

Sex, Lies and the Gay Debate

At a time when homosexuality is widely embraced. tje Bible's message hasn't changed.

A battle is raging in our society over the issue of homosexuality. On the surface, it appears that those on the "right" side of this battle are losing. Consider these facts:

- * Religious homosexuals have made stunning gains and captured worldwide attention in the church.

- * Our nation's judiciary has become infected with activist judges who care little about traditional sexual morality.

- * Lawmakers have taken up the cry of tolerance for homosexuality.

- * Religious leaders have lost a hard-gained moral voice because of repeated divorce, ego battles, sexual scandals and money pursuits.

These are not simply exaggerated generalizations. In Los Angeles, a major Pentecostal denomination's leading bishop became embroiled in controversy when an openly homosexual clergyman was invited to preach at his church. The Episcopal Church recently consecrated an openly gay priest as a bishop.

What's more, a staggering juggernaut of social, religious, communication, educational, political and entertainment elements have aligned themselves with the homosexual movement.

As the battle has intensified, Christians have experienced what seems to be burnout on the issue of homosexuality. Many have adopted a tolerant attitude because it is safe. But tolerance is in direct opposition to the gospel message, which declares that sinners—including homosexuals—must acknowledge their state, repent and accept the truth that Christ died to give them freedom from the power and penalty of sin.

Burnout can be attributed to several things:

The voices of persistent homosexual activists who demand “rights.” This constant speaking out and the hostility and intimidation that attends it cause people to simply shut down when same-sex issues arise. And because comfort rather than conflict is a major goal of many Christians, they neglect to do the necessary spiritual warfare regarding homosexuality.

Confusion about the semantics of homosexuality. The Bible says God is not the author of confusion. That tells us who is behind the social and religious vortex over homosexuality. Is it right or wrong? Are people born gay? Can people truly change? Is the Bible out of date? The enemy wants to keep us questioning rather than standing on our knowledge of what the Word says.

Failure by Christians to study God’s Word and properly apply it. When Christians are confronted with same-sex issues they are ill-equipped to respond properly. They simply don’t know what the Bible teaches.

In reality, the battle involving homosexuality and its meaning and implications for all of us is merely an outgrowth of one of the oldest struggles known to man. This battle is one waged

against the veracity, credibility and authority of God Himself.

An Ancient Question

Behind the “debates” about homosexuality, abortion, racism, corporate greed, “intergenerational” relationships and a host of other ills are Satan’s sinister and subtle words whispered so long ago: “‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’” As quickly as the woman repeated verbatim the command of God, Satan followed it with a voice-over: “‘You will not surely die’” (Gen. 3:1,4; NKJV).

Today the question—Did God really say?—is the same; it is just focused on a different issue, that of sexuality. The mutations have now taken the form of statements. And for Christians who hold God’s Word as the absolute compass for morality, today’s educated guesses about what is right and what is wrong have the potential of taking them off track.

The question has been asked many times: What does the Bible say about homosexuality? An even more important question may be, What does the Bible mean when it refers to homosexuality?

At the core of arguments about homosexuality and various moral issues of our times is whether or not the Bible is a credible authority to govern our lives in light of new “scientific revelations” about humanity. In question is the veracity of the Scripture and its application to human living.

Christians must resist the pull to treat Scripture as relative and subject to the latest poll or study. In a world in which the winds of societal change blow erratically, our security

lies in knowing that the Word of God is forever settled in heaven. Knowing that God's Word is an unchanging source of truth, we should courageously contend for the faith.

Answers to modern attempts to affirm, tolerate and portray homosexuality as a valid expression of the human sexual picture can be found in the Word of God. In fact, there are numerous Scriptures that deal with homosexuality. Through personal study I have found 16 passages and verses in the Old Testament and nine in the New Testament.

Collectively, these living words address every aspect of same-gender commingling that can be reasonably brought up. I have divided them into two categories: explicit and implicit.

Explicit Scriptures clearly address the issue and require no explanation. Implicit Scriptures are those by which one can derive meaning from what is implied or indirectly expressed. They contain a meaning that is not readily apparent.

Leviticus 18:22, for example, is an explicit Scripture: "'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.'" What God is saying is undeniable—he prohibits two people of the same gender from engaging in a sexual relationship.

Notice that the Scripture does not allow for consensual sex between same-gender partners, as religious homosexuals and their revisionist cohorts claim. Based on this verse, there is not even a remote possibility that God would sanction such behavior. According to this explicit rendering, it is forbidden.

Titus 1:15-16 is implicit: "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (NKJV).

Paul's harsh—but inspired—words paint a picture of those who practice homosexual sin but claim to be disciples of Christ. To marry such an abominable practice to the name of Christ in phrases such as "gay Christian" reflects a reprobate ideology. As it is written: "'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. 2:19).

The verse from Titus implies that people who practice sin are "abominable" (the same term used in Leviticus to describe the tragic state of homosexual relations) and view everything through the screen of their brokenness rather than the truth of the gospel. Such darkened perceptions skew every righteous intention.

This is why homosexuals can easily claim that King David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers. They have darkened minds and darkened consciences.

Are Homosexuals Born Gay?

In our society there is a prevailing assumption that individuals are "born gay" or that homosexuality is a genetic trait. I believe that my life and the lives of thousands of other former homosexuals and lesbians are in direct contradiction to such an assumption.

Besides, this argument is irrelevant if we take into account

the Scripture's clear teaching on transformation and change (see Rom. 12:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Matt. 16:24). Transformation and change, along with freedom from the penalty of sin, are the key fruits of a life submitted to Jesus Christ.

If we cannot expect change from the oppressive Adamic nature that enslaves us, then what need do we have of Jesus? His advent, coming, death, burial and resurrection all guarantee that the new birth is a new start. If it is indeed a new start, how can one continue to practice without remorse something so repugnant to the holiness of God?

We must also take into account where these theories of being "born gay" originated. They did not come from the Bible. They are not part of the historical concerns of the early church fathers. They have not been revealed by any credible prophet of God.

The truth is that in 1991 homosexual activists touting their flawed "studies" began spoon-feeding the notion to the media, who without any critical analysis bought it and began preaching it as fact.

We can see the devastating effects of such cultural lies on the church. Now, less than 15 years later, many prominent churches and church leaders are calling for "full inclusion" of unrepentant homosexuals based on this false premise.

In Psalm 51 we learn that we were shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin. In other words, all humans are born with a propensity to sin. It's in our spiritual genes.

Perhaps, on that understanding, one could reason that a person

might be “born gay.” However, following this line of reasoning, one would also have to acknowledge homosexuality as sin. The inevitable conclusion? As sin, it must be repented of and forsaken.

Furthermore, if the born-gay theory were theologically or socially plausible, how would it fare against Jesus’ words in John 3:7, “‘You must be born again’”? That statement alone should put to rest any questions about homosexuality as a genetic predisposition.

In any case, the focus should be the forgiveness and healing Jesus freely offers to every homosexual sinner who will accept it. It is an offer no one can afford to pass up.

The church must shift the dynamics of the discussion to what matters most—Jesus saves! Prolonged debates about genetics will save no one, but the powerful, life-transforming, good news of the gospel will accomplish what God pleases.

What the Bible Says

It should be no wonder to those who pay attention to the Bible that eventually religious scholars and theologians would be asked by affirmation-starved homosexuals to reinterpret Scripture for them. Believers may be partly to blame.

For years, we have preached a prejudicial gospel that has ignored the plight of the homosexual strugglers in the pews. We have summed up this gospel in two words: “hell” and “abomination.”

At age 13, when I was already conflicted by what I felt and feared, I was told that homosexuals are going to hell. Somehow I knew that statement referred to me—but I didn't want to go to hell.

Many of the gays and lesbians running in and out of the bars, parks and sex rooms are children of the church who have been driven out by the church's lack of concern. Her one-size-fits-all attitude does not allow for deliverance—only hell.

It stands to reason that Satan would offer homosexuals their own church, their own form of the gospel, their own teachers and preachers and bishops. They were ripe for the picking.

The Bible tells us, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). One of those "fables" revolves around the original intentions of the Creator.

God created humanity male and female and encouraged them to enter into a sexual relationship. God pronounced that good. There is not even a hint that two males or two females were created and encouraged to have sexual relations together (see Gen. 1:26-28).

Genesis 1:26-28 is the official historical record on the original intent for human sexuality. In other words, God created a "gold standard" for human sexual relationships. Whether you or I reach it, that standard will never change.

People who struggle against same-sex attractions, desires and behavior are not living by this standard. But they can be delivered and healed to live productive and fruitful lives.

I intentionally use the phrase “struggle against” as opposed to “struggle with” because the connotations are important. “Against” says I do not want this as a part of my life. “With” says I am resigned to having it dominate and sidetrack me.

Former homosexuals joyfully point to one definitive Scripture that mentions them and the redemptive process they are embracing: “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites ... will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

When I met and married my wife, Dee, almost 12 years ago, she and I both were clueless about what my post-homosexual life would be like. As painful as my past sin was to me, my wife was not the cause of my change; rather, she was the fruit of my change.

She was the gift of God to a lonely man yearning to please his Deliverer. Now, with our four children, we are living testaments to the wonderful benefits of living life submitted to Christ.

Our responsibility as Christians is to pour love out without measure on those who struggle to overcome homosexuality. Compassion was the hallmark of the Chief Shepherd, and as His disciples, we should be characterized by it too as we

encourage them to embrace the freedom Christ offers.

BUMMI NIYONU ANDERSON

Albany, Georgia

My struggle with lesbianism began when I was around 4 years old. I was too young to know I was gay; but I knew I was different. I knew I was drawn to a female cousin of mine. It was the beginning of my struggle for sexual identity.

My struggle manifested itself early in how I dressed (shorts, jeans and sneakers), how I behaved (playing sports and being a tomboy), and eventually how I chose my relationships. Somehow I developed a strong attraction for women, which led me into sexual and emotional relationships. I always ended up hurt, angry and deeply depressed. Sometimes I wanted to kill myself.

I got saved in 1997. At that time I was involved in a sexual relationship that I was enjoying. I did not come to Jesus because I was running from something or unhappy. I simply found a "greater love." I came out of the gay lifestyle when I realized God had greater plans and purposes for me.

The biggest thing salvation did for me was give me the freedom to choose. When I was in darkness, I saw myself as a lesbian and thought the only relationship I could ever have was a sexual relationship with a woman. Freedom in Christ has taught me that I can have healthy God-given relationships.

I learned that there is a process of deliverance from homosexuality, but salvation is the first step. Making the decision to follow Christ and repenting is essential.

The key to my freedom involved three things: seeking God in prayer, reading the Bible and developing healthy relationships. God spoke to me in prayer and through His Word, and He put people in my life who reinforced what God had already said about me.

LINDA CARTER
Mobile, Alabama

I grew up as the youngest in a family of six children. For as long as I can remember, I was attracted to women. As I grew older, these feelings became stronger.

I was raised in a strong and loving Christian home. But I could never talk about what was going on inside me, so I buried my secret.

In the fall of 1980, I enrolled in a junior college and had my first sexual encounter with a woman. We were together for a while, but ultimately our relationship ended in chaos and confusion.

The pain I felt after our breakup led me into obsessive drinking and partying. I started going to gay bars and parties. Eventually I began dating again and became involved with six other women. None of these relationships lasted more than a year. I was living the "gay life," but instead of feeling good about it, I felt trapped.

During those years, I felt as if I were on a roller-coaster. I prayed and I prayed to God: "When is this ride going to end? Are You ever going to change me?"

I did not know this at the time, but my mother never stopped praying for me. Even though we had never discussed my lesbianism, she knew. After she died in 1995, I gave my life to the Lord and began to seek Him in every way I knew how: through Christian television, prayer and reading the Bible.

I noticed that my desires for women began to fade, and soon I was not struggling with them at all. I believe this happened because I was truly focused on the Lord. I was hungry for Him.

Now I have great peace and joy in my heart. I know that God created me to be a woman, and deep inside me He has assured me that this is what I am.

JAMES PENNYMON

Atlanta, Georgia

I am currently working as a customer service coordinator in the travel industry. All my family members also live in the metro Atlanta area and have been a great support system throughout my life.

I was in the homosexual lifestyle from around 16 or 17 years of age, searching for support through the members of a gay-teen support group, who told me to just give in and accept it.

Somehow, through the darkness, I could feel God pulling on me, wanting to show me something different. I answered the call in 1996 and came out of the homosexual lifestyle (clubs, parties and so on). However, I entered into a relationship with a man at that time that lasted for six years. The last 2-1/2 years of that relationship, I felt the Holy Spirit pulling much

harder at my heart, and He was maturing me, even in the midst of the situation I was in, because I wanted to know Him.

I accepted Jesus as my Savior on my birthday in 1997. After attending a local ministry called LifeLines in 2002, I was able to end the six-year relationship. In 2003, I was set free from bondage on all levels. Now I feel it's my duty to show others what God is able to do.

Currently, at age 33, I facilitate an overcomers ministry at my church, helping those who want to come out of the gay lifestyle. I also am developing a new overcomers program to help men and women live fruitful, disciplined lives as Christians.

In addition, I am allowing God to use me to speak to others in congregational settings and to educate leaders to effectively minister to homosexuals.

BOB RAGAN
Fairfax, Virginia

Growing up, I sensed a separation from my family and peers. In high school, after being exposed to homosexual pornography, the label "homosexual" became seared on my heart and further isolated me.

In church I heard only condemnation for homosexual behavior. I felt condemned and alone. In 1976, turning my back on God, I entered into active homosexuality and remained in that lifestyle for 11 years.

The illusions that the world tries to promote about the “normality” of homosexuality were shattered for me in 1987. I realized the pit I was in and knew my heavenly Father was anticipating my return. I also realized that earlier in my life I had accepted Jesus only as Savior, but now I wanted Him to truly be Lord of my life.

In 1988, after I experienced what I consider to be a spiritual breakdown, the Lord led me to Regeneration, a ministry in Northern Virginia. I ceased feeling isolated when I met others who were searching, as I was, for freedom from homosexuality.

I heard redemptive testimonies of men and women who had walked out of homosexuality. I began to understand the root issues that contributed to the development of same-sex attractions.

All I learned revolved around who I was in Jesus. The Holy Spirit took off the label “homosexual” and put on the label “son.” I also found a church where the men supported and loved me unconditionally as their brother.

God showed me that I am not being healed from my sexual brokenness but sanctified from it. I’m often asked if I am married, as if marriage is an indicator of being truly changed.

I have experienced many significant changes that have resulted in true freedom from overwhelming homosexual attractions. But I continue to embrace the process of my sanctification. I celebrate my singleness and await God’s continued manifestation of change in my life.

STEVE ROOKS

Albany, New York

I experienced no childhood molestation or early affinity to the gay lifestyle. With the exception of having an emotionally distant father and being constantly teased and ridiculed by many of my peers, I had a “normal” childhood. It was not until I was in college that I had my first homosexual experience.

My partner was not the classic gay man. He was a star college athlete and by most observations a “lady’s man.” He was everything I felt I was not—secure in himself, strong and powerful—but he was also willing to accept me for who I was.

Though I knew there was something inherently wrong about our first encounter, I was powerless to resist his advances. Although I also dated women at that time, he and I were sexually involved for almost all my college years.

It was not until my senior year in college that I began pondering the big issues of life. I spent a year and a half reading the Bible, hoping to discover who God is and who I was created to be. This pursuit continued after graduation.

During my first year as a dancer in New York, I became involved in a number of relationships, the final one lasting for more than four years. I had somehow become convinced that God had made me gay and I would probably be that way for the rest of my life.

However, after I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ at the Brooklyn Tabernacle in 1981, I began to question my sexuality. In February of 1983, I began my journey “out of the life.”

I became one of the founding members of . Ministry that year and was a counselor and leader in the ministry for a decade. Today, I am the leader of one of the ministry chapters.

I have been married for almost 15 years. I am a choreographer and instructor of dance, with my lovely wife, Desiree, and two daughters. I am thrilled to say I have been out of homosexuality for more than 21 years.

MIRIAM PASSMORE
Miami, Florida

I am the second oldest of eight siblings. When I was growing up, I played football and basketball with my brothers because doing girl things was too boring. At age 6, I began having fantasies about having sex with my first-grade teacher, although I didn't know what sex was, and I became attracted to girls in my classroom. That's when I realized I was different.

Years later, a man whom I trusted took advantage of me, and I became bitter toward men. Not realizing what was happening, I began to take on the identity of the person who molested me. I became emotionally attracted to women.

Afraid my mother would find out about my feelings, I tried to suppress them. But my pain became so overwhelming that at the age of 13 I started drinking a six-pack of beer a day. I wanted to stay drunk for as long as I could because it took away the pain.

I didn't like the person I was. But at 16 I became sexually involved with an older woman. I lived a lesbian lifestyle for 20 years as a male impersonator.

One day while I was at work a young man told me about the love of God and prayed for me. Later I joined a church, where I received my deliverance.

I also went through counseling. I allowed God to deal with my issues—low self-esteem, anger, rejection, fear and rage. I became accountable to the elders in my church, and God put godly men and women around me who prayed for and with me.

I stayed in the Word of God and went to church as often as I could. The love from the people in my church helped me to overcome homosexuality and identify with my womanhood. I began to embrace my femininity and walk in freedom.

MATTHEW WALKER
Orlando, Florida

At 18 I began acting out sexually with men and rebelling against my parents. I had been a good son, but I felt they would reject me for being gay, so I rejected them first. I began to collect credit cards, amassing \$23,000 in debt. I chased my childhood dream of training marine mammals, pursuing it through three states and five cities.

At one time I embraced the “born gay” mentality. I rehearsed the reasoning in my head to defend myself against Christians.

Yet deep down inside, I wanted to be like them. I longed for “normal.” I didn’t want to be gay, but I didn’t know how not to be gay. No matter how natural homosexuality felt, it was simply a camouflage shroud that kept me from seeing the deep inner issues in my life.

I lived as a homosexual for 10 years. Part of that time I considered myself a gay Christian. But the Holy Spirit helped me see how much energy I had wasted on the gay lifestyle and how little I had invested in Christ.

I realized I needed to focus more on God. In one year, He began to fulfill the desires of my heart. Needs that had gone unmet for 10 years were the first ones on God's "to do" list. Christ began to repair my heart.

During my rebellious period, my father had never stopped praying for me. In fact, he invited me to come home and start all over. Not long after he issued the invitation, I returned home and left homosexuality behind.

During the last five years I've learned that change, through Jesus, is possible. I have battled masturbation, promiscuity and pornography and come out victorious. I celebrate a life restored.

JERRY A. ARMELLI
Cincinnati, Ohio

When I was 11, a boy I admired sexually molested me. He was part of a group of boys I respected and at the same time despised because I couldn't seem to fit in with them. I admired him because he had the physique, the sports trophies, the status and the male friends I didn't have. I really wanted to be friends with him the same way the other boys were friends with one another.

I came to the conclusion: "Ah! This is the place of

acceptance. This is the place I'm adequate, I'm good, I'm loved." The sexual relationship went on for several years, and it was seductive. I got hooked on the behavior.

However, I never consciously labeled myself as a homosexual until much later. Because I was raised in the church, I wanted to know what God thought about it, so I sought answers from many different sources. Some said it was wrong; others said it was OK. But something within me told me it was not good.

One day I spoke with the chaplain at my former high school, and he invited me to a charismatic Catholic prayer group. It was in that group that I met Jesus as a living, active, involved person. Over the next few weeks, I accepted Him as my Savior.

I didn't invite Him into my life to save me from homosexuality; rather, I knew I needed Him to atone for my sins. I wanted His strength, guidance and love with me always. Gradually, I made Him the Lord of my life—and my life began to turn around.

Today I no longer struggle with homosexuality. I love my wife and daughter and spend my time helping others find healing from homosexual feelings and identity, sexual abuse and sexual addiction.

DL Foster is the director of Witness Ministries, an outreach that offers hope, counseling and resources for people who want to leave homosexuality. For more information write him at P.O. Box 162953, Atlanta, GA 30321, or call 770-968-1011. Or you can learn about the ministry on the Web at .