

Once Gay, Always Gay?

A new law in California tells gay teens it's impossible to change their sexual orientation. But what if they want to change?

I have a confession to make: I have prayed for many people who struggle with homosexual feelings, and I have asked the Holy Spirit to help them overcome those urges. According to the state of California, that makes me a criminal if the person I prayed for was under 18.

California has banned so-called "reparative therapy," which is used to cure minors of their homosexual feelings. Upon signing the law in late September, Gov. Jerry Brown said such psychological counseling has led to depression and suicide among gay youth, and he added that any therapy aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation falls into the category of "quackery."

The law states that no mental health provider can provide minors with therapies to "change behaviors or gender expressions, or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same sex."

Brown, the majority of California's legislators and leaders of the gay community say it's hateful to offer a gay person alternatives if they struggle with same-sex attraction. They believe if young people have gay feelings, they might as well embrace their homosexual identity and get busy acting it out. (Meanwhile, a formerly gay student and two therapists have filed suit against the law, claiming that it is a violation of free speech and freedom of religion.)

We all know homosexuality is a complicated issue, and it requires loads of compassion and sensitivity. I will readily admit the Christian community hasn't always shown love to homosexuals. But as we develop genuine compassion there are

three truths we must never compromise:

1. Homosexuality is not necessarily inborn. The prevailing view in the mainstream psychological community is that if a person feels gay attraction, those feelings permanently define him/her. Change isn't possible, supposedly, because all homosexuals are "born that way."

Yet any honest psychologist knows certain factors can trigger gay feelings. I have prayed for many guys, for example, who were haunted by unwanted gay desires because they were sexually abused as children or teens. I have also prayed for women who developed sexual feelings for women after being abused by men; for them, lesbianism provided protection from the men who hurt them.

Some boys develop same-sex feelings because they lack a father figure. A boy's craving for his absent or distant dad's affection can lead to sexualization of other men in his life. To ignore such environmental or developmental factors is a gross denial of the obvious. To tell a teenage boy that he must automatically embrace gay feelings—especially when his sexuality is still being developed—is a worse form of quackery than Brown has condemned.

2. The Holy Spirit can heal our broken sexuality. I have known many people who struggled with various levels of homosexual desire before they met Christ—and many who continue to resist those temptations as Christians. Some were in long-term gay relationships; some simply experimented with homosexuality; others got hooked on gay porn. But in every case they found freedom from those urges through honest confession, repentance and healing prayer.

If a young man came to me and admitted he was tempted to seduce women, I would not tell him: "You just have a strong sex drive. Go ahead and have sex with as many girls as you want! That's just who you are!" That would be crazy. If this

teen really wanted to change his behavior I would lead him in a prayer of repentance, deal with the root issues of his problem and encourage him to trust Jesus for the grace to exercise self-control. Why wouldn't I do the same for a teenager who is attracted to the same sex?

3. Many homosexual strugglers want freedom. Supporters of the California law would probably say I'm being "hateful" if I prayed for a young person who wanted to overcome same-sex urges. But I could turn the argument around and accuse the psychological community of hate because they are not giving gay people any options. Wouldn't it be more loving to ask a person what they want instead of imposing a lifestyle on them?

One of the most basic truths of Christianity is that Jesus gives us a new nature when we experience conversion. This is the miracle the apostle Paul described in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (NASB). Why would we offer that freedom to those who struggle with other forms of sin or brokenness, but not to those who want to be free from homosexuality?

Let's stop being naive. California's tyrannical law is not based on science or solid psychological theory. It is mean-spirited intolerance, and it will become federal policy if defenders of religious freedom don't challenge it.

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project. You can follow him on Twitter at [leeegrady](#). His recent books include 10 Lies Men Believe and Fearless Daughters of the Bible.*