

# Discussion of Homosexuality

## Introduction

Many Christians and whole churches have lost confidence in the gospel and not truly believed the gospel when it comes to how they think about and respond to homosexuality. Many single out homosexuality as “The sin.” Many have very strong emotional reactions to homosexuality. Often these strong emotional reactions flow out of a deep insecurity, feelings of repulsion, disgust, and threat. These reactions expose a profound unbelief in both the power of the Gospel to change lives and the depth of sin in our hearts. While we encounter people everywhere who struggle with homosexuality, there will likely be a higher percentage of people with this struggle in (our) area. Therefore, we want to think through what our approach to this issue will be at (our church).

## I. Our Approach to Homosexuality

Key discussion points in our approach to homosexuality:

- We will welcome and treat all people with dignity and respect
- We will assume homosexuals are always in our midst
- We will avoid all homophobic speech
- We will repent of our stereotypes and prejudices towards homosexuals
- We will never single out sexual sin as worse than any other
- We will be honest about the sexual sins popular among heterosexuals (promiscuity, fornication, masturbation, pornography, lust, etc.)
- We will focus on the way the Gospel addresses the heart; not focus on behavior
- We will give biblical teaching on sexuality and relationships
- (Our church) will be a place where it is safe to be Christian and homosexual (we won't make “heterosexuality” a form of legalistic righteousness)
- We will take a process, not confrontational approach (homosexuality a lifelong struggle; real change is possible)
- We will acknowledge that everyone is capable of every sin. There is no sinful behavior that given the right circumstances my sinful heart will not adopt.

## II. Biblical rationale for this approach:

### A. Causes or contributing factors to homosexuality:

When we look at the causes or contributing factors to homosexuality, we can discern multiple factors. We must avoid the following simplistic approaches:

- Homosexual feelings and/or orientation are simply the result of a wicked choice to violate God's laws.
- Homosexual feelings and/or orientation are the result of biological factors that determine the person will be homosexual.
- Homosexual feelings and/or orientation are the result of early, profound environmental factors that determine the person will be homosexual.

Instead, we must see homosexuality as the product of a "sin complex" with multiple factors involved. Homosexuality is a complex product of as many as four influences:

- There may be biological factors that pre-dispose a child to more feminine or masculine behavior than is usual for his or her gender.
- There may be family factors which make it very difficult for the child to feel confident in his or her social gender role or which make opposite sex relationships unattractive.
- The child or youth may have been sinned against by others through emotional and/or physical and/or sexual abuse.
- The person either confirms or resists the homosexual feelings through hundreds and thousands of small choices to fantasize, entertain, and act on those desires or not. A person must still be seen as a responsible agent who either confirms or chooses to resist the condition with his/her choices.

### B. Morality

We are also led by Scripture to acknowledge the following concerning the morality of homosexuality:

- Homosexuality is not God's design for human relationships (1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Timothy 1:9–10).
- Homosexuality is learned. This does not mean it is a choice. Very little about our personality is actually the result of our choices, yet nearly all of it is learned. Our personality traits are often the result of our biological makeup, our environment, and our decisions. Is everything about our personalities right because it is learned in this way? Of course not. With difficulty, lots of effort, motivated activity, and hundreds of new choices we can unlearn these negative personality traits and attempt to learn new ones. Similarly, homosexuality is learned and not simply a choice.
- Homosexuality can be changed. The Gospel is the power of God that is able to change anyone. The actual process is no different than the process of change for anything else in the life of a Christian. We expect change to happen through the ordinary work of the Holy Spirit and the means of grace: gospel repentance, faith in the work of Christ, fellowship, growth in character and wisdom, exposure of the depths of sin in our heart, allowing the word of God to dwell in us richly, etc. We do not prescribe dramatic or sudden "deliverances" as the norm.

### C. Identity vs. Orientation

Let's look at another perspective on the process of change. Like with any other sin in our lives, the idolatry of our hearts that is at the root of that sin penetrates deep and shapes our identity. We look to something other than Jesus for our sense of comfort, approval, control, or power. These idols are at the root of all our sinful behaviors, thoughts, and words in part because of the shaping power they have on our identity. When we perceive these idols to be threatened, we become anxious; when someone stands in the way of us achieving them, we feel threatened; we become driven to obtain them at all costs; when we do obtain them they satisfy for a short time but then leave us empty and longing for more; and when we fail to obtain them we become angry. The key to change is to identify these idols in our hearts that motivate our behaviors, thoughts, or words and to repent of them. They cannot promise what they deliver and at root they expose our unbelief that Jesus is all we need.

When we approach homosexuality with this same gospel dynamic, many of our stereotypes and prejudices towards homosexuals or the “sin” of homosexuality is changed. This is a sin that is no different than any other sin lodged in our hearts.

Further, given the complexity of factors and the way we expect change to take place in the lives of believers in general, when we think of homosexuality it is helpful to distinguish identity and orientation. The Gospel can bring change to the homosexual at the level of their identity. In the Gospel, their identity is no longer in being male, female, homosexual, or heterosexual. Rather, we are all now “in Christ” new creations indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The process of change is in part becoming in our daily lives what we are already “in Christ.” This process of change takes time and, as in the case of any sinful patterns in our hearts, will never be “complete” until Christ returns or we die and are present with Him.

Part of the implication of this is that sexual orientation may never change. We all still have sinful bents and sinful patterns that we continue to struggle with. In fact, as we grow in the Gospel, we become more aware of how deep our sin penetrates into our hearts. It is consistent with the way the Gospel brings change in our lives to be a believer and remain homosexual in orientation. Change in the life of a homosexual does not necessarily mean that they must become “heterosexual.” At the same time, understanding homosexuality as not consistent with God’s design for relationships, an orientation to homosexuality does not give a person the “right” to live in a homosexual relationship. It does mean, like it does for any person, that the deep-seated idols of the heart that motivate sinful homosexual relationships and sexual activity need to be uprooted through a lifestyle of repentance and faith. That is why community is so important. It is in community that we learn together to grow as we practice repentance and faith.

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"To suppose that whatever God requireth of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect." JOHN OWEN