

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 8 What is the Christian's Response to Homosexuality?

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 11.28-29.09

Good morning. Let's thank Dan and our worship team for leading us this morning. Dan, wonderful job as always – thank you. Good to see you here this morning. We need to be reminded of what we just sang about God's goodness; about His mercies, especially as we approach our subject for this morning. We're going to look at one of the most controversial issues, not only in our culture, in our country; in our world this morning. It's a question that I did not expect to receive when I passed out the cards a few weeks ago. A number of questions kept coming in about the issue of homosexuality. And, because of the sheer number that came in I thought this is the time to talk about this. This is clearly the time when we as a church need to understand what we believe and why we believe it. When I say that I also understand that this is a time that can be very personal for many of you here this morning. Many of us have friends, loved ones, people within our own family, children – if you are parents and siblings who are involved in a homosexual lifestyle. And I realize this can be a highly charged, highly personal issue to talk about in this setting.

You need to understand it's personal for me. In my own extended family I have a family member who I've been close with since childhood who is practicing the homosexual lifestyle so I approach this myself with this sense of eagerness to understand how we should approach those who are practicing this lifestyle, as well as, how should we manage what the Word of God says our own faith in regards to that lifestyle.

It's an ongoing debate, all around us. In government there are debates about homosexuality; healthcare; genetic research; in the ethics community; in churches and to be frank, in the church community, church worldwide we probably not been as clear as we need to be. There are many in the church community who on one side have a very open and liberal view of homosexuality. On the other, a very conservative and at times degrading view of homosexuals and their lifestyle. For example in the World Council of Churches they essentially deny that homosexuality is a sin; that it is an alternative lifestyle. Same goes with the National Council of Churches. Many of you from mainline denomination churches like Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran – all of them have factions either within their denomination or as a whole that accepts openly homosexuality. Many of them ordain homosexuals into the clergy. The Quaker church released a statement that says homosexuality is no more deplorable than left handedness. So, clearly there appears to be confusion on just about every level about the issue of homosexuality. How should we respond? How should we respond as a church? How should we respond as believers?

You know, when you approach a subject like this you have to ask the question – where do I start? The question about the homosexual lifestyle and how it is infused into our culture is so complex but we as believers have a definitive place to start and that is with the scriptures. So, as we move through this discussion this morning I'm going to begin with a reminder of what we believe and that is we believe in the biblical authority. We affirm the bible as our authority over life and conduct. It's critical to start there. Affirmation of biblical authority is critical to the Christian's view on all issues that we face. So, we start with asking what does the bible say? That is, actually, the watershed issue for believers.

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We return to the Word of God, not what culture tells us but what the Word of God tells us and so we ask – do we affirm the Word of God as our authority in all areas or not. If we do then there's really no moral confusion. If we want to know how to act and how to believe we turn to the Word of God. If we affirm the Word as the Word of God then it's cleared up. If we don't affirm this book as the Word of God then we're left with really no absolutes. We actually return to existentialism, which we talked about last week where man must decide his own belief system. He must determine his own values. If you do not have a sense of absolutes then you're in danger of being tossed to and fro by the winds and the waves and culture and its belief system. We believe in the biblical authority.

The Word of God tells us in 2 Timothy, I've taken you here so many times you probably know it by heart. 2 Timothy, 3:16. All scripture is breathed out. That's the idea that it is inspired by God, profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, for training in righteousness. We believe in the inerrant, infallible, inspired message of the Word of God and actually, if you remember, way back, eight weeks ago when we started the series that was the first question we answered – whether or not this book is trustworthy. We spent a whole message exploring that particular issue. So, if you missed that and you're questioning about that go back to part one of this series. It's available online for free. It's available in our Resource Center. You can pick it up and study it for yourself. There you'll hear me say again that this book is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. So, that's where we start. And so, when we come to an issue like homosexuality or any issue for that matter we know where we can start. We start with the Word of God. And so, what does the Word of God teach on this particular issue?

Well, to begin with we need to understand what the Word of God teaches about sexuality in general. The Word of God teaches, the scripture teaches that heterosexuality is God's revealed will, His design for human kind. That this is God's created purpose. You see that in the very first book, in the very first chapter of your bibles – Genesis chapter 1. Why don't you turn there. Genesis 1, verse 27 we see the created order by our maker. The complimentary gender view is that there is a created man and a created woman. We see that in verse 27. So God created man in His own image and in the image of God He created him male and female He created them. So there's really, in the very beginning somewhat a sense of obviousness of the anatomical design, the relational design, the practical design of a man and a woman. Verse 28 – the same chapter, chapter 1 gives us extended information that God blessed the man and the woman and said to them be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion over it. And so the scriptures affirm the idea that God created a man; God created a woman and the purpose was for procreation.

Now, we learned more about this in chapter 2, verse 24. He says, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, hold fast to his wife. Old English word is cleave. Cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh. There is the biblical description of the sexual union. One man, one female, they become one flesh. This is God's ordained design for society. And yet, this is also the very first place that Satan begins his attack. What happens

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after chapter 2 in the book of Genesis? Chapter 3 is the fall of humanity where the serpent slips in, deceives the woman and the man and they fall into depravity – a theological word that means they begin to move away from God and they begin to assume their own authority and from that point on it spirals them out of control. Actually, the next chapter, we see in chapter 4 the sanctity of human life is ignored. Cain murders his brother Abel. By the time you get to Genesis chapter 6 it says the whole world is in a state of corruption, moving away from God's divine plan. By the time you get to the end of the book of Genesis what is the primary attack on human kind? It's sexuality. You see man is involved in fornication, incest, rape, prostitution, polygamy and homosexuality.

Now, this is where many in the community will stop and say are we certain that homosexuality is a sin or is it simply a secondary choice to the sexual activities of human? You see, you need to understand that God not only ordained sexuality as procreation but it's also, for those of us who are married, recreation and we understand that and many will say that the bible affirms sexuality as a process of procreation and recreation what is stopping the idea that it's also recreation in a homosexual lifestyle? Does the bible clearly say that it is forbidden or that it is sin? To be honest with you there's only a handful of places in the Old Testament, handful of places in the New Testament that even speak about the issue but if you want clarity you can turn to the extended law in Leviticus, chapter 18. Here God gives us further clarity on human sexuality. The whole chapter of Leviticus 18 tells us what is lawful at the same time what is unlawful. This is the sexual code of scripture. It really begins in verse 1 of chapter 18 when God says you shall follow my rules, keep my statutes and so forth. Verse 6 through verse 23 he becomes detailed. He says you should not have sexual relations with your parents, your mother or your father, your sister. You shouldn't have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife, shouldn't covet another man's wife and so on. You get down to verse 22 and in the detail of the chapter what does God say? God says you shall not lie with a man as with a woman. It is an abomination. That word abomination is the strongest biblical word for God's wrath in the Old Testament. He says you shall not do this. Other words that describe this activity in the scriptures says that it's unclean, that it's perverse, that it is a sin or iniquity which is the biblical terminology for sin. So, clearly what we have in the Old Testament is pronouncement against homosexuality as a lifestyle.

So, follow where we're going. First – we affirm biblical authority. That's where we start. We move out and say what is God's design for human sexuality? It's heterosexuality. And then number three, what do we say? We say homosexuality, as with all sin is a perversion of God's plan as a result of the fall of humanity. That homosexuality, as with all sin is a result of the fall of humanity. Now, right now you might be already thinking ahead. You might be saying to yourself – well, what about genetic predisposition? We hear a lot about that today. What about the whole side of is someone created with a DNA where they are predispositioned to be attracted to the same sex? How can that be a sin if it's rooted in the very nature of who you are as a person? This is actually a study that has been going on for about a hundred years. In the nineteen hundreds Sigmund Freud who studied

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homosexuality was the one who began the debate when he basically said it was a psychological disorder. That homosexual activity was the result of domineering mothers or fathers. That a man would become a homosexual because of domineering mother. A woman would become a lesbian because of a domineering father. And that was basically the train of thought for about fifty years. 1930 Havelock Ellis began the research in the genetic side of the debate and that's where we get the nurture verses nature debate about homosexuality. Was it nurtured from parents or was it a part of the nature, part of the DNA code. And, to be honest, from that point forward it started to move quickly towards defining as a genetic part of human behavior.

Actually, in the nineteen fifties, Albert Kinsey, many of you might remember of the Kinsey Report of Sexuality said one out of ten people are born homosexual. In the nineteen sixties the American Psychiatric Association declassified it from what Freud was saying as a mental illness and said that no, it is a part of someone's internal make up and that's where the debate is today. Is it a part of the genetic code? And so, what scientists are doing even in today's culture are studying, not only human genetic code but studying in natural, in the animal kingdom as well. They're saying, does homosexuality exist in nature. The thinking is if it can be proven to be in nature, then it can be proven to be in humanity as well.

*"A bare majority of rams turn out to be heterosexual. One in five swings both ways. About 15 percent are asexual, and 7 percent to 10 percent are gay...a crucial part of their brains--the "sexually dimorphic nucleus"--looks more like a ewe's than like a straight ram's". He writes, "Gay men have a similar brain resemblance to women. Charles Roselli, the project's lead scientist, says such research "strongly suggests that sexual preference is biologically determined in animals, and possibly in humans."*

Now, here's the thinking to remind you of what I just said. The thinking is that if it's seen in nature than it can ultimately be seen in humanity and that makes it normal. But is that true?

What is the premise of Genesis chapter 3? That humanity has gone under the fall. That has begun the incessant depravity, depraved nature that not only impacts us as humans but the world around us. Read Romans chapter 8, verse 19 through 23. We're not going to go there this morning but you might want to read it or jot it down or read it later. What does Paul say? Paul says the very cosmos has been impacted and waits in groaning to be released from the cause of the fall; that there is a desire, not only in our own bodies from the experience of pain and suffering all that sin has caused due to the fall; that we wait in our own bodies to be released from that and yet, so does the cosmos. So does the world around us. So does nature. What's my point? We shouldn't be shocked at all if scientists discover that there is homosexual orientation in the genetic code. It shouldn't shock us at all. It's just another impact of sin in the world. But, listen to me, genetic predisposition does not sanction sinful behavior. That's the point.

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Albert Mohler, who is the President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes:

*“Given the consequences of the Fall and the effects of human sin, we should not be surprised that such a causation or link is found. After all, the human genetic structure, along with every other aspect of creation, shows the pernicious effects of the Fall and of God's judgment. The biblical condemnation of all homosexual behaviors would not be compromised or mitigated in the least by such a discovery. The discovery”, He writes, “ of a biological factor would not change the Bible's moral verdict on homosexual behavior.”*

That's the point – that we've all been impacted by the fall. That does not change the moral responsibility that we have before God so let's talk honestly about what the bible says about homosexuality.

I want you to hear this as compassionate truth. Here's the thing: If I do not tell you what the Word of God says in regards to this issue I'm not being truthful to you and I'm not being loving to you. As difficult as it can be to hear what the bible says – it's what the bible says. So, what does the bible say?

Well, let me take you to a couple passages that first tell us that homosexuality is an act of rebellion and unbelief against God. That homosexuality is an act of rebellion and unbelief against God. Romans chapter 1, that's where I'd like you to turn. Romans 1 is a diverse passage. We've already studied it even in this series so I'm not going to spend a lot of time. Romans 1 is Paul's discourse on the justice of God's wrath to those who are unrighteous. But there are some key points that we need to understand. It is the bible's clarity on a confusing issue.

Let's begin in verse 18. It says, for the wrath of God, chapter 1, verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness, what does it say? Suppresses the truth or suppress the truth. Remember that. Now, drop down to verse 22. Claiming to be wise they became fools. Who's the they? Those people who suppress the truth – the truth of God. Claiming to be wise they suppressed the truth and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the images resembling mortal man, bird, animals and reptiles. Talking here, clearly about idolatry. Therefore, God gave them up. Now, you're going to hear that three other times in verse 24, 26 and 28 that God gave them up, why? Because they suppressed the truth. They were practicing idolatry. He gave them up in the lusts of their hearts in impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever, amen.

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Alright, here's the detail. Ready? For this reason God gave them up to the dishonorable passions. What dishonorable passions did God give them over to or give them up to? For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passions for one another; men committing shameless acts with men and were receiving themselves the due penalty for their error.

What is Paul's point? Paul's driving point is that homosexuality is the outward example of rebellion and ultimately, unbelief or disbelief against God. That it demonstrates that they are suppressing the truth of God. What's the outcome? That God gives them up. This is just the natural recourse of fallen man; that they have this desire, this dishonorable passions in their body. So, it doesn't matter if you're practicing a homosexual lifestyle, if you proclaim to be a follower of God, if you believe in the Word of God, if you proclaimed Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you're not living out the lifestyle that God has called you to live you are in rebellion and unbelief against God. That's the scriptures – that homosexuality is an act of rebellion at its very core and the very act demonstrates an unbelief of God.

Now, let me take it one step further – that is the present condition of those who practice homosexuality. The future is that homosexuality leads to, according to the Word of God, eternal separation and damnation of God. That homosexuality leads to eternal separation and damnation from God. I'm turning to 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6 clearly gives us an understanding of future, the future that awaits those who practice homosexuality. Verse 9, 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Who are the unrighteous? We just read about it in Romans 1:18. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. That's as if the Word of God is saying don't fall into a misconception about this issue. Don't be swept along with a cultural view. Don't be deceived. Neither the sexual 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.

Now, just take the scriptures at face value. Who will not inherit the kingdom of God? It's these kind of people who will not be in the presence of God and if you're not in the presence of God, where are you? You're separated from Him and you'll experience the damnation of God. That is the biblical word on homosexuality. But, it's not the last word.

If you're like me you're probably sitting here and you feel somewhat heavy hearted. You're conflicted in what to feel because this is not just something that is theological in nature but it's personal in nature. And, that is, by the way theology. True theology intersects humanity in our feelings. You know, when I think about what the bible says especially in relation to my own family member I'm very heavy hearted by this. Yet, this is the truth of God but it's not where the truth of God ends. Even the next verse gives us a glimpse.

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What does Paul say in verse 11? And such were some of you. You see, it's not just left hanging there as if we have no opportunity for salvation but rather, it's an inclusion. Such were some of us. He's pointing to people in the church. And he's saying, don't forget. This is not just some nucleus of a group that God is waiting is reign down condemnation upon but such were some of us. But, you were, and these are all past tense – washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the spirit of our God. Look at that trilogy. You were washed. You realize in Leviticus 18 it talks about homosexuality as being unclean? Washed clean through Jesus Christ. You're sanctified. What does that mean? You are now set on the road to spiritual growth. You are justified. What's justification mean? It means you are once and for all redeemed. Your salvation is secure. When? That's the question. When? When you turned to Jesus Christ.

And so, what are we saying here? We're saying that this passage teaches that homosexuality, just like the rest of the list that is put before there and you can look at a number of scripture references that have lists. And this all inclusive nature that homosexuality is no more of a degrading of a sin than any other sin. That's what we have to get in our mind. That it is a redeemable sin as much as lying. You know, I have some people who I think have been genetically pre-engineered to be liars. It's like everything that comes out of their mouth is a lie. Does that mean that they are beyond God's salvation? No. If you're genetically pre-engineered to struggle with homosexuality does that mean you can not be saved by Jesus Christ? No, it means you can be saved. That's the good news.

And so, what are we left to do? The last point. The greatest love and compassion that we can demonstrate to those in the bondage of homosexuality, like the bondage of any other sin is to tell them the truth of God's Word. That's what we should be doing because it's through God's Word that someone can be released from the bondage of whatever sin that they're involved in.

Now, here's the problem. Those of us who opposed the lifestyle of homosexuality are not put in the best light even today in modern, sometimes conservative circles. We're called homophobics, narrow minded, bigots. Do you realize right now, in the court system there's civil rights legislation that's being attempted to be passed that would basically be a violation against the law for anyone, including someone like myself in a public setting to speak against homosexuality? So, the world around us is closing in as if to say you can not hold this view and yet, it's this very view that offers the greatest redemption. This is the truth of God. This is the most loving and compassionate thing that we can do is to tell people this is how God sees you today. This is your future but there is a way of escape.

So, I'm not done with you this morning. It's not in your notes but I want to give you four commitments that I think we need to make as a believing community. I'm not going to take a long time but just four commitments we need to make. First commitment that we will unapologetically proclaim homosexuality as sin. We won't apologize for this. This is what

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the Word of God says. This is what we believe. At the same time we'll make the second commitment. We will equally proclaim hope and freedom from homosexuality through Jesus Christ. And then thirdly, we will be open, loving, supportive of people struggling with the temptations of homosexuality. See, this is where it becomes difficult because now we basically are saying we're affirming the fact that there are people within our congregation who are struggling with homosexuality.

Again, quoting from Al Mohler, he says, "*We must stop confusing the issue of moral responsibility and moral choice*". We're all responsible for our sexual orientation but that does not mean that we freely and consciously choose that orientation and that's right. We do not always or even generally choose our temptations. Nevertheless, we are absolutely responsible for what we do with sinful temptation, whatever our so called sexual orientation. See, that's the point. We have to come to an understanding that there are people who struggle with this and they understand it's a struggle.

This came home to me in my sophomore year in college. I went to a Christian college, Cedarville College in southern Ohio and I met a young man we became friends in one of our classes. He was studying for the ministry. I was studying for the ministry and so we struck up a conversation. I noticed he had scars around the temple area on both sides of his head. Well, I got to know him a little bit and I asked him about that and he said, well, it's going to take awhile for me to explain that. Do you have the time? So, over a lunch, he sat down. He began to explain that those scars were created by screws that were put into his head to hold a halo brace because he had broken his neck. He spent nearly six months in the hospital recovering because he dove off a shallow end into a pool, hit his head on the bottom, almost died. He then began to share that he was a party, a gay oriented party. That he had grown up in a Christian home but, he had always, from an early age felt these leaning towards being attracted to men. And he began to explore that when he was in high school and it became an all out passion in his life by the time he was in his early twenties. He was telling me that it would be routinely, he would routinely have multiple sexual partners in any given week and he was an advocate for homosexual rights. He says he spoke loud and clear what he thought what was his right and what he believed in. But he said internally he felt like he was being eaten alive. He said there was just this sense of disconnect with who he thought he really was and lying in that hospital room through multiple visits of a close friend he gave his life over to Jesus Christ. Now, at this point, as a young, naïve college student I'm thinking, well, fine then, you're released from your temptation from homosexuality. He said, nothing of the sort. He said I've been given a new power source to battle the temptation but the temptations are still there. I understand the call of God in my life – to live a righteous life. Before, on my own I never had the power to do that but now I understand my true identity. Just because the enemy would like to inflict temptation on my life does mean I have to fall to it. You see, and that's what we as a community have to understand that there are people in the homosexual community that literally, want to move outside of it as far as they can. They just don't know how to be released.

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And so our fourth commitment as a community I think needs to be that we'll attempt to offer processes of sanctification, spiritual growth for those who renounce homosexual behaviors. For those who come to Christ we need to be able to say to them this is the one place, the church where you can engage in that battle. That you will not be ostracized here anymore than the professing liar or name your sin – anyone else because you've heard me say it many times before. When you come through those doors we come on level ground. None of us are righteous. All of us have sinned. All of us need the grace of God. We have a community of men and women who desperately need the grace of God. Not to be ostracized or shunned by us but to be lead and included in our spiritual journey. Just as we will renounce our own sinful behavior, if they're willing to renounce theirs and come to Christ let them join in the journey to following Jesus Christ. Amen?