



What is Our Response to Homosexuality?

Definition of Homosexuality

According to the Encyclopedia of Bioethics, a homosexual is someone who:

- has a predominant attraction towards members of the same sex (same-sex attraction, SSA), and
- seeks or would like to seek actual sexual acts with a person of the same sex.

What is Our Response to Homosexuality?

- 1) What the Bible says about homosexuality?
- 2) How to respond doctrinally to homosexuality?
- 3) How to respond pastorally to homosexuality?

What the Bible Says about Homosexuality

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [Genesis 1:27]

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” [Genesis 2:18]

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

[Genesis 2:24-25]

God's Intention for Sexual Conduct

- The sexes complement each other.
- The command to procreate in Genesis 1:28 is a natural extension of God's intention for sex.
- Human sexuality is a gift from God, and sex is a profound expression of love between a man and a woman within the covenant relationship of marriage.

God's Intention for Sexual Conduct

- Sexual intercourse is not for everyone.
- Outside of marriage, it commands celibacy.
- This applies not only for those with same-sex attraction, but also for heterosexuals (those attracted to the opposite sex).

Homosexuality in the OT

- **Genesis 19**: Story of Sodom and Gomorrah
- The men of Sodom wanted to have homosexual intercourse with Lot's visitors.
- “just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued **unnatural desire**, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” **[Jude 7]**

Homosexuality in the OT

- “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable”. [Leviticus 18:22]
- “If a man lies with a man as with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable”. [Leviticus 20:13]

Homosexuality in the NT

- “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

[1 Corinthians 6:9-10]

Homosexuality in the NT

-“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 1:22-27]

Homosexuality in the NT

- In Romans 1:22-27, Paul associates homosexual acts and other immoral acts with idolatry.
- Theological point: when man inverts his relationship with God, it becomes the basis for inverted relationships between man and man.
- Homosexual relationships, along with strife, envy, murder, pride, are all manifestations of perverted and disordered human relationships.

What the Bible Says about Homosexuality

- Although the Bible does not speak about homosexuality very often, every passage that deals with it regards it as a sin.
- When it comes to talking about sins, the Bible says a lot more about idolatry, oppression, lack of compassion for the poor and lack of love for our brothers and sisters.

What the Bible Says about Homosexuality

- When the Bible speaks about homosexuality, it's always in terms of homosexual behaviour (acts and practices). They are regarded as sin.
- Regarding same-sex attraction (SSA), the Bible does not address specifically.
- There is a difference between those who has SSA, and those who choose to indulge and act on those attractions.

What the Bible Says about Homosexuality

- The Bible does not treat homosexuality as especially repugnant when compared to other sins. Instead, it condemns it together with other sins.
- Homosexual practices are wrong, just as murder, envy, pride, slander and idolatry are wrong because they all pervert human relationships.
- This Biblical balance must be maintained whenever we discuss homosexuality.

What is Our Response to Homosexuality?

- We must respond doctrinally, and also pastorally to homosexuality.
- Responding doctrinally means being clear with where God's boundaries are. This is so we don't fall under false doctrines and end up condoning sin.
- It defeats the purpose, if in our attempts to get people not to commit the sin of homosexuality, we end up committing the sin of "un-grace".

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- We do not condone the act of seeking sexual acts with a person of the same sex. This means we don't agree with it, don't encourage it and don't advocate for it. We also prevent the spread of false doctrine.
- We express the same firm stance for other sins, with the same rigour.

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- We need to have a deeper theology of sin. One major component of the theology of sin is hypocrisy, and the inconsistent way we see the sins of others.
- Is our reaction to homosexual sin consistent to how we approach other sins?
- Are we as harsh on our own sins, the same way we are harsh with homosexual practices?

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- **Sin of Pride:** prioritise our own ego. Belief that we deserve mercy while others deserve condemnation.
- **Self-Deception:** blind ourselves to our own spiritual condition.
- **Usurping God's Role:** taking the place of the Ultimate Judge, forgetting that only God has the authority to judge perfectly. Human judgment is inherently flawed.
- **Double Standards:** We demand perfect holiness from our neighbours, yet grant easy exemptions to ourselves.

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- We don't appreciate it and get offended, if people insensitively call us out for our sins.
- Why does such ungrace then happen more for those struggling with same-sex attraction? Statistics have shown that many don't feel welcome in a church. Being judged insensitively is one of the reasons.
- It's easy for us to condemn a sin we know we will never commit.

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- While the church rejects homosexual practices, as with other sins, it also condemns homophobia and all expressions of prejudice and discrimination.
- Homophobia: the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals. In the case of homosexuals themselves, self-loathing.
 - psychologist George Weinberg

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- How do I respond doctrinally if I struggle with same-sex attraction?
- Realise that our identity is fundamentally based on our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our identity is not defined by sexuality, though we acknowledge that it is an integral part of who a person is.
- Understand that although sexuality is a gift from God, sexual temptations do not come from God. We should then refrain from sexual activities prohibited in Scripture.

Responding Doctrinally to Homosexuality

- Sex is not everything. This is true for both heterosexuals and people who struggle with SSA. Every Christian struggles with sexual temptation and must refrain from certain forms of sexual activities.
- The faithful Christian struggling with SSA is in a similar position with the heterosexual Christian who is not married. Both must commit to a life of celibacy.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- Responding pastorally means building towards a grace-filled community, a safe space for sinners to work through their struggles.
- The church is not a “safe place” in that it condones sin. Rather, it is “safe place” in that it accepts anybody and everybody as they are, and points them to the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- The church must learn to walk with people from all strands of life, including those with SSA.
- The church is akin to a hospital for the broken, not a country club for saints. We are all broken people in need of grace.
- How do we regard people? Do we tend to define people superficially and microscopically? Do we perceive others the way God perceives: precious, beautiful and valuable to God.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- We should not define people by their sexuality. A person is so much more than their sexuality.
- Don't link everything about them to their sexuality, or immediately assume they pursue a homosexual lifestyle.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- Extend our hospitality and friendship, not only to those with SSA within the church, but also in your schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods.
- Be a good friend. Learn of their world and their challenges. Identify with them!

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- Do not confuse friendship with condoning sin.
- Don't exhibit Pharisee behaviour, and complain that people spend time with sinners. Rather, we are called to be like Jesus, who see no problem hanging out with sinners. Also, we are all sinners ourselves.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- For those coming alongside people who struggle with homosexuality, we have to hold the balance between truth and grace in our ministry (so perfectly blended in Christ) in order to guide the vulnerable.
- Discipleship must come from a place of love and pastoral care, not cold judgementalism. This does not mean condoning wrong choices and actions. Rather, feedback, rebuke and disciplining is appropriate when done with love and gentleness.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- Through a grace-filled community, there have been testimonies where some gradually find deliverance from their homosexual inclinations.
- Others may have to struggle with same-sex attraction their whole lives, but they gain self-control through Christ and are helping to minister to Christians facing the same struggles. God can use Christians with SSA mightily.

Responding Pastorally to Homosexuality

- Some Christians with SSA suffer from self-loathing, and pray for their inclinations (thorns) to be removed.
- Paul struggled with his thorn. God did not remove it despite constant prayers. As painful as his thorn was, it kept him humble, reminding him to depend on God. He could also minister better to people with similar thorns.
- God often uses the broken to show His glory. Every broken person can become a conqueror in Christ, and in turn, become an invaluable ambassador for God.

Concluding Summary

- As a church, let us stand firm to hold on to the truths of our faith, but also dispense grace. Don't commit the sin of ungrace in the midst of defending doctrinal truths.
- Using OT description of ancient cities with clearly marked city gates, our church gates are to be “open but guarded”.
- “Open” to all who seek to know the community and to know God. “Guarded” in the sense of guarding the fellowship against false doctrine, or wrongly-intentioned persons who may seek to disrupt the life and faith of the church.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What should be the church's attitude towards practising homosexuals? What should the attitude of a Christian experiencing SSA be?
- 2) What are some behaviours by church members that may make persons of SSA feel unwelcomed? What would you like to see change in our church regarding this?
- 3) How can we support families and persons experiencing SSA better? What resources can we build?