

HOMOSEXUALITY

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Much of this article was gleaned from chapter six of Brent Crowe's book *Chasing Elephants*.

One of the great tasks the church faces today is uphold the truth of God's Word and at the same time respond with Christlike love to those struggling with a homosexual lifestyle. Sadly, many churches have responded with hatred toward homosexuals while just as sadly, many churches have embraced homosexual lifestyle with approval for membership and even pastoral ordination.

Two key questions must be addressed. The first is: "Are some people born homosexual? We could ask the same question about other sins. Are some people born pedophiles? Are some born murders? Adulterers? Chronic liars? Thieves? Etc. This raises another question: Are people born with a predisposition to a certain sin more than other sins?

As descendants of Adam, we are all conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). It would not be unreasonable to believe that different individuals have a propensity toward some sin(s) than others. Therefore, it would be plausible that some people have an inclination toward homosexuality. But does this automatically mean they will adopt a homosexual lifestyle? Or, that they have no choice but to be homosexual? No! Everyone experiences many different types of temptation. Having a temptation is not wrong for even Jesus was tempted. Being tempted is not sin, but yielding to that temptation is. A person is not released from being accounted for sin just because they have an attraction toward that sin

The second question with which we must wrestle is: Is homosexuality an orientation or an action? Andrew Sullivan, a leading figure in the homosexual community, defined homosexuality to mean "someone who is constitutively, emotionally, and sexually, attracted to the same sex." William Lane Craig, a respected and accomplished defender of the faith, shared a similar definition: "Being homosexual is a state or an orientation; a person who has a homosexual orientation might not ever express that orientation in actions."

On surface having a homosexual orientation would seem to be the same as having a propensity toward homosexuality but there may be some differences. Propensity means one has a leaning or inclination toward something. Orientation carries the idea of identification and alignment which is a stronger position.

Brent Crowe defines homosexuality as "both the desire to and engagement in homosexual behavior." He couches his definition with the idea of *being* and *doing*. He states that "identity and action are intrinsically bound to each other...who I am and what I do cannot be separated (Mark 12:28-31; John 15:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; James 2:14-20)."

Crowe states, "Homosexuality is defined as sin in the Bible. We must first note that no sin is more respectable than others; all sin breaks the heart of God and should therefore break the hearts of His followers. Having said that, while all sin breaks the heart of God, not all sin bears the same consequence."

There are six biblical texts that deal explicitly with homosexuality.

Genesis 19:1-13: The men of Sodom pursued sexual activity with the men (angels) who came into Lot's house and even continued to do so after Lot offered his two virgin daughters for their sexual pleasure. The angels then struck the Sodomites with blindness and declared destruction on Sodom. Speaking of this, Jude wrote, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange (unnatural) flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (verse 7)

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13: Leviticus is a book that answers the question: What is the acceptable way to live before a holy God? Some advocates for homosexuality say that these prohibitions are no longer relevant today because they are found in the Old Testament, and we are no longer under Mosaic Law. However, the New Testament reaffirms the authority and relevance of prohibitions against homosexual behavior. Furthermore, the morals of God have not changed as He has not changed (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17). Homosexuality was morally wrong before the Law (as we saw in Genesis 19:1-13), it was wrong in the Law, and it is still morally wrong today.

The term *abomination* refers to an act that is abhorrent or repugnant. It indicates a violation that brings God's wrath because it dishonors God and His holiness. It occurs when you choose to do something contrary to both the law of God and the order of nature which He has established.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10: The Apostle Paul states that the unrighteous "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Does this mean that anyone who has committed one of the sins cannot go to Heaven? No! Crowe declares, "*Unrighteousness* refers to those who continually do wrong or who live as if God's moral standards don't exist." The sins listed in these two verses describes those who are not followers of God and live a lifestyle of defiance to His moral laws.

What about those who claim to be Christian and homosexual at the same time? The Bible is crystal clear on this question: Anyone unrepentant soul who adheres to a homosexual lifestyle shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Crowe provides great insight here: "Following Christ is not one of many experiences. Instead, it is a defining experience that serves as a gateway to a new identity... The decision to turn from sin and place your faith in Christ determines all your other decisions, including ones that have to do with sexual behavior."

1 Timothy 1:8-11: Paul connects these verses to the moral law of God provided through the Holy Spirit inspired writings of Moses. He teaches that the law is made for the "lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for unholy and profane" and goes on to specifically identify who that is. He categorizes "them that defile themselves with mankind" as such. The NKJV uses the word "Sodomites"; the ESV uses the phrase "men who practice homosexuality." So clearly Paul is referring to a lifestyle of homosexuality.

Romans 1:18-32: In this passage we see the downward spiral a society takes that ultimately makes homosexuality acceptable. At this point, God leaves the unrighteous to their own sin and the eventual judgment of God.

First: The ungodly and unrighteous hold God's as being unrighteous.

Second: God revealed Himself and the unrighteous knew God but rejected Him in favor of their humanistic ways of thinking.

Third: They worshiped the creation rather than the Creator

Fourth: God gave them up (what a sad state to be in) because of their lusts.

Fifth: God gave them up to their unnatural sexual practices of lesbianism and homosexuality.

Six: God gave them over to a reprobate mind, which is a mind devoid of judgment.

How Should Followers of Jesus Respond to Homosexuals

First, consider yourself. Crowe offers great insight on this: “Because we have escaped judgment only by the grace of God, we should therefore desire that no one experience the fate we all deserved. Judgment is reserved for God.” My sin may be different from that of homosexuality, but it was still an affront to Holy God, still needed the crucifixion of Jesus, and still needed the grace of God! Every recipient of God’s grace is to also be a distributor of it!

Secondly, approach those living in a homosexual lifestyle as Jesus would. I think Jesus would approach a homosexual the same way He approached the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter four. She was living in adultery. She had been married five times and was living with a man at the time she encountered Jesus. She came to faith in Christ and was used of God to bring about a city-wide revival. Also, I think Jesus would approach a homosexual the same way He approached the woman caught in the very act of adultery in John eight. When she was accused and asked Jesus about stoning her, He said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” Upon this, the men dropped their stones and left.

Thirdly, follow Paul’s teaching to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). We must be salt and light in the world. We cannot be this if we are unwilling to tell people the truth. However, as Crowe admonishes, “we must communicate the truth about sin, but only after our hearts first break for sinners.” He continues, “Sin fractures every human soul. In our conversations, we must never be guilty of positioning one sin as more ‘sinful’ than another.” After all, any sin separates us from Holy God.