling Center*. He has served as the Director of *Vancouver Bible Institute* since its founding in 2004, where he also serves as one of the professors. He is a Certified Biblical Counselor with the *International Association of Biblical Counselors* and is their Area Coordinator (for Washington and Oregon). Pastor Lamb is also a SAFE (Setting Addicts Free Eternally) Certified Leader, and Facilitator Training Specialist (for the curriculum of *Mending the Soul*) with *Door to Grace Ministries*. He brings with him many years of practical experience specific to the needs of the broken.