

**Explanatory Notes:****HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BELIEVER****Series title:** Homosexuality and the Believer**Topic:** Homosexuality**Table of Contents:****Message 1:**

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**Message 1: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?****Romans 1:24-27, Luke 19:10, Matthew 9:12-13, John 8:11, CEV.**

Today we are going to talk about the topic of homosexuality, the practice of having sex with people of the same gender: men with men, women with women. What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Bible states in clear terms that homosexual behavior is a sin. The law of Moses calls same sex intercourse an ‘abomination’—a very wicked sin. This is what it says: *“The penalty for homosexual acts is death to both parties. They have committed a detestable act and are guilty of a capital offense.”* (Leviticus 20:13, NLT)

Many centuries later, in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul also calls homosexual activity shameful and unnatural. Here are some of his words:

*So God let these people go their own way. They did what they wanted to do, and their filthy thoughts made them do shameful things with their bodies. They gave up the truth about God for a lie, and they worshiped God’s creation instead of God, who will*

**Scripture verses relating to homosexuality:**

- **Genesis 1-2:** God creates men and women and tells them to have children. God institutes marriage as the union of one man and one woman (2:24).
- **Genesis 19:** the men of Sodom and Gomorrah threaten to rape the angelic ‘men’ staying in Lot’s home. God destroys these cities for their sinfulness. Many, many verses in the Bible speak of Sodom and Gomorrah as notorious examples of wickedness.
- **Leviticus 18:22, 20:13:** The law of Moses condemned homosexual behavior and called for the death penalty for people who practiced it.
- **Romans 1:26-27:** The apostle Paul says that homosexual behavior is shameful and unnatural. It is a result of humankind’s rejection of God.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10:** Homosexuals are among a list of people who will not enter the kingdom of God.
- **1 Timothy 1:8-11** says that the laws of God are for rebellious and disobedient people, including homosexuals.

*be praised forever. Amen.  
 God let them follow their own evil desires. Women no longer wanted to have sex in a natural way, and they did things with each other that were not natural. Men behaved in the same way. They stopped wanting to have sex with women and had strong desires for sex with other men. They did shameful things with each other, and what has happened to them is punishment for their foolish deeds.*

(Romans 1:24-27, CEV)

So, then, homosexual behavior is a sin. All sexual desire can be exaggerated, abnormal and harmful. Sexual desires of all kinds result in sexual sin if we do not restrain them within the boundaries God has given us in his Word, the Bible.

**What can a person do if they have homosexual desires, but wish to follow Jesus?** The traditional Christian answer is to encourage them to be celibate. To be celibate is to be sexually inactive, to control our sexual desires avoid what the Bible prohibits.

Many people consider celibacy to be a great burden. They think that people are not fully human unless they express themselves sexually. But the Lord Jesus was celibate yet fully human. And the apostle Paul was also celibate and unmarried all his life. Many great men and women in the history of the church have been celibate. They directed their energies into their service and worship of the Lord.

The church rightly celebrates the importance of the family. But we must never lose sight of the important and historic role single people have played in the life of the church. And we need to encourage people with homosexual desires follow in their footsteps unless the Lord miraculously changes them and gives them normal, heterosexual desires.

**But is this possible? Can homosexuals ever become heterosexuals and begin to desire members of the opposite sex?** There are two extremes to avoid.

**You need to be aware of the questions some Christians ask about the meaning of these verses:**

**1. Did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their homosexuality?** Or for their unkind reception of the visitors to their city? Lack of hospitality was a serious sin in that culture. And there seems to be a deliberate contrast between Abraham's hospitality in Genesis 18 and Sodom's lack of hospitality in Genesis 19. And what about Ezekiel 16:49? This verse says that "Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door." (NLT). It doesn't mention anything about homosexuality.

These are good observations. When writing messages on Genesis 19, it is not fair to say simply that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because their men were homosexuals. Be faithful to what the Bible actually says. But Leviticus also condemns homosexuality. It is more accurate to say that the homosexual behavior of the men of Sodom adds to their wickedness. But their primary sins were their evil treatment of guests and the sins listed in Ezekiel.

**2. Are New Testament Christians still required to obey what the law of Moses says about homosexuality?**

Aren't there many Old Testament laws that are no longer binding on Christians today?

**One extreme is to insist that homosexuals will all be healed instantly if they have enough faith in God.** People who say this hope for a miraculous healing. They believe God will change the person's desires so that they begin to desire members of the opposite sex.

God doesn't always work in this way. Many Christians with homosexual desires want to change. They pray with many tears to be 'normal.' But for some reason they are forced to struggle all of their lives with sexual desires for people of the same sex. It is not fair to blame them or tell them that their desires are a result of their lack of faith.

**The other extreme is to offer homosexuals little or no hope for change.** People who say that homosexuals can never change their orientation (their sexual desires) are only trying to be practical. They know many people struggle all their lives. They don't want to offer these people false hopes. Nor do they want them to feel guilty or ashamed if God doesn't grant them the miracle they seek.

But God CAN work miracles, and often he does. There are many cases of homosexuals who become believers and lose their homosexual desires.

A more balanced way to help homosexuals is to give them hope for change, yet prepare them in case there is no change. In all circumstances, we should pray for the best, and prepare for the worst. We do not know what plans the Lord has for us. But we seek to be content no matter what life brings us (Philippians 4:11-13).

If you are listening today and you struggle with homosexual desires, know that the Lord Jesus loves you. Know that he accepted a life of singleness for your sake. He can sympathize with our every weakness because he faced sexual temptations as we do, but he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). He can give us strength when we are tempted and comfort us when we are hurt and discouraged.

The answer is that the New Testament also condemns homosexual behavior. The Bible speaks with one voice against such behavior.

**3. Are the Bible writers only writing against especially perverted practices** such as homosexual rape and homosexual prostitution? Is it possible that Paul and others could not foresee the idea of faithful, monogamous same-sex "marriages" among Christians today?

Some Christians maintain that people with a homosexual orientation may legitimately have faithful monogamous "marriages" to people of the same sex. They say that such "marriages" are quite different from the unbelieving, immoral homosexual relationships in Bible times. Some even suggest that practicing homosexuals may become ordained clergy (pastors).

But it does not appear that the Bible writers were only referring to extreme practices. It seems clear that what they objected to is homosexual sexual intercourse in any form.

And more importantly, the idea of homosexual "marriages" contradicts the positive teaching of Genesis 1 and 2, that marriage by nature is the union of one man and one woman, as the earlier messages in this series emphasize.

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**How do people become homosexuals?** Are they born that way? Do they become that

## Message #2: HOW SHOULD BELIEVERS TREAT HOMOSEXUALS?

**Jude 21-23, Luke 19:10, Matthew 9:12-13, John 8:11.**

In our last message we found out what the Bible teaches about homosexuality. We found out that according to the Bible, it is a sin to practice homosexuality. We also saw that God cares for people who struggle with homosexual desires. He wants to help them. He miraculously removes homosexual desires from some of them. But he calls most of them to control their desires and remain sexually inactive.

How should followers of Jesus Christ respond to people who say they are attracted to people of the same sex? What attitude ought believers have toward homosexuals? Listen as I read some very important verses from the Bible. They tell us how to treat people who struggle with sinful temptations:

*Live in such a way that God's love can bless you as you wait for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his **mercy** is going to give you. **Show mercy** to those whose faith is wavering. **Rescue** others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. There are still others to whom you need to **show mercy**, but be careful that you aren't contaminated by their sins.*

Jude 21-23, NLT

These verses call Christians to show mercy to all people who struggle with sin and temptation. They should try to rescue them from their sins. But many believers have disobeyed the Lord Jesus by treating homosexuals in a cruel and unloving manner.

- **Often believers have shown contempt and hatred for homosexuals.** They make homosexuals feel unloved and unwelcome. They reject them.
- **Often believers have treated homosexuality as much worse than other sins.** They have been very critical of this sin and more forgiving of other sins. But is

way as they grow older? Or is it a conscious choice people make?

This is a controversial question. Scientists, doctors and theologians debate this question endlessly. We do not claim to have final answers to this complex question. But we offer the following as one possible explanation of homosexuality. The explanation below tries to integrate Christian teachings and the results of science to date.

The fall of the human race into sin had many harmful effects on the world and its people. Sin brought people hard work in gardening and great pain in childbearing (Genesis 3:16-19). Sin darkened peoples' minds and corrupted their bodies (Romans 1:18-32). Reformed Christians call this the "pollution" or "corruption" of sin—God allows sin to distort and contaminate the human race, and this gets passed down from one generation to the next (Exodus 20:5).

We see the effects of sin passed from generation to generation in the way people are different from each other. Some people are born with a greater chance of becoming alcoholics than others. Other people are born with a greater chance of becoming overweight than others. Likewise, some homosexuals may be born with flawed sexual desires. But the way they are raised, the life experiences they have and the choices which they make play a part in their becoming sexually active as homosexuals. It is not fair to say, "They simply chose

homosexual behavior really more sinful than (for example) hurtful gossip or selfish greed? Shouldn't we be fair and treat all sins as bad? And shouldn't we treat all sins as forgivable?

- **Some believers have also been unkind and impatient with people who are attracted to people of the same sex but who genuinely desire to follow and obey Jesus.** They want homosexuals to change their behavior and be perfect immediately. But the road to holiness is a long one. We grow slowly and our faults are corrected one by one. We all know how long it takes for us to change our behavior and become better people. But these impatient believers expect instant perfection from new believers who struggle with homosexual desires. This can be a very difficult change if a new believer's culture or former religion permits or encourages homosexual sex.
- **Some believers have not always taken time to understand the pain and struggles that homosexual people face.** Homosexuals struggle with many problems. They face temptations, rejection, loneliness, shame, and guilt. They cannot understand why they are as they are. If believers are going to help homosexuals they need to understand them. They need to be aware of the serious problems homosexuals face.
- **Finally, believers have not always done enough to show homosexuals that God loves them and wants to help them.** They have not formed ministries to reach out to homosexuals with the good news of Jesus. They have often ignored their needs and acted as if homosexuality wasn't their concern.

**But Jesus was different. The Lord Jesus showed compassion and mercy on sinners.** He spoke to them and ate with them. He lovingly tried to convince them of the truth. Praise the Lord that believers are changing. Churches are beginning to recover Jesus' love for sinners. Believers are returning to the example of Jesus, who said,

*“The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost.”*

Luke 19:10

to become homosexuals and they can choose to change at any time.” On the other hand, it is not fair to say people are not responsible for the actions they choose.

Many Christians now make a distinction between having a homosexual orientation and engaging in homosexual behavior. It is not the temptations and impulses that plague us that are sinful, but how we respond to them. Just as heterosexual people must control their sexual desires to avoid sins like fornication and adultery, so people with a homosexual orientation must seek to control their sexual desires and remain celibate (sexually inactive).

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#### **How can churches help homosexuals?**

- 1. They can become friendly, welcoming families** where everyone shows compassion to each other.
- 2. They can promote singleness and celibacy as a normal, honorable Christian vocation.** All too frequently, Christians claim that marriage is superior to singleness. Some married Christians pity single Christians as if they are not fully human because they are not married. This is not what the Bible teaches (see message #4 on singleness). We need to celebrate singleness and celibacy just as much as we do marriage.
- 3. They should pray for homosexuals.**

and,

*“Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, ‘Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.’ I didn’t come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners.”*

Matthew 9:12-13

Christian brothers and sisters who are listening to this message, I trust you want to follow the merciful example of Jesus, not the judgmental example of people who hate and judge others. I trust you want to hold out hope, grace and forgiveness to homosexuals.

If you do, please consider the words of Jesus when his enemies brought him a woman who was caught in adultery. He told her two things: “I do not condemn you” and “Go and sin no more.” (John 8:11).

Many Christians have only followed half of Jesus’ example. They tell homosexuals, “Go and sin no longer.” This is important. But they do not tell them, “I do not condemn you.” Let us be the faithful followers of Jesus who do ALL of Jesus’ will. Let us call homosexuals to follow Jesus and keep his commands and leave their lives of sexual immorality. But let us not condemn them. Let us show them our encouragement, our patience, our prayers, our friendship and our love.

Only the Spirit of God knows the true condition of believers’ hearts. He faithfully guides believers away from sexual sins. He will judge people fairly and truly in these deeply personal matters.

**4. They can start support groups for people who struggle with same sex attraction.**

In these groups, homosexuals can see that they are not alone in their struggles. They can have Christian friends who can be their prayer partners, encouragers and mentors.

**5. They can minister to family members of homosexuals, who often struggle with shock, denial, blame, grief, anger and shame.**

**6. They can show compassion and kindness to people who suffer from AIDS.** Homosexual persons who have sex together can pass on the AIDS virus. Homosexuals with AIDS have often been treated as the religious people of Jesus’ day treated lepers—as immoral people with contagious diseases. They did not want to go near them. But Christians should show the kind of compassion Jesus showed when he touched the leper to heal him. The leper probably had not felt the touch of another person in a long time. By touching him, Jesus showed him that he cared for him.

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**Problems homosexuals face:**

**1. Shame:** “I’m ashamed of myself. I am not like other people. I am strange. Other people will not accept me. God does not accept me.”

**2. Rejection and loneliness:** “My family members, neighbors and nearby believers condemn me. They call me names. They

avoid me. Who can I turn to?"

**3. Confusion:** "Who am I? Why am I the way I am? Why did God make me with these desires?"

**4. Temptation:** "I know these desires are wrong, but they are very strong!"

**5. The hardship of celibacy:** "Some people have a spiritual gift to be celibate. Not me. I want to enjoy sex. Sex is part of the way God makes us. But I can't get married to people I am attracted to and I don't want to remain single."