

Sexual Orientation

What Does the Bible Teach about Sexual Orientation?

Selected Texts

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February 11, 2018

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Introduction

When a baby is born, the first thing usually said is, “It’s a boy!” or “It’s a girl!” The sex of a child is based on biology— anatomy and chromosomes. But, for some people, their sense of gender does not always match their sex.

That mismatch was brought to our attention in 2015 when Olympic superstar Bruce Jenner announced that he no longer wanted to be Bruce. Several months later he was introduced on the front cover of *Vanity Fair* as Caitlyn Jenner.

That same year, same sex marriage was legalized in all fifty states on June 26, 2015 by an act of the United States Supreme Court. Who would have thought that possible just a few years earlier? But, the speed at which the culture’s view on gender and sexuality has changed with lightning speed.

I read that the Facebook in the U.S. used to list over 50 gender options, whereas in the U.K. a person has over 70 gender options! However, I believe that now one is able to custom list one’s gender preference on Facebook. So, who knows how many options there are today?

When we were considering what topic or series to preach on for Sunday evenings, the Session believed that this topic was important for us to examine in light of the current cultural conditions. Not only is there pressure in the contemporary culture to accept modern conceptions of sex and gender, our children are being taught that at school too.

While we could spend many sessions on this topic, I am

going to cover it in only one session. Therefore, this study will be necessarily cursory. However, I believe it will be sufficient to give a biblical answer to the issue of sexual (and gender) orientation. I encourage you to purchase *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation* by Michael Lefebvre, as well as *The Gospel & Gender Identity* to learn more about this very important topic.

I should also mention that I have no expertise in medicine, science, or psychology. My training is theological. And so, my approach to this topic is theological and pastoral. My concern is what the Bible teaches about this topic, and also how we as Christians and as a church should help those wrestling with issues related to sexual and gender orientation.

Let me briefly define a few terms so that we are thinking about the same thing:

- *Sex*—refers to the *biological* classification of a person as male or female based on physical features.
- *Gender*—refers to the *social* and *psychological* classification of a person as male or female based on personal perception.

There are a few instances in which a person's physical anatomy is different from his or her chromosome make-up. That is very rare, very difficult emotionally, very difficult pastorally, and beyond the scope of this study.

Historically, a person's physical *sex* and social *gender* were regarded as unified. So, a physical male was also a social male, and physical female was also social female.

Today, however, this historical view has been challenged. A person's *sex* and *gender* are no longer regarded as necessarily matching. Today, a physical male may be gendered as a female, or vice versa. That is where the term *transgender* comes in: a *transgender* is a person whose sex and gender do not match.

Lesson

What is God's answer for the issue of sexual orientation?
Let's use the following outline:

1. Current Concerns about the Issue of Sexual Orientation
2. Culture's Answers to the Issue of Sexual Orientation
3. God's Answer to the Issue of Sexual Orientation

I. Current Concerns about the Issue of Sexual Orientation

First, let's look at current concerns about the issue of sexual orientation. Why do we even need to examine this issue?

Sexual orientation and gender identity are at the forefront of today's culture. A tremendous amount has been written about it. Laws have been changed. The media accepts that sex and gender do not need to match for people. And as I said, even social media, like Facebook, allows people to self-identify.

People who wrestle with sexual orientation and gender identity issues often struggle very deeply, although admittedly not all do. A Transgender Remembrance Day poster states, "34% of trans people attempt suicide. 64% are bullied. 73% of trans people are harassed in public. 21% of trans people avoid going out in public due to fear." If these numbers are accurate, or even if they are not close to accurate, that is very sad.

The current sexual orientation movement is extremely influential. Way back in 1994, an article in *Time* magazine said the homosexual revolution

is still changing the way Americans see many of their

basic institutions—family, church, schools, the military, media and culture among them.... Everywhere one looks, there are signs of gay acceptability [formerly] unimaginable.... Gays are working openly in the White House and on Capitol Hill.... A gay man is president of the Minnesota state senate, and another is the democratic candidate for secretary of state in California. Pop stars and Olympic heroes acknowledge they are gay.... The gay dollar is courted by big companies and gay tourism is encouraged.... Earlier this month 20,000 gay men and women were made welcome at the icon of bourgeois family life, Disney World.¹

Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders asserted, “We need to speak out to tell people that sex is good, sex is wonderful.... It’s a normal and healthy part of our being, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual.”²

In 1961, every state in the U.S. had laws outlawing homosexual activity. By June 2015 same sex marriage was legalized in all fifty states by an act of the United States Supreme Court.

Our culture has been pressing very hard, especially in recent years, to accept whatever sexual orientation or gender identity a person chooses. However, as we consider issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, we must be sure that answers are in agreement with God’s Word. We must not capitulate to medicine, science, or psychology unless its propositions are consistent with God’s Word.

II. Culture’s Answers to the Issue of Sexual Orientation

Second, notice culture’s answers to the issue of sexual orientation.

¹ *Time*, June 27, 1994, pp. 55, 57.

² This quotation was widely reported in the popular press in mid-1994.

One current view promoted is that sexual orientation is determined by our biological make-up. They say that sexual orientation is akin to eye color or left-handedness.

And with regard to gender, transgender activist and entertainer, Chaz Bono, said, “There’s a gender in your brain and a gender in your body. For 99% of people, those things are in alignment. For transgender people, they’re mismatched. That’s all it is. It’s not complicated, it’s not a neurosis. It’s a mix-up. It’s a birth defect, like a cleft palate.”³

One leading researcher, Simon LeVay, conducted post-mortem examinations on the brains of nineteen homosexual men who died from AIDS and sixteen presumed heterosexual men, six of whom died of AIDS. His results suggested that the brains of homosexual men consistently had more brain cells in a specific area of the brain (INAH 3) believed to be involved in sexual behavior. When this data is interpreted with a homosexuality-as-biologically-determined view, the conclusion is that homosexuality is located in the brain.

But fellow scientists have noted that the results of this study do not establish a causative link between brain activity and homosexual behavior. Even LeVay agreed that his research was limited, and that it was an invitation to further study. In fact, he acknowledged that “the results do not allow one to decide if the size of INAH 3 in an individual is the cause or the consequence of that individual’s sexual orientation.”⁴ In other words, from his perspective it may be just as likely that the possible brain differences are a result of homosexuality rather than a cause.

³ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender: Christian Compassion, Convictions and Wisdom for Today’s Big Questions* (The Good Book Company (October 11, 2016), n.p.

⁴ Edward T. Welch, *Homosexuality: Speaking the Truth in Love* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000), 21-22.

It is important to note what Michael Lefebvre writes:

It is possible that future science will more thoroughly demonstrate that the biological factors associated with such conditions are truly causative. It may even be found that there is a “gay gene,” so that even homosexuality is congenital. The answers to these questions are extremely important; however, they do not in themselves call for a reform of the church’s historic doctrine of man, of human sexuality, and the impact of original sin.⁵

Another current view promoted is that sexual orientation is determined by psychological and environmental factors. Alfred Kinsey eventually stated, “I have come to the conclusion that homosexuality is largely a matter of conditioning.”⁶ Perhaps this is why sex authorities Masters and Johnson emphasized, “It is of vital importance that all professionals in the mental health field keep in mind that the homosexual man or woman is basically a man or woman by genetic determination and homosexually oriented by learned preference.”⁷

There are people who have “same-sex attraction” (SSA). And there are also people who have what is known as “gender dysphoria,” which is defined as an experience of clinically significant distress due to a “marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least six months duration.”⁸

Our culture’s answers to the issue of sexual orientation

⁵ Michael Lefebvre, Editor, *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012), 18.

⁶ Cited by W. B. Pomeroy in *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 147.

⁷ Cited in Van den Aardweg, *Homosexuality and Hope* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1985), 32.

⁸ A Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *Gender as Calling: The Gospel & Gender Identity* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2017), 8-9.

and gender identity are inadequate. The vast majority of people dealing with these issues still struggle.

So, what is God's answer?

III. God's Answer to the Issue of Sexual Orientation

Third, let's examine God's answer to the issue of sexual orientation.

Biblically, a person's social gender is identified with his or her anatomical sex. People are created by God with a male or female anatomical sex, and that sexual identity marks the person's gender identity. (There are, however, a very small number of people born with ambiguous anatomy, but that is beyond the scope of this message.)

The Bible's foundational statement on sexual orientation and gender identity is Genesis 1:26–28: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Note that this passage introduces God's design for humanity as “male” and “female.” These two categories are not merely descriptive of all humans; they are prescriptive. These are not the two outer ranges, with a gradation between them. No, there are only two categories: male and female.

This passage also conflates sex and gender. The biological

classification is exactly the same as the social classification. The reproductive and social duties of the man is presented within the same gender, as it is for the woman. Lefebvre notes, “Nowhere in Scripture are men or women exhorted to question their gender identity based on tastes or mannerisms—let alone their sexual orientation.”⁹

Modern proponents for the sexual revolution say that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality when it is properly understood. They say that homosexual promiscuity in the Bible related to cultic prostitution or to rape or to pederasty. They argue that the Bible approves of homosexual relationships, if they are committed, life-long, monogamous relationships. The problem that Scripture simply does not teach what they assert.

There are a number of passages in Scripture that deal with the issue of homosexuality. These are: Genesis 19:1-29 (the account of Sodom and Gomorrah), Judges 19:1-30 (the Levite’s concubine), Leviticus 18:22; 20:13 (the Mosaic prohibitions), Romans 1:26-27 (Paul on unnatural desire), 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (Paul’s list of defilements), 1 Timothy 1:8-11 (Paul’s application of the Ten Commandments), Jude 5-7 (Sodom and Gomorrah remembered). We don’t have time to examine each of these texts, but I invite you to read their treatment in *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation* by Michael Lefebvre.

However, let me draw your attention to Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination,” and also 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.” Some argue that these Mosaic prohibitions were given to God’s people as they were about to enter the Promised Land

⁹ Michael Lefebvre, Editor, *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation*, 18.

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because they were not to imitate the ritual, cultic, idolatrous worship of the Canaanites. Others argue that these are ceremonial and not moral laws. However, these arguments simply do not hold up. The wider context of these passages, seen in Leviticus 18:1-30 and 20:10-27, makes it clear that these were not ceremonial laws, but moral laws required of all people.

Let me also make a brief comment about Romans 1:26-27, which states, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” One of the arguments that some use in support of homosexual relationships is that Paul is “condemning any individual engaging in sexual activity contrary to *his own, innate nature*, rather than condemning sexual activity that is contrary to the natural, created order.”¹⁰ Michael Lefebvre answers:

This view fails to take into account the fact that the whole passage hearkens back to creation (vv. 20. 25), where God determined the nature of mankind’s sexual make-up. He united a man and a woman as biblically natural partners. The point of Romans chapter one is that humanity has rebelliously twisted God’s natural order, including sexual design, hence God has given them over even further to the sin they crave. The point is not that individuals have different inborn identities with which they must act consistently (their *own* sexual nature), but that the Lord has established the normative identity of male and female for all humanity to be expressed sexually between only one man and one woman being joined as one flesh (*mankind’s* sexual nature). Though some may indeed

¹⁰ Michael Lefebvre, Editor, *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation*, 51.

experience strong same-sex attractions, God's people must know from Scripture that while such temptations are real and perhaps even biologically influenced, they are not objectively natural but the result of human sinfulness requiring redemption.¹¹

Conclusion

Therefore, when we are confronted with the issue of sexual orientation, we should give heed to God's answer as set forth in Scripture.

God's answer, however, must also be given pastorally.

First, the Bible clearly teaches that there are only two sexes: male and female. There are two genders, and these genders correspond to our biological sex.

Second, if you are experiencing sexual orientation or gender identity issues, please talk with someone whom you trust.

Third, grace is available to all. All of us deal with sin and suffering in our lives. Paul struggled with an unnamed affliction that God never removed from him (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). But God did promise that his grace was sufficient for him.

Fourth, the gospel provides the only hope to any of us. God promises the total redemption of our whole man in Christ. In this life, we must continually make use of the means of grace to deal with our sin and grow in Christlikeness.

Finally, let us be a fellowship of God's people who love all people, regardless of the issue with which they are struggling. It grieves my heart when I hear people make off-color comments about those struggling with sexual orientation gender identity issues. May we love others as we wish to be loved. Amen.

¹¹ Michael Lefebvre, Editor, *The Gospel & Sexual Orientation*, 51.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
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