



SAME-SEX ATTRACTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Whatever defined us before coming to Christ no longer defines us in Christ. And one day, by His grace, we will be made whole.³

HOMOSEXUALITY

Sexual sin is not a new problem, neither is the issue of homosexuality. But it's easy to see that times have changed. Homosexuality is now championed by the media, cemented into law, and public opinion—especially among younger generations—has turned decidedly in support of it. According to the culture, anyone who continues to defend traditional sexual ethics is on “the wrong side of history.”

There is some good news. Humans have always transgressed the limits of God's design for marriage and sexuality. Despite these challenges, marriage has proved resilient throughout human history. The reason

is simple: Marriage was designed by God to picture the gospel. Biblical sexual ethics may be regarded as both outdated and unloving, but Christians should not be concerned about the way history will regard our fidelity to God's plan for human sexuality. The arc of history is long, and it points in one direction—toward the fulfillment of God's redemptive work in Christ.

As parents, we can confidently tell our children about God's intentions for love and sexuality. We do not need to adjust our views to adhere to the wisdom of the culture, nor do we need to shelter our kids from these cultural realities. Instead, we can help our

kids navigate the challenges related to sexual brokenness by pointing them to the beauty of God's design.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

When we think about the Bible's teaching on human sexuality, we follow the lead of Jesus who affirms the creational design of marriage in Matthew 19:1-10. In that passage, Jesus pointed out that marriage—the union of one man to one woman—was instituted by God and intended to last a lifetime. Marriage itself points to the gospel. God established the institution of marriage to picture the relationship of “Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). God also established marriage so that human beings could experience love and sexual intimacy in ways that are appropriate and honoring to Him (1 Cor. 7:1-9).

Too often we are tempted to wade into conversations about homosexuality or same-sex attraction apart from consideration of the broader biblical teaching on sexuality. Having seen that both sexuality and marriage were designed by God as a part of His plan for humanity, it is then possible to engage the topics of homosexuality and same-sex attraction as issues that deviate from God's overall pattern for sex and sexuality.

Scripture contains explicit commands prohibiting homosexual relations in both the Old and New Testaments.

You are not to sleep with a man as with a woman; it is detestable.

LEVITICUS 18:22

For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged

natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

ROMANS 1:26-27

We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious.

1 TIMOTHY 1:9-10

Concerning homosexuality, the teaching of Scripture is clear. Homosexual relationships are not compatible with God's grander plan for human sexuality. Even so, it is important to remember that discussions about sexuality, even homosexuality, are not primarily about what God prohibits; they are primarily about God's design. We are made to image a holy God, and He has told us how we should live.

IS SAME-SEX ATTRACTION A SPECIAL KIND OF SIN?

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males ... will inherit God's kingdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10

We are all broken sexually because of the fall. But because of cultural pressures, it is sometimes tempting for Christians to draw a distinction between homosexuality and other kinds of sins, even other kinds of sexual sins. Scripture doesn't make this

distinction. Homosexuality is not a special classification of sin. Yes, the Bible specifically addresses homosexuality, but it also speaks vehemently against sexual immorality of all kinds—including fornication, adultery, and lust. We are all guilty in the category of sexual immorality.

When we're talking to our kids about homosexuality or same-sex attraction we need to use the right vocabulary. There is a significant difference between engaging in a homosexual relationship and struggling with same-sex attraction. In essence, we are talking about the difference between sin and temptation. We have already seen that the Bible condemns homosexuality, but this condemnation is directed toward the practice of homosexuality (e.g. sexual acts or romantic involvement with a person of the same sex). We need to recognize that not every person who is attracted to people of the same sex chooses to act on those desires. There are many Christians who admit to being attracted to people of their same sex who nonetheless agree with the Bible's teaching on homosexuality and seek to flee from this form of sexual sin.

This distinction does not excuse same-sex attraction or make same-sex attraction morally neutral. The Bible portrays any erotic sexual desire apart from the covenant of biblical marriage as falling short of the biblical ideal. Same-sex attraction is still the result of sin and disordered sexual desire, which can lead to lust or further immorality. Yet our message to brothers and sisters who are struggling with same-sex attraction is not one of condemnation, but a message of hope. We call for them to fight against sin

and temptation out of obedience to Jesus. But we do not regard them as a special class of sinners. We are all broken. We all need redemption.

WHAT IF MY CHILD CLAIMS HE IS GAY?

Many Christian parents live with a real fear that one of their children may someday reveal that they experience same-sex attraction. Others have already had a son or daughter admit to being homosexual and did not know how to respond. One of the reasons this is such a crushing experience for many parents is because they assume that their alternatives are limited to affirmation or alienation.

Every child, whether gay or straight, is oriented toward sin, and so are you. If your child or grandchild says he or she is gay, you shouldn't act shocked, as though you are surprised your child might be tempted toward sin, or that you find your own sinful inclinations somehow less deserving of God's judgment.

Your child's point of temptation doesn't mean that your entire relationship with him or her should be defined by that. We never affirm something the Bible says is wrong simply because someone we love is drawn toward it, but that doesn't mean your entire relationship is now to become a sparring match over Romans 1. As a Christian, you believe this person is made in the image of God and thus worthy of love, regardless of how far away from God or from you.

Still, you may be asking, *How do I practically respond to this?* First of all, consider what your child is telling you. He

Jesus isn't shocked by your child's temptations, and He will not leave him alone to fight them.

or she could be saying that this is an identity from which they refuse to repent. That will require a different sort of response than if the child is saying, "This is how I feel, so what do I do?" This will change the way you respond, but what doesn't change is your love and care for this child. Don't panic and don't reject them. Say explicitly that you love that child, no matter what, and mean it. Your relationship wasn't formed by the child's performance, and that won't start now.

If your loved one is a Christian, spend time over the years discipling her about what following Christ looks like. Jesus isn't shocked by your child's temptations, and He will not leave him alone to fight them. The path toward chastity and fidelity to Christ is a difficult one. Your child will need you, the church, and the "large cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) to cheer her on as she walks a path that can be lonely in a world that too often defines sex and sexuality as ultimate in life.

If your loved one isn't a Christian, express your love, keep the relationship going, and be a gracious gospel witness. God never promises us that our children will all follow Christ. Every wandering son or daughter needs to know that if the moment of crisis comes in his or her life, there's a house waiting with a fatted-calf party ready to go, welcoming the wanderer home (Luke 15:11-32).

God calls parents to love their children. Be clear about your convictions, but do not exile your child from your life. If we sacrifice grace for truth or truth for grace, we will fall short of displaying Christ to others.

LOVE AS JESUS LOVED

Let's be people who respond with grace—not just to our kids, but also to the culture at large. This means we call for repentance inside the church and bear witness to God's pattern for human sexuality outside of the church. Our children will face these issues sooner or later, and we don't want them to face them alone. So let's help our children be prepared for what they will encounter in the world and teach them to love as Jesus loved. After all, what our broken world needs more than anything else is to know the love of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is it important that we help our child know that all of us are sexually broken?
2. Are you treating homosexuality as a special kind of sin in how you talk about it in front of your children? If so, how can you change that?
3. What's your plan to discuss this issue with your child?
4. How are you helping your child love others as Jesus loved them?
5. What one thing stood out to you from this article?