

Introduction

In this booklet, I want to talk about a subject that has become very confusing and polarizing in our culture. I want to talk about homosexuality. If you're struggling with this or have loved ones, friends, or relatives who struggle with homosexuality, you most likely find this an extremely difficult issue to navigate.

My desire is not to add to your pain but to give you hope and to help us respond to our families, friends, and culture with understanding and redemptive grace and truth.

Before we go any further, it is important to clarify something. In this booklet, I make a distinction between homosexual behavior and same-sex attraction. Attraction in itself is not sinful, but sexually acting out on that attraction is sin. This is an important distinction to keep in mind because when the Bible speaks of the sin of homosexuality, it refers to behavior. I will address this further later in this booklet.

We Are All Broken

I have entitled this booklet “Broken Identity” because homosexuality at its core is not about sex but about a person’s inner identity. I also chose this title because we are all broken people and on a journey to finding healing from our brokenness and to find our true identity in God. The sin nature we are all born with is that of brokenness and sinfulness.

The Bible says we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
We are all in the same boat. We are all equally lost without Jesus.

Homosexual behavior is just one expression of human brokenness. The Apostle Paul lists it along with other expressions of brokenness.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

In this list, homosexual offenders—or those who practice homosexual behavior—are listed in the middle of a host of other sins. This tells me homosexual offenders are not worse than others. We are all on this list. We are all broken sinners. But just as we do not try to normalize adultery, stealing, or drunkenness, neither should we try to normalize homosexual behavior.

In verse 11, Paul gives hope to our sinful behaviors and addictions. He says that we can be set free through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. He says, “*That is what some of you were...*”

“Original sin alone makes every human being disordered; homosexuality is simply one more of

those disordered conditions . . . [in which] God's grace is available to assist us in being healed and in avoiding sinful behavior." Janet E. Smith ¹

We have two extremes in the church today. Some churches are compromising truth in their desire to extend grace, and some churches in a reactionary way show little grace to those struggling with homosexuality. Both are wrong! We need both grace and truth!

In this booklet, I will lay out a biblical understanding, possible causes, and how to walk with those trying to find healing from homosexual behavior and same-sex attraction. My goal is to share in a helpful, loving way that enables us to come alongside those caught in this struggle.

Terminology and Confusion

The term homosexual or gay covers a variety of same-sex orientations. Lesbianism is used more specifically to refer to women with a homosexual orientation. Then there are bisexual and transgender people and many other expressions of sexual identity.

LGBT, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, is often used to describe the broader homosexual and sexually diverse community.

In this booklet, I use the terms homosexual and gay as meaning the same thing. I refer to the term same-sex attraction as being different than homosexual behavior. I use the term homosexual orientation as a behavioral mindset that develops after engaging in the lifestyle over a period of time. The terms transgenderism or transgender refer to those who struggle with gender confusion.

The confusion in our culture has reached the point where the emphasis has shifted from being born male or female to where we now get to choose our sexual identity, and are encouraged to experiment with both genders to discover which we like the best. Facebook presently lists 59 custom gender options. Another source listed over 70 different gender identities.

Studies show that only a small minority struggle with homosexuality. A 2012 Gallup Poll lists them at 3.4%. ² Even though this is a small minority, there is a huge push and agenda to normalize homosexuality and sexual diversity in our culture.

Starting Point

The starting point for this discussion is important. Because where you start sets the direction for where you will end up.

For Christians, our starting point must always be the authority of God's inspired scripture. Not culture, orientation, or personal desires. Moral issues must never be defined by the culture we live in. For instance, just because our culture has decided that abortion is legal does not make it

morally right. It is sin because God's Word says it is sin.

Our starting point as followers of Jesus is to submit to the Lordship of Jesus in every area of our lives. I might like the high from drugs or pornography or pre-marital sex or same-sex behavior but because Jesus is my Lord, I submit my feelings, needs, desires, and behavior to him.

God's Word reveals God's will, and is the final authority in our lives. So let's begin with what God tells us in his Word about homosexuality.

What Does the Bible Say?

The clear reading of scripture shows that homosexual behavior is morally wrong and sinful in God's sight.

Whenever the Bible, in the Old or New Testament, refers to homosexual behavior, it is always referred to as sinful and wrong. The civil and ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have been discontinued, but the moral law continues into the New Testament and is reaffirmed for us today.

Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. Leviticus 18:22

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Romans 1:24-27

The Bible clearly states that homosexual behavior is a perversion of God's creation and plan for sexual intimacy. Our culture has changed perversion into personhood.

The scripture makes it clear that it is sinful not only to engage in homosexual behavior, but also to approve and affirm those who do.

. . . They not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:32

Some Christian groups try to twist the plain meaning of scripture to say that the Bible approves of homosexual behavior and gay marriage as long as the two remain faithful to each other. Clearly that is not what the Bible teaches; and even pro-homosexual scholars agree that the Bible plainly teaches against homosexual behavior, but they don't believe it applies to today's culture.

“It is extremely revealing to note that almost every pro-gay group within the church shares one thing in common: they reject the Bible as being fully the Word of God.” Joseph P. Gudel ³

“A plain and contextual reading of the Bible leaves no doubt that homosexual behavior is sin—and such a sin that it especially exemplifies the spiritual confusion and moral depravity of fallen man.” Dr. E. Daniel Martin ⁴

God’s Original Design

“God created clear gender and sexual distinction in the beginning, establishing heterosexuality as the normative direction for sexual impulse, behavior, and marriage.” Dave Weidis⁵

In the beginning, God created them male and female and brought them together into a covenant relationship where they became one flesh.

God created sex for procreation and pleasure in the unity and oneness of heterosexual marriage.

Sex is a good thing. And to protect this good thing, God said that any sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman—whether pre-marital sex, adultery, or homosexuality—is outside of God’s set boundaries, and is sin.

Jesus said that even lust in our heart toward another person is sin. Sexual sin is not just a behavioral issue but also a heart issue. We need to deal with the issues of our heart, not just control our behavior.

Whenever we violate God’s moral law, it brings pain and judgment into our lives.

“. . . nowhere in the Scripture is there any evidence that homosexual relations receive the same blessing or can possess an equivalent intimacy or sanction as heterosexual relations. Passages indicating God’s approval of this form of sexuality are not to be found.” Larry Bishop and Eric Pement ⁶

What Does Jesus Say?

Jesus affirmed God’s design for marriage to be between a man and a woman.

Some people say Jesus didn’t condemn homosexual behavior. However, by affirming God’s design for marriage as being between one man and one woman, he did clearly state the norm for sexuality which does not include gay marriage.

Jesus stated clearly that God’s plan and design are for a male and female to come together in marriage and become one flesh. Jesus defines sex as a male and female behavior.

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?” Matthew 19:4-5

Also, as Christians, we believe the entire Bible is equally inspired of God, not just the four gospels and the sayings of Jesus. There are a lot of things Jesus didn’t specifically address, such as pedophilia and bestiality, that the rest of the Bible clarifies for us.

Are Some People Born Gay?

Homosexuality is complicated and has many causes, but it is a myth that people are born gay.

There is no “gay gene.” There is no scientific proof for the argument that homosexuals are “born gay.” Of all the studies that have been done, none have found a gay gene. Those who promote the idea of being born gay do so because of a gay agenda and not a scientific basis.

Even pro-homosexual scientists agree that there is no clear evidence that people are born gay.

“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 people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain.”

neuroscientist Simon LeVay ⁷

Let me be very clear. If you are struggling with same-sex attraction, you were not born this way and you are not predestined to be gay. It means you have some identity issues and unmet needs God wants to heal. There is no gene that makes you gay. Anyone who says that is either lying or confused by those with an agenda.

So, do genes play any part in it at all? Genes do contribute to factors that in turn could predispose an individual to a given behavior, but this is not the same as saying there is a gay gene. Biology may play a role, but it is overshadowed by social, cultural, and psychological factors.

Same-sex attraction is developed through brokenness, not genetics. It is a search for lost identity.

“There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play

complex roles.” American Psychological Association ⁸

“The genetic theory of homosexuality has been generally discarded today . . . Despite the interest in possible hormone mechanisms in the origin of homosexuality, no serious scientist today suggests that a simple cause-effect relationship applies.” Masters and Johnson ⁹
Even if they found a gay gene, it would not change God’s moral law. It’s possible that people have genetic dispositions toward things that are sinful, such as pedophilia, bestiality, necrophilia, kleptophilia, alcoholism, and depression. The fact is we are all born with a sin nature and oriented toward sin. We are all broken in some way but we are still called to live by God’s moral law.

“Even if there were a study proving a genetic link to homosexuality, does that in any way negate our biblical responsibility to address this matter from God’s perspective and with his heart? When a baby is born with fetal alcoholism, do we celebrate the baby’s fetal addiction? Do we feed the child a formula of fermented malt and hops in order to continue the alcoholism? No!—we say that we have an unusual need, and we do all we can to help. When someone is born blind, do we celebrate the blindness? No!—we commit ourselves to finding extra resources for meeting every need. And when men speak lies concerning the very nature of our being, we must not bow to the lies as if they were gods, we must speak the truth in love instead.” Dr. E. Daniel Martin ¹⁰

Confused Feelings of Adolescence

Just because you had a sexual encounter with the same sex or have same-sex attraction at times does not mean you are gay.

Sometimes people have these feelings and experiences. Whether it was sexual experimentation as an adolescent or teen or molestation that stirred up confusing feelings, it does not mean you are gay.

The culture is trying to squeeze you into its mold by defining your sexuality for you. There are lots of stories of young people who experimented as kids with some of this sinful behavior and went on to live healthy, heterosexual lives.

“We too easily buy into the labels and make them the definition of who we are. A confused adolescent boy has had same-gender sex play. Now he becomes sexually aroused around other boys. Does he ignore it because he’s male? Well, there’s this category of ‘sexual orientation’ called ‘gay.’ So he says, ‘OK, I’m gay!’ The label creates the ‘reality,’ the boy takes on a ‘homosexual identity.’ But the truth is that we are all human beings subject to a wide range of impulses and desires. And many of those desires shape us in ways that don’t look like what God intended for us.” Dr. E. Daniel Martin ¹¹

It is irresponsible to offer gay affirmative counseling to teens on the grounds that homosexual orientation is intrinsic and fixed, because it clearly is not.

Is Same-Sex Attraction a Choice?

People will tell you they did not choose to have same-sex attraction.

Most wish they didn't have those feelings. The best studies show that same-sex attraction is caused by a combination of factors and it is not the same for every person.

"It seems inappropriate to speak of choice for a child hurt by early abuse or emotional rejection . . . The adult homosexual does, of course, have choices—to remain celibate, to engage in sexual activity, or to seek therapy to resolve the unfinished business of childhood. But the homosexual orientation itself, though not innate, remains something the adult may not have chosen."

Elizabeth Moberly ¹²

It is not unusual for some to say, *"I feel I was born this way because I have always felt different."* Those feelings can be very confusing to a young person who is hearing the culture say accept your gayness, celebrate your gayness. Our depraved society is trying to convince people that homosexuality is normal and good.

Same-sex attraction results from a complex interaction of personality, family dynamics, developmental and childhood experiences, and biological inheritance. No one factor causes same-sex attraction.

"Same-sex attraction usually develops because social and emotional needs were not met in the developmental years." Dave Weidis ¹³

Family relationships, environment, early childhood experiences, trauma, sexual abuse, abusive messages, experimentation, cultural influences, peer pressure, and demonic factors can all contribute to same-sex attraction. We can find contributing factors, but no definitive cause.

For example, we can say from studies that smoking can cause cancer, but not all smokers develop cancer. In the same way, studies show some commonalities in people with same-sex attraction but we can't say, for instance, that all children who are sexually abused or had unmet father or mother issues will develop same-sex attraction.

Some with healthy family relationships and with no trauma or abuse still develop same-sex attraction for other reasons. So instead of placing blame, we try to understand the complexity so we can better walk with people through their healing.

Trauma to the Whole Family

The trauma that a family feels when they realize that a family member is inclined toward homosexuality often leads to heavy guilt, especially among parents and spouses. Parents with

children who are sexually attracted to others of the same sex tend to blame themselves:
“We’ve caused this!”

A spouse with a mate who struggles with homosexual longings or behavior often thinks, *“It’s my fault. I’m not meeting his/her needs. I’m not a desirable mate.”*

The shame that comes from believing we’ve failed as parents or spouses is debilitating. When pastoral counsel and prayer don’t seem to make any difference in the situation it is extremely tempting for parents to rationalize that a family member’s homosexuality is “OK,” even when it flies in the face of what the Bible teaches and what they’ve always believed.

This is not helpful. It removes the encouragement and hope that change is possible for the struggling person, even though they may pressure you and want you to say their behavior is okay and normal. **Parents, I encourage you to stand strong. They may accuse you of not loving or accepting them, but the truth you stand for is the truth that can one day set your son or daughter free. Holding onto this hope for your child is the deepest kind of love as you stand in the gap of prayer and faith for them.**

Same-sex Attraction Development

Because no situation is the same, it is hard to generalize how same-sex attraction develops. No one has all this figured out. We are still learning. At the risk of oversimplifying, let me give one scenario we see at times.

Parents, bear with me a minute as I lay out one example. There are exceptions, of course, because every person is unique.

Sometimes same-sex attraction feelings develop early on. Maybe a boy’s personality and interests are more sensitive and artsy than most and he is not into sports and hunting and the things our culture says are manly. So other kids pick on him and call him sissy and maybe gay and he doesn’t feel a part of his gender group. He becomes detached from other males and more comfortable with females.

Maybe dad didn’t really connect with him like the other sons and mom sees this and becomes extra protective of him.

He begins to relate more to mom and females and is never able to really find his initiation into manhood and connect with male figures. So he feels different, and thinks maybe he is gay from all the messages he is given.

When a healthy male/female gender identity is not internalized and healthy relationships with same-sex parents

and peers are not developed, those longings can become sexualized. They seek sex with the

same sex because they still long for an unmet need of attention, affirmation, and affection from their childhood. This is not something they are usually conscious of. They just have confused feelings and same-sex attraction. They didn't choose to have these feelings. But acting on these feelings is a choice.

To this child, it feels very natural that he longs for male love. In fact, he typically thinks that he was born that way, having craved male love for as long as he can remember. However, initially, it was not a sexual craving. Instead, it was an emotional craving, a legitimate need for non-sexual love, wanting to be affirmed and accepted by his father or peers; this unmet emotional need then becomes sexualized.

“In his multiple, same-sex adventures, even the most effeminate gay was looking to incorporate the manhood of others, because he was in a compulsive, never-ending search for the masculinity that was never allowed to build and grow in early childhood.” Dr. Charles W. Socarides ¹⁴

A natural component of sexuality is that the exotic becomes erotic in our minds. For instance, girls appear erotic in the minds of most boys because they are different. For a boy struggling with same-sex attraction, other boys are seen as different and so become erotic to him.

Now let me be clear; although father and mother issues are common, some people have had great relationships with their parents and develop these feelings for other reasons. So in no way do I want to put guilt on parents who are already feeling bad. The parent-child relationship is only one factor and is sometimes not a part of the equation at all.

Perception, for instance, can be another root cause. The core beliefs we develop come in part from meanings we ascribe to things that have happened to us: sexual abuse, teasing, rejection, peer pressure, experimentation, etc. Depending on what you ascribe to these experiences, you can draw the wrong conclusion that you must be gay. Perceptions shape identity, even if inaccurate.

Compared to heterosexuals, non-heterosexuals are about two to three times as likely to have experienced childhood sexual abuse. ¹⁵

Sometimes the root cause is simply that we are born with a sin nature. We are born with a bent to follow the selfish and sinful desires of our flesh, which are many. Paul lists some of them in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Then on top of that, the culture tells you to accept same-sex attraction, be true to yourself, and act on it. But God says, I want to heal you and help you find your true identity in me.

“Social attitudes toward homosexuality will play a role in making it more or less likely that [a homosexually-leaning individual] will adopt an ‘inborn and unchangeable’ perspective . . . It is

obvious that a widely shared and propagated worldview that normalizes homosexuality will increase the likelihood of his adopting such beliefs. But . . . ridicule, rejection, and harshly punitive condemnation of him as a person will be just as likely . . . to drive him into the same position.” Dr. Jeffrey Satinover ¹⁶

Missing Father and Mother Figures

Boys without dads in their lives need men who will be father figures in their lives. After about age three, boys begin to look to dad or men for their male identity. Men, it's important that we come alongside these kids and validate their maleness. Young girls also look to both dad and mom to affirm their femininity and worth.

Lesbianism

The female development of homosexuality is a bit more complex but has some of the same developmental patterns. A strong affirming relationship with mom and dad is a deep-felt need. Seeing mom as weak, being sexually abused, or peer experimentation can all contribute to confused feelings of one's sexual identity as a girl.

For some girls, same-sex attractions may not initially be present, but may later develop as a result of entering into a non-sexual friendship which becomes emotionally dependent. An emotionally-dependent relationship is a relationship in which healthy boundaries are not in place. The absence of appropriate emotional boundaries can then lead to a violation of physical boundaries.

Lisa Diamond in her book *Sexual Fluidity* reported that many women did not set out to form a lesbian sexual relationship but rather experienced a gradual growth of affective intimacy with a woman that eventually led to sexual involvement. ¹⁷

Homosexual behavior is more than a sexual issue. It is also an issue of unhealthy emotional and spiritual soul ties. These need to be dealt with through prayer and counseling in order for there to be true freedom.

Choice and Behavior

The ongoing choices we make will reinforce our sexual orientation. Choice is involved at some level where we decide what behavior we will take.

Experiencing same-sex attraction is not necessarily a choice, but engaging in homosexual behavior clearly is. At some point, you choose between right and wrong behavior.

No one is born with a homosexual orientation, but repeated behavior creates an orientation after a while. We become oriented to what we repeatedly give our hearts to, and this can feel

second nature and natural after a while.

As fallen humans, we all have a sin orientation we need to deal with.

The good news is that God forgives, cleanses, and restores all sinners, no matter what our sinful orientation is. He loves us all the same. Repentance is leaving a host of behaviors and intents of the heart and choosing to walk in holiness.

Attraction vs. Behavior

It is helpful to understand that same-sex attraction in itself is not sin.

Same-sex attraction is part of humanity's brokenness, just as we all have areas of our life that are broken and need God's healing touch. Same-sex attraction is brokenness of the soul. We can be struggling with brokenness without giving in to that brokenness and sin.

Another way to say it is that temptations or predispositions toward sin in itself are not sin. There is a difference between predisposition and what we choose to do with it. It is when we give into the temptation or desire that it becomes sin. The Bible says Jesus experienced temptation but did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15) James describes how the desires of our flesh can turn into sin.

. . . after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Jas 1:15

It is also important to understand that in the Bible, sin is listed as both a *heart issue* and a *behavior issue*. When any attraction outside of marriage turns into sexual fantasy, it becomes lust in our heart, and God calls that sinful. (Matthew 5:28) When my heart begins to lust after another, or when I begin to act on those desires, it becomes sin. Lust of the mind and heart is as sinful as the behavior.

The Bible does not condemn you because you struggle with same-sex attraction. In fact, we as the church welcome you and want to walk with you. The important key is whether you are seeking God's help and healing to walk in victory.

Instead of giving into these urges, we bring our brokenness to God; through his grace and sometimes Christian counseling, we are able to walk in victory. We need to work at the root causes of our struggles —not just manage them.

The root of homosexuality is broken identity. We need to find our identity in Christ and not in our brokenness.

" . . . homosexuality is not a sexual problem at root, but an identity problem. The person of

homosexual orientation tries to find identity through homosexual activity. Thus it is not surprising that such persons develop a homosexual 'life-style.' Consequently, the person who changes from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation may have achieved little if anything in terms of personal development, if his identity is still centered around sexuality.” — Dr. E. Mansell Pattison ¹⁸

Our True Identity

Our identity is not in being gay or straight but in being a child of God.

It is really sad when a person takes on the identity of being gay. You may struggle with same sex-attraction and you may have acted on it, but your identity is not that of being gay. Our identity is not in our sexuality, gay or straight, but rooted in being created in the likeness and image of God and loved by him.

By labeling people according to behavioral traits, we invite them to define themselves according to that label. This becomes a trap and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In our fallen humanity, we tend to find our identity in our brokenness, but as redeemed followers of Jesus we have become new creations with a new identity as a son or daughter of God. We find our identity in who we are in Christ and who we are created to be in him.

Identity is important because it affects our behavior. We tend to live out of our inner identity. The world says your *behavior defines your identity*. The Bible says your **identity defines your behavior**. God says, let me define your identity as my son or daughter.

Because of who I am in Christ, I choose to live a holy life according to God's standard.

Our sense of identity is important. So, instead of saying “*I am a homosexual or I am gay*” (or a *gay Christian*), it is more correct to say, “*I am a Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction.*” My identity is in who I am in Christ, not in what I am struggling with.

Same-sex attraction is a symptom of deeper needs and our sin nature, and not an unalterable part of our basic personality and identity.

The reason some homosexuals get so angry when we say we love them but reject their sin is they have found their identity in being homosexual, so it feels like rejection when we say we love them but disagree with their behavior. They are not able to separate their identity from their behavior. In their minds, any rejection of their sexuality is a discrimination against them as a person, and that's why it's become a human rights issue in the legal system. We need to lovingly help them find their true identity as a child of God so they can break free.

“In following God, I am a son of God. I worship God, not my desires. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life no longer define who I am. I am a new creation.” Dr. E. Daniel Martin ¹⁹

Good News—Change is Possible

In I Corinthians 6, where Paul lists homosexual behavior within the group of sins, he goes on to say something very encouraging to those bound by their sins. He says . . .

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. ^{1 Corinthians 6:11}

Change is possible. Jesus died to set us free from all sin and bondage. Thousands of men and women have testified to healing and change from their homosexual lifestyle.

But only through a genuine commitment to choose help and change can an individual break free of the soul’s hurts and society’s lies and deceptions.

It is not a quick or easy process. For most people it is a long road to recovery with counseling, prayer, and deliverance from hurts and strongholds. Some have their same-sex attractions change to heterosexual and some do not, but all are able to walk in holiness.

“Sometimes we’re too simplistic about sin, communicating that it’s easily overcome, but besetting sins are not easily overcome. We need God. We need his power. We need help.” Dr. E. Daniel Martin ²⁰

Dr. Irving Bieber, past president of the American Academy of Psychoanalysts and former professor at New York Medical College concluded (after treating more than a hundred homosexuals) that: “. . . a heterosexual shift is possible for all homosexuals who are strongly motivated to change.” ²¹

“We have followed patients for as long as 20 years who have remained exclusively heterosexual.” Irving Bieber ²²

“If the patients were motivated . . . a large percentage will give up their homosexuality (behavior). In this connection, public information is of the greatest importance. The misinformation spread by certain circles that ‘homosexuality is untreatable by psychotherapy’ does incalculable harm to thousands of men and women.” Dr. Reuben Fine, director of the New York Center for Psychoanalytical Training ²³

“Homosexual activists want to convince not only the public but themselves that change never occurs, because if [change does occur], each of them must be haunted by the possibility that they, too, might find the power to change.” Thomas E. Schmidt ²⁴

“Anyone who says there is no hope (for change) is either ignorant or a liar. Every secular study

of change has shown some success rate, and persons who testify to substantial healings by God are legion.” Dr. Stanton L. Jones, Provost, Professor of Psychology at Wheaton College ²⁵

God is a loving and just God. He would not call homosexual behavior sin if it were not possible to turn from that sin and experience lasting change. God offers his power if we will receive it. He gives us both the power to choose and to change. (Philippians 2:13)

“The 1973 decision [to declassify homosexuality as a disorder in the APA’s Diagnostic Manual] was based not on any advance in scientific or medical knowledge. It occurred instead as a result of successful gay lobbying—and a considerable body of psychological data on homosexuality was dismissed as no longer relevant.” Dr. Elizabeth Moberly ²⁶

Brain Chemistry

Science is also learning that repeated sexual behavior with homosexuality and pornography are shown to affect brain chemistry and create neural pathways. Each experience releases chemicals that create a pleasurable high and widens these neural pathways until they become a powerful addiction that is hard to break. Repeated behavior can change the size and shape of the brain so that differences can be noted. So, you are not only dealing with a heart issue, inner brokenness, wrong behavior, and cultural messages, but also an addictive brain.

Another Option

Celibacy is a viable option for both heterosexual and homosexual-oriented people. The Apostle Paul chose to lay down his sexual desires and live a single life of celibacy. This is a biblical option for those who continue to struggle with same-sex attraction. God’s grace is there for people who are celibate by choice or by circumstance such as singleness, the death of a spouse, divorce, for medical reasons, or same-sex attraction.

Some who struggle with same-sex attraction can enjoy a fruitful heterosexual marriage relationship—although we don’t counsel people to get married as a way to try and get rid of their same-sex attraction.

All single and married people need to express self-discipline against fantasies, temptations, pornography, and adultery. By God’s grace we must all manage our sexual desires according to God’s will.

What About Transgenderism

In discussing transgenderism, a distinction is often made between one’s biological sex and one’s gender. In our Christian worldview, we see these as one and the same but in our culture today these are discussed as two separate parts of a person’s identity. They are defined as:

***Biological sex:** As male or female (typically with reference to chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and internal reproductive anatomy and external genitalia).*

***Gender:** The psychological, social, and cultural aspects of being male or female. How you experience yourself (or think of yourself) as male or female, including how masculine or feminine a person feels.²⁷*

Transgenderers are those who choose to identify as a gender different from their biological sex. They may feel as if they were born in the wrong body. They may feel as if they were assigned the wrong gender at birth. A boy may say he feels like a girl trapped in a boy's body, so he chooses to identify as a girl.

Those who have gone through sex-reassignment surgery to transform their appearance to better correspond with that of their preferred gender are often referred to as transsexuals.

Transgenderism is not the same as homosexuality. Many transgenderers are not homosexual. However, like for homosexuals, the inner struggle and confused feelings are not a willful choice and not sin in themselves. They are part of the effects of the fall and the resulting brokenness that affects our lives. It is what we do with these impulses that determines if it becomes a moral and sin issue.

Mark Yarhouse, in his book *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*, states: *"The experience of true gender dysphoria, however, is not chosen, nor is it a sign of willful disobedience, personal sin or the sin of the parents as such."*²⁸

There is a broad range of transgender people who struggle with aligning their feelings of gender identity with their biological sex. Some quietly struggle with their feelings, some manage their feelings by secretly wearing underwear of the opposite sex, and some cross dress at times. (This is different than those who do this for sexual arousal or as a fetish. That is another disorder.) Then you have those who openly identify with their preferred gender. Some go to the extreme of having a sex change and try to live the life of the gender that is the opposite of their biological sex.

The cultural shift around us has contributed greatly to the confusion around sex and gender. Some parents don't know how to guide their children and sometimes send them wrong messages instead of helping them embrace their biological sex. For instance, we don't have to force an artsy sensitive boy into the cultural norms of masculinity. We do need some flexibility with our cultural norms, but we do need to help them embrace their biological sex and work at resolving their gender confusion.

This is a difficult issue for the church to deal with because we recognize it partially, if not totally, as a psychological disorder. Yet we need to set some boundaries to honor the sacredness of God's creation in which he created Adam and Eve as distinctively male and female. (Genesis

2:21-24)

The theological concerns rest in the “denial of the integrity of one’s own sex and an overt attempt at marring the sacred image of maleness or femaleness formed by God.”²⁹

Transgenderism does not reflect God’s divine creation and divine order of living according to one’s biological sex as God created it. It is true that some people are born with both male and female genitalia, but this is a very small percentage, and it is seen as a developmental anomaly.

We need to sort out the point at which transgender behavior crosses the line and becomes a moral sin issue and not simply psychological disordered behavior that can be tolerated as we extend grace and nurture them to wholeness. The goal is to bring their gender identity into harmony with their biological sex as God created them.

A grace-and truth-filled church needs to find ways to come alongside the struggling person without shaming them but at the same time speaking truth and helping them to embrace and harmonize their biological sex and gender identity as one and the same.

We live in a fallen, confused world with broken people, and they will be coming to our churches. As a caring church to the broken, how will we handle a situation when a parent brings a small boy to Sunday school dressed as a girl with the request that we call him his preferred gender name? What about the use of restrooms? What about these kids signing up to go to camp? How do we walk in grace and truth? This is tough, and requires humility and much wisdom.

It’s easy to lay down the law with a set of rules, and we do need some clear guidelines, but it’s harder to walk with people in a compassionate way through their brokenness and confusion toward healing. The ministry of helping the broken is often messy and not clear cut. A helpful question is “Are we moving in the right direction.” Looking at the little steps of progress instead of how far they still have to go is redemptive and helpful. We need to be able to compassionately come alongside people and help them navigate through their gender confusion. It might take a while for truth to penetrate the cultural lies and confused feelings.

I am not advocating we compromise on sin or the fact that transgenderism is not God’s will. I am not saying we shouldn’t have standards of acceptable behavior or that we should just go along and accommodate gender confusion. Loving someone does not mean we approve of or condone their confused or sinful behavior. Loving someone means we speak truth and patiently walk with them to wholeness and healing. I am advocating for humility and compassion since we don’t have all the answers as to what causes this disorder, and are still discovering how to help people find freedom.

“I imagine some readers will be thinking to themselves, I just want the person to choose the right path. I can understand that thought. However, paths are chosen with reference to a

*number of factors, not in isolation. People choose paths in the context of the community they have been able to form around themselves. If you want a person to choose a path that seems more redemptive, you will want to be part of a redemptive community that facilitates that kind of decision making for every person who is a member.”*³⁰

Persons experiencing gender confusion often feel isolated and confused. It is often associated with depression and anxiety. They need people who will not shame them or reject them but walk with them in their journey toward healing. It usually takes time to reorient their thinking and feelings. Invite them to tell you more about their experience. They need someone who will cry, pray, and struggle with them. Not just people telling them they shouldn't feel this way. Remember they did not choose to have these feelings and gender confusion.

It is also helpful for us to look honestly at our cultural definitions of what it means to be masculine or feminine. Our cultural stereotypes can add to the gender confusion some people experience. In other words, we can unknowingly be part of the problem. A girl who would rather play with guns instead of dolls, climb trees, hang out with boys, and do fun “boy things” is called a “tom boy.” A boy who enjoys the art of cooking and doesn't like rough outdoor activities and things like cars and football is called a “sissy.” This can add to gender confusion. From a biblical perspective, the definition of masculine and feminine is not nearly as rigid as our culture defines it. Jacob loved to stay home and cook while Esau was a hunter. Both were affirmed and seen as masculine. (Genesis 25:27-30) We need to be more affirming of girls who enjoy more adventurous things and boys who enjoy more artsy and domestic things. Masculine men can be great cooks and artists just as feminine women can be great mechanics and hunters.

The cause of gender confusion is not clearly understood. The most common is the brain-sex theory. But there is little evidence that transgender identity has a biological basis. Most of the studies and theories out there are based on a small sampling of people, and often on those who are already using hormone therapy, which could affect the areas under study.

*“A person often receives the message that they are born this way . . . scientists do not know what causes gender incongruence. It is a rare phenomenon and one in which we have little by way of research to inform the discussion. A popular theory is the brain-sex theory, but there are gaps in our understanding of that theory too. There is likely no one causal path that accounts for the many and varied experiences that fall under the transgender umbrella as well as what we see as a continuum of gender incongruence, even among those for whom incongruence is the more salient experience.”*³¹

Psychological, environmental, and social causes seem to play a significant part.

“While causality is difficult to determine, the transgendered are more likely to have been victims of child sexual abuse and to have a history of trauma, loss, and family disruption. The Health Research Council states there's a near 100 percent absence of fathers in the homes of boys who suffer from severe gender dysphoria. As much as 80 percent of mothers of individuals with

*gender dysphoria had some type of psychiatric problem or some form of psychiatric treatment, mainly to treat symptoms originating from their struggle with gender identity. As much as 45 percent of fathers of individuals with gender dysphoria also had some type of psychiatric problem or some form of psychiatric treatment and as much as 52 percent of children between ages 4 to 11 have one or more diagnosed conditions, alongside their gender dysphoria.”*³²

*Transgender activists have objected to having their condition labeled a "disorder." They successfully lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to have the diagnosis of "Gender Identity Disorder" (GID) changed to "Gender Dysphoria." Consequentially, the revised language in the APA's 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) says, "Gender dysphoria refers to the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender." It is politics, not science, which has driven the conclusion that such a condition is not inherently "disordered" and is only problematic if it causes subjective distress. Family Research Council*³³

The American College of Pediatricians warns that gender ideology harms children. They state, **“A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking. When an otherwise healthy biological boy believes he is a girl, or an otherwise healthy biological girl believes she is a boy, an objective psychological problem exists that lies in the mind not the body, and it should be treated as such. These children suffer from gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria (GD), formerly listed as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), is a recognized mental disorder in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V).”** The group is most concerned about the regimen of drugs that is given to children to block puberty. They state, *“Conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is **child abuse.**”*

According to the DSM-V, as many as 98% of gender-confused boys and 88% of gender-confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty. Rates of suicide are nearly twenty times greater among adults who use cross-sex hormones and undergo sex reassignment surgery, even in Sweden which is among the most LGBTQ – affirming countries. *What compassionate and reasonable person would condemn young children to this fate knowing that after puberty as many as 88% of girls and 98% of boys will eventually accept reality and achieve a state of mental and physical health?”*³⁴

Mark Yarhouse states, *“Most cases of gender incongruence in childhood resolve by the time the child reaches adolescence or adulthood.”*³⁵

*No degree of supporting a little boy in converting to be considered, by himself and others, to be a little girl makes him biologically a little girl. The scientific definition of biological sex is, for almost all human beings, clear, binary, and stable, reflecting an underlying biological reality that is not contradicted by exceptions to sex-typical behavior, and cannot be altered by surgery or social conditioning. The New Atlantis Journal*³⁶

“It does not do justice to the phenomenon to say that the dysphoria is simply the result of rejection from others. I would concur with Zucker that the desire to be the other sex is itself a reflection of distress, a conflict that resides within between one’s somatic or phenomenal self and one’s psychological or emotional experience of oneself vis-a-vis one’s gender identity.”³⁷

There are some who want to push us toward a genderless society. They feel gender is nothing more than a social construct and they advocate even little children having the option of choosing their gender. They can change their gender names, birth certificates, dress, genitalia, etc. but they can never change who God made them as a biological boy or girl. Every cell of the human body remains coded with one’s birth gender for life.

“Most are not meaning to participate in a culture war; most are casualties of the culture war.”³⁸

There is great concern for those who choose to undergo a sex change (also known as gender reassignment) to try and resolve their gender dysphoria. Not only is it a moral issue, it puts them at great risk.

Dr. Chris Hyde states; *“While no doubt great care is taken to ensure that appropriate patients undergo gender reassignment, there’s still a large number of people who have the surgery but remain traumatized — often to the point of committing suicide.”³⁹*

Some are deceived into thinking that once they have completed their transition with gender reassignment surgery they will feel complete and happy. But the euphoria for many lasts only a short time, and they discover the struggle is still within them. Then the horror and regret of what they have done leads to even greater depression for many.

Yet, in the face of clear evidence that transgenderism is a psychological disorder, many in our politically-correct culture are encouraging children, youth, and adults to embrace their disorder, often with tragic results. We need to lovingly guide those who are struggling, and most will grow to embrace their biological identity.

“I see the value in encouraging individuals who experience gender dysphoria to resolve dysphoria in keeping with their birth sex.”⁴⁰

Whether it is homosexuality, transgenderism, alcoholism, or the many other isms of life, our goal is to reorient rediscover our true identity in God. The core problem is an identity problem in our lives. Out of broken identity comes all kinds of disorder that leads to temptation and then sinful behavior.

Our identity is in being a child of God, created in his likeness and image. It is not first and foremost our sex or gender.

Identity is important because it affects our behavior. Instead of saying *“I am transgender”* and putting on that label, a Christian who is struggling in this area can say *“I am a Christian”*

struggling with my gender identity.” Your sex and gender are not the core of your identity. It is being rooted in the likeness and image of God, and loved by him. My identity is in who I am in Christ, not in what I am struggling with.

Transgenderism is a symptom of deeper needs and our sin nature and not an unalterable part of our basic personality and identity.

Jesus Christ has come to heal the broken, which includes all of us. There is no problem too big for him to heal and resolve, including transgender disorder or gender dysphoria. Our hope is in him to set us free from our multitude of sins and psychological disorders.

No Longer a Private Matter

Why should I care about what people do in their private lives? Isn't homosexuality or transgenderism a private issue? Shouldn't homosexuals have the same privilege of marriage as everyone else? Who is it hurting?

We have considered the issue of homosexual behavior and gay marriage long enough to see that it is much more than a private issue that we can ignore. Public policy affects marriage and family formation, and because marriage is foundational to a civil society, it is not just a private matter but affects entire communities and cultures.

The Supreme Court and many homosexual advocates are determined to force everyone to dramatically and permanently alter the definition of marriage and family. This is no longer a private issue.

God has created and defined marriage. It is not a man-made institution that can be altered and redefined. It is not up for a vote or judge's decree. God has defined it for all cultures and times. And what he has defined cannot be changed and still be called marriage in God's eyes.

“On the most basic level...despite any arguments, the institution of marriage is not changeable. No church council, legislature, or judge can change what marriage is, which is not a social construction or a personal choice or a legal fiction. Rather, marriage is grounded in nature—the way human beings reproduce themselves—and thus in God's created order.” Gene Edward Veith ⁴¹

Those who stand by the great historical cross-cultural understanding of marriage and the union of husband and wife are now being called bigots in the public square.

Allowing transgender people to use locker rooms and bathrooms based on their preferred gender violates the safety and moral decency of others. It is no longer a private matter.

Fight for our Children

We need to be concerned for the sake of children. Every same-sex marriage deprives a child of a mother or father.

Studies have shown that children raised by couples living a homosexual lifestyle are at a significant disadvantage.⁴²

Society is teaching our children that there is nothing special to mothers and fathers raising children together, and anyone who thinks otherwise is old-fashioned and out of touch.

Many schools are forcing the idea on our children that homosexuality is normal, against our will as parents. Some schools no longer call them *boys and girls* but *children or people* so they can choose their own gender and sexual identity. It is no longer a private matter. It is being forced on all of us.

Parents, please fight for your children. They need you to cover them, protect them, and teach them the truth. Talk to your children about what they are learning in school. Even some churches and Christian schools are not taking a clear Biblical stand on this moral issue. With your older children, you might want to read and discuss this booklet together. Give them something that will help them combat the lies of our culture calling evil good and good evil. There is a very real battle for the hearts and minds of our children. They need us to protect and help them in this battle.

We are already seeing the outcome of the radical homosexual agenda. Their end goal is not gay marriage but to force everyone to accept gay as normal and to punish anyone who publicly speaks out against homosexuality. I believe it is the spearhead of persecution against Christians in our nation. We are already seeing this take place on a number of fronts.

The battle in this culture war is no longer about the legality of what two or more consenting adults do in the privacy of their bedroom. The issue has moved into the public and private arenas of all of our lives.

Laws are being passed that make it prosecutable as child abuse for mental health professionals to counsel that change is possible to children and teenagers facing unwanted same-sex attractions or gender identity confusion.

Schools are being forced to open bathrooms and locker rooms to children and teenagers who say they prefer to be the opposite gender, putting our children at great risk and exposure. It is no longer a private issue that we can ignore.

Keep Your Voice

We must not surrender our voice, even though it may result in being ostracized, fined, jailed, demoted, called hateful, or even losing our jobs or business. We need to be respectful but not surrender our voice to fear and intimidation. We must strive to practice true, loving tolerance. But tolerance does not mean I must agree with or condone your behavior.

Tolerance Defined

The Oxford Dictionary definition of tolerance: *The ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with.* ⁴³

The culture has hijacked the definition of tolerance and changed it to mean you must agree with and validate my behavior as being good and normal or else you are intolerant, hateful, and a homophobe.

It is not hatred or unloving to say homosexual behavior is sin. Just as it is not unloving for a doctor to tell a patient they have cancer. It is how we say it that is important. We need to be full of grace and truth.

“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 you agree with everything they believe and do. Both are nonsense. You don’t have to compromise convictions to be compassionate.” Rick Warren ⁴⁴

“There is no contradiction when those who condemn homosexual behavior reach out lovingly to self-identified ‘homosexuals.’ It means that they are able to see the Divine image in all people.” Joel Beasley ⁴⁵

The Honest Struggler

It is very important that we don’t put everyone in the same box of radical activist. This can easily happen when we feel threatened and angry with what is happening around us. But not everyone who defines themselves as homosexual or transgender is a radical activist or has an agenda. Many are simply confused and struggling and searching for God in their lives. We want to reach out in love and help them.

We do need to be aware that there is an agenda that is being pushed, and we need to be concerned about it and boldly stand against it. But let’s keep our hearts open to the honest struggler among us.

Being a Healing Community

How can we come alongside those struggling with same-sex attraction, homosexual behavior, and gender confusion? Some of it depends on whether they want help or whether they just

want us to accept their behavior as normal. This is true of any sinful behavior.

The church family is the key to helping people resolve this issue in their lives.

Janet Boynes, who was a lesbian for 14 years before she found freedom, writes: *“I am convinced that the active, prayerful, Spirit-anointed compassion of God’s people is the key to bringing deliverance and hope to those caught in the homosexual lifestyle. If someone had confronted me with a judgmental attitude or even a hint of condemnation, I would’ve turned away. You see I already had enough condemnation boiling inside of me. What I needed most was an active demonstration of God’s love and mercy breaking into my prison of sin and guilt.”*⁴⁶

Here is how the church can be a safe place of healing.

- **Welcome people seeking help with homosexual and transgender confusion to our church family.**

Be consistent and treat them the same way you would any other person dealing with a life controlling problem or living in sexual sin. The church and Christians have at times been hurtful and a part of the problem instead of a safe place for healing. For this we apologize and ask forgiveness. Love takes risks with people in loving them to wholeness.

- **Take time to hear their story.**

There is a reason why they are struggling. It is unloving to just tell someone to change without listening to their heart issues.

- **Share our story of brokenness.**

We like sheep have all gone astray. We all are broken and need healing and forgiveness. We are all on a journey of finding our true identity in God, and we all need grace to get there.

- **Offer God’s love and forgiveness.**

Jesus forgives, cleanses, and restores all sinners with their host of sinful behaviors. We help them find a living relationship with Jesus. Empower them to make choices consistent with the scripture. Understand that it is behavior and not attraction that is sinful.

- **Genuinely care by offering wholesome friendships, patience, and counseling.**

Provide safe relationships. Guys and girls struggling with same sex attraction and gender confusion need guys and girls of the same sex to be their friends. Healing from these lifestyles is not a quick fix of repentance. It is a journey of healing, and God wants his church to be a safe place where people can journey and find healing. There are ups and downs while on the journey, with progress and setbacks along the way.

- **Don’t just focus on behavior.**

Focus on the whole person with their many interests and gifts. Don't treat them as if their identity is in being homosexual or transgender. As a person, they have much to offer. Discover the unique and wonderful person they are.

- **Show compassion.**

God calls us to show compassion for the underlying pain and to walk patiently with those who are struggling. We don't try to give them the quick fix (and tell them to just get married or stop feeling that way). We don't promise that with prayer all their same-sex attraction and gender confusion will go away. But we can promise that God will help them heal and find the strength to live lives of holiness.

There is Coming a Day

All the laws in the world promoting and condoning homosexual behavior and transgenderism will not be able to produce true inner peace and heal the brokenness of a person caught up in this lifestyle. There is a desperate false hope that once the homosexual and transgender lifestyle is a protected civil right and society accepts it as normal, or they complete their transition to the opposite sex, they will feel fulfilled and whole as a person.

But there is coming a day when they will come to the realization that they are still empty, broken, and searching for true peace and joy. Changing your body and the affirmation of government, society, friends, and even compromising clergy cannot heal the inner brokenness and the search for true identity in God. Fulfillment can never be found outside of God's creative design and purpose.

There is coming a day when many will become disillusioned with these sinful alternative lifestyles and begin to search for help and answers once again. So, the future is not hopeless. Where sin increases, God's grace increases all the more.

The question is, will the church be there to lovingly receive them and help them find their true identity in God?

Epilogue

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I am indebted to a number of people who helped me understand the pain and difficulty surrounding this subject. I am especially indebted to those families who have confided in me about their struggle of having a son or daughter who is struggling with same-sex attraction or has entered the gay lifestyle. I am indebted to those who have taken the risk of sharing their personal struggle with same-sex attraction and allowing us to support them in their journey toward wholeness. They have helped me to balance grace and truth.

I am grateful to Dr. E. Daniel Martin, who has been a prophetic redemptive voice, and for his willingness to allow me to use some of his writings.

I am grateful to Dave Weidis of Serving Leaders Ministries, Inc. and other ministries that provide clear biblical and scientific data that is helpful to this discussion.

Over the years I have collected notes from various sources on the subject of homosexuality and transgenderism. I have given credit where I can but realize my notes are not always complete with references. If I am made aware of any quotes and persons not given proper credit, I will certainly do so in future publications.

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