

The Gospel & LGBTQ+ Issues

Resources

- * Sam Allbery, *Is God Anti-Gay?* and *7 Myths about Singleness*
 - Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*
 - Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender*
 - * Ed Shaw, *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: the Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life*
- * Allbery and Shaw are pastors who struggle with same-sex attraction and live celibate lives.

1. Christians should face these issues biblically, both in terms of *truth* and in terms of our *tone*:

- The danger of dehumanizing LGBTQ+ people:
 - “We need to begin by remembering that we are not simply talking about ‘issues’ here, but people: precious individuals, each created and loved by God. Most of them don’t have a strong political agenda or any desire to fight in a ‘culture war’; they are simply trying to cope with feelings that may well cause them great distress.” (Roberts, 14).
- The danger of fear dominating love:
 - In 2015, after the US Supreme Court (*Obergefell vs. Hodges*) de-prohibited same-sex marriage across the United States, many Christians struck a self-protective tone. Although not without merit, this response was fear-driven and self-focused. Jesus promised us persecution (Mk. 13:13, 2 Tim. 3:12)!
 - The real tragedy of *Obergefell vs. Hodges* is not that the American church might be persecuted, but that the highest court acted with hatred toward our neighbor – officially sanctioning (and thereby encouraging) a counterfeit, idolatrous identity that, like all idolatry, leads to eternal destruction.
- How to speak:
 - “As a Christian, it is *because* I love my LGBTQ+ neighbors that I pray for them to repent of this pattern of life. I don’t want to kill them; I want them to live with me forever in the new creation! Because I believe the Bible, I believe its warning that embracing the LGBTQ+ identity and lifestyle will lead my neighbors away from such a happy ending.”
 - “**Jesus has a better plan for your life.** He wants you to build your identity around who he says you are, rather than what you feel you are.”

2. “But the Bible doesn’t actually say all that much about this subject...”

- In some sense, this is true – the Bible is not as sex-obsessed as modern Western “expressive individualism.”
- Yet in its intended sense, this statement is false. In many places Scripture speaks explicitly and prohibitively against homosexual activity (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:18-32; 1Cor. 6:9-11, 1Tim. 1:8-11, Jude 7).
- Jesus implicitly spoke against all forms of sexual immorality when he cited Genesis 2:24 as *the* God-revealed model for human sexuality (Mat. 19:3-10, Mk. 10:2-9).

Note: “In the end, what keeps me on the path [of obedience to Christ] is not so much individual proof texts from Scripture or the sheer weight of the church’s traditional teaching against homosexual practice. Instead, it is, I think, those texts and traditions and teachings *as I see them from within the true story of what God has done in Jesus Christ* – and the whole perspective on life and the world that flows from that story, as expressed definitively in Scripture... **I abstain from homosexual behavior because of the power of the Scriptural story.**” (Shaw, 24)

3. The issue of LGBTQ+ behavior should be framed within larger biblical categories:

- Like all sexual activity outside of biblical marriage, it is a species of sexual immorality.
- Furthermore, sexual immorality is a species of idolatry and self-worship. (Gen. 3:5, Rom. 1:25).
- However, there is a real sense in which LGBTQ+ activity is an escalation in rebellion against God. It is contrary not just to *special* revelation (God’s law in Scripture) but also *natural* revelation (God’s design in our physiology). Paul describes it as engaging in “relations... that are contrary to nature,” (Rom. 1:26).

4. “But I was born this way...” or, “God made me this way...”

- This is possibly true as an *explanation*, but not as a *justification*:
 - Scripture is clear that the original sin of Adam and Eve spread a curse over the entire natural order (Gen. 3:17-19, Isa. 25:6-8, Jer. 17:9, Rom. 8:19-21). We are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5) – sin affects us when we are but a single cell! As we grow we learn that “the desires of the flesh are contrary to the Spirit,” (Gal. 5:17). Therefore it is no exaggeration to say **sin affects us on the subatomic level**.
 - Consequently, it is possible that a person may be born with a natural, fallen tendency toward same-sex attraction, as toward other many other sins: “Our own sense of desire and delight, or of pleasure and of pain, is not self-validating. People may, through no conscious decision of their own, be drawn to binge drinking, to promiscuity, to rage, to self-pity, or to any number of sinful behaviors.” (DeYoung, 111)
- Nevertheless, we must distinguish between inherited disposition and a conscious decision:
 - It is no sin to be tempted; Jesus was tempted (Heb. 4:15). Sin comes when we give in (Jas. 1:14-15).
 - In any area of deep temptation, even if it is genetically-inherited, Scripture’s call remains clear: rely on Christ (Gal. 2:20), exercise self-control by his Spirit (Gal. 5:23), put to death our sin (Col. 3:5), and believe the promise that God will not permit you to be tempted beyond your ability (1 Cor. 10:13).

5. The fundamental issue here is identity: how/what we *feel* does not determine who we *are*:

- Labels matter: “We tend to live out the identities that people give us or that we give ourselves.” (Shaw, 35)
- “I tend to avoid using the term [‘gay’]... this is a way for me to recognize that the kind of sexual attractions I experience are not fundamental to my identity. **They are part of what I feel but are not who I am in a fundamental sense. I am far more than my sexuality.** Take another kind of appetite... my love for meat does not mean I would want someone to think that ‘carnivore’ was the primary category through which to understand me. It is part of the picture, but does not get to the heart of who I am.” (Allberry, 8-9).
- “**Nothing in the Bible encourages us to give sex the exalted status it has in our culture**, as if finding our purpose, our identity, and our fulfillment all rest on what we can or cannot do with our private parts. Jesus is the fullest example of what it means to be human, and he never had sex. How did we come to think that the most intense emotional attachment and the most fulfilling aspects of life can only be expressed through sexual intimacy?” (DeYoung, 119)

6. How can we best minister to those with LGBTQ+ desires?

- “**Read the Gospels, and see how Jesus treated sinful and broken people like you and me...**” (Roberts, 67)
- Toward non-Christians who identify as LGBTQ+:
 - Keep the focus on the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Once they come to see him as God and Savior, they will then need help working out the implications of what it means to trust him – i.e., sexual repentance. But until they see him as such, why should they care what he has to say about this?
- Toward Christians struggling with these desires:
 - Struggling against these desires is not failure; it is a mark of the Spirit’s work in their lives!
 - LGBTQ+ desires are not irresistible. “But you were washed, you were sanctified...” (1 Cor. 6:11):
 - Over time, God may change and heal LGBTQ+ sexual desires – there are examples.
 - However, God may also choose to permit them to remain during this life as thorns in the flesh that remind of the all-sufficiency of Christ’s grace (2 Cor. 12:7-9).
 - God will be with them (1 Cor. 10:13) and we will be with them (Gal. 6:2).
 - “**Who you are is not defined by how you feel, but by what and whom Jesus says you are!**”

7. How should we interact with LGBTQ+ people outside of the church – for example, at work?

- Principles: 1) Do not lie (Col. 3:9),
2) Do not seek confrontation (1 Th. 4:11, 1 Tim. 2:2),
3) When confrontation occurs, do all you can to keep the focus on Christ (1 Pet. 4:14-15).
- *Ex. #1*: Co-workers who ‘transition’ between genders. How should Christians respond when told that from now on, ‘he’ must be referred to as ‘she’?
- *Ex. #2*: Corporate travel. What should a Christian do if asked, on business travel, to room with a person who has ‘transitioned’ to their gender, but who is biologically of the opposite gender?