

Are There Hidden Christian Messages in Macklemore's 'Same Love'?

Macklemore and Ryan Lewis rustled more than a few feathers with the release of "Same Love," which recently served as the soundtrack to the *en masse* gay marriage ceremony at this year's Grammys. Christian outcry against the single even included a dubbed-over rebuttal rap from pimp-turned-Jesus-freak "Bizzle." So what Christian ideas did the hip-hop tune accidentally affirm?

All right, so Macklemore isn't exactly a Bible scholar. In the song, he complains of Christians who "paraphrase a book written 3,500 years ago," even though Paul's exact words to Roman believers during the church age condemn some men for "their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error" (Rom. 1:27, NKJV).

But the refrain of the chorus—"I can't change, even if I tried"—resurrects an old debate. According to the Bible, do people change? If not, does that make your natural tendencies OK? Or if people can change, should they?

Biblical Message #1: You Can't Change Your Nature

Early in the song, Macklemore criticizes "right-wing conservatives" who "think [being gay] is a decision, and you can be cured with some treatment and religion."

He's dead right. Treatment and religion can't "cure" homosexuality.

Everyone—homosexual or otherwise—is born with the same inescapable nature, according to the Bible. That human nature

is called sin. Only two men ever had real free will: Adam, the first man, and Jesus Christ. But when Adam chose to disobey God, he left a state of perfection and entered a state of unrighteousness—where he had all his children, including you and me.

From our perspective, this is why no one's perfect. We're all "only human." But from God's perspective, it means we're just plain *bad*. Even if you're a decent, respectable person, you are not good in God's eyes (Ps. 14:1-3; Rom. 3:10-12). You can't escape your sinful nature any more than you can escape its consequence: death itself.

When Jesus came and lived among the hyper-religious Jewish leaders, He didn't criticize their belief in God's commandments; instead, He showed them how high God's standards really are. Some people applaud themselves for never cheating on their spouse, but Jesus said that whoever even looks at a woman with sexual desire is already an adulterer—in the heart (Matt. 5:28). If you've ever hated someone even for a moment, you're a murderer in your heart (1 John 3:15). If you've ever lied, you're a liar. And even if you've only sinned once, you might as well have broken every single law God ever wrote (James 2:10).

So according to the Bible, treatment and religious exercises are about as good at changing your core, unrighteous nature as medicine and food are at reviving a corpse. That's why the Bible says you're dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). Dead people can't diet or exercise back into good health; neither can sinners (whether gay or straight) get right with God by simply modifying behaviors.

What Macklemore Missed: Predisposition Isn't Permission

Lady Gaga ("Born This Way") missed this too. God did not make us as sinners; He gave Adam a choice, and Adam chose to enslave himself—and us by extension—to sin. And by obeying our

inborn sinful urges, we re-enlist daily as slaves to sin (Rom. 6:16). So while we're born with predispositions to do certain things, we're still held accountable.

In a culture where we let our feelings rule us, know that your natural inclination to feel or act a certain way doesn't equate to divine license. No jury would forgive a thief simply because he has kleptomaniacal tendencies. No court would acquit a murderer simply because he's always been an impulsive, angry person. And what wife would forgive her cheating husband simply because she knows he's drawn to curvy women?

But if we're all sinners by default, how can God judge us? Paul anticipated a similar question and wrote, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom. 9:20, ESV). Whether a potter finds a crack in his pot right when it comes out of the oven or when he pours water in it a week later, isn't he equally justified in throwing it away in both cases?

Even inborn desires must be tamed. Scripture consistently maintains that homosexuality, along with any kind of sexual activity outside a heterosexual marriage, is detestable to God. But Macklemore also forgot that desire isn't identity. We might be defined by our sin now, but God's will is for us to be defined by Him being in us (Gen. 1:27). But that's something only He can do. And by God's grace, He does.

Biblical Message #2: Man "Plays God" When He Uses Human Methods to Change Someone's Nature

After exposing the weaknesses of treatment and religion, Macklemore laments, "Man-made rewiring of a predisposition, playing God, aw, nah, here we go."

If these people are "playing God," then that means they're doing what only God can do. Macklemore emphasizes the negative

at the expense of the positive. The bad news is, no one can change you, not even you. The good news is God can!

What Macklemore Missed: God Made You, So He Can Remake You

Since Adam's sin is what gave us a default sin nature, we don't need new rules from God. We need a new "Adam."

His name is Jesus.

When you trust Jesus' death for you, your old life and nature dies. When you trust Jesus' resurrection for you, you are resurrected spiritually, granting you a new, righteous nature. This is where we get the term "born again" Christian—not "believe right" Christian or "do good" Christian, but *reborn*.

Jesus is not about helping you fix yourself. He recreates you. He doesn't just modify your behavior or give you new rules; He gives you brand new desires altogether. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV).

Does God magically rewire every predisposition of your brain and body? Sadly, no. I know several who have struggled with homosexuality even long after being transformed through Jesus. God miraculously changes some of them, but He calls others to wage all-out war against their sinful desires.

But when Christians fight sin, it's a fundamentally different kind of battle. A living, breathing person can fight an infection in his body; a dead person cannot. Christians aren't enslaved to sin anymore, but freed and purchased by Christ. So sin's call is like an old slave master: You could go back, but why return when he has no control over you?

Moreover, God promises that He will give you a brand-new body one day, renewed to be like Jesus (1 Cor. 15:50-53). And in this body, all your struggle is replaced with effortless, joyous obedience.

Whether from birth you've been drawn to the same sex or to opposite-sex lust, premarital sex, pornography, pride, lying, greed or gluttony, the solution is the same. Don't settle for heart surgery when what you need is a full transplant. Jesus, who died and is now alive again forever (Rev. 1:18), can give you a new nature—His perfect nature.

Identify yourself with Jesus, and trade in your “same love” for “For God so loved” (John 3:16).