



Homosexuality & the Church

A Stonegate Workshop

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Setting the Table

A. Background Reality #1

The Bible's Vision of *The Body*

- We are deeply **integrated** beings — we are *embodied* souls and *ensouled* bodies.
- The Human Body is part of God's **revelation** in creation. It is not meant to be discarded or ignored when making moral decisions.
- The Body is affected by sin, but the original **design** of male and female remain intact.
- The Body is essential to understanding human **identity** and **morality** — **who we are** and **what we should do**.

So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.— Genesis 1:27, 31 CSB¹

This is the document containing the family records of Adam. On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God; he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind. — Genesis 5:1–2

The central question is how we define our identity. It is widely assumed today that humans are driven primarily by desires, feelings, and attractions — that your sexual feelings define your identity. By contrast...The Christian sex ethic is grounded in the human humans were originally created. 'In the beginning' is where we learn who we are, how God made us, and what it means to be fully human. — Nancy Pearcey²

God created two sexes – and he created them to relate to one another sexually. Thus, as a man, God's original intention for me in creation was to be able to relate sexually to a woman. This remained true, quite irrespective of whatever feelings I might have. Indeed, I came to think that in fact my feelings were what were relatively superficial, in comparison to my physical identity.

For me, a...liberating and helpful discovery was that my sexual identity as a man was *already fixed and secure* – because sexuality (in the sense of the sexual differences between men and women) is a gift of God to humanity in creation. My role was not, therefore, to seek to change my sexual desires in order to change my sexual identity. Rather, it was to receive or acknowledge what I already had (a male body) as a good gift from God. Theologically, this is sanctification by grace through faith rather than through hard work and strenuous effort – the transformation which I then experienced was not on the basis of effort and achievement, but through trusting in God's good ordering of his precious world. — Sean Doherty (same-sex attracted man)³

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations will come from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

² *Love Thy Body: Answering the Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 161.

³ "‘Love Does Not Delight in Evil, but Rejoices With the Truth.’ A Theological and Pastoral Reflection On My Journey Away From A Homosexual Identity," *ANVIL* 30 (1) March 2014: 9–10.

B. Background Reality #2

God's *Design* for Sex

- God's Design for Sex is One Man, One Woman, in Marriage, for Life.
- God's Design for Sex is rooted in God's Design for Marriage
- God's Design for Marriage reveals Jesus' Relationship to the Church
- Any Sexual Contact outside the Covenant of Marriage is Considered a Form of Sexual Immorality
- God's Design for Sex and Marriage is directly connected to the Creation, Nurture, and Protection of Children (Genesis 1:28).

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame. — Genesis 2:24–25

*When Jesus had finished saying these things, he departed from Galilee and went to the region of Judea across the Jordan. 2 Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. 3 Some Pharisees approached him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?" 4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that he who created them in the beginning **made them male and female, 5** and he also said, '**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh**'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." — Matthew 19:1–6*

*He set out from there and went to the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Then crowds converged on him again, and as was his custom he taught them again. 2 Some Pharisees came to test him, asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 He replied to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away." 5 But Jesus told them, "He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts. 6 But from the beginning of creation God **made them male and female. 7 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother 8 and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9** Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." — Mark 10:1–9*

Drink water from your own cistern, /water flowing from your own well. 16 Should your springs flow in the streets, streams in the public squares? 17 They should be for you alone and not for you to share with strangers. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth. 19 A loving deer, a graceful doe—let her breasts always satisfy you; be lost in her love forever. 20 Why, my son, would you lose yourself with a forbidden woman or embrace a wayward woman?— Proverbs 5:15–20

Now in response to the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. 3 A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. 4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. — 1 Corinthians 7:1–5

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, **23** because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. **27** He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. **28** In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, **30** since we are members of his body. **31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32** This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. **33** To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband. — Ephesians 5:22–33

Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. — Romans 13:13

18 Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. **19** Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, **20** for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body. — 1 Corinthians 6:18–20

*I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. **9** But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire. — 1 Corinthians 7:8–9*

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as a warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. — Galatians 5:19–21

*For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, **4** that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, **5** not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. — 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5*

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. — Revelation 21:8

It is against this backdrop that the Bible's veto on extra-marital sexual intercourse must be seen. Any behaviour which breaks the links between sex, personhood and relationship is symptomatic of disorder. Moreover, the doctrine of creation was widely understood in NT times as limiting the legitimacy of intercourse to permanent, exclusive heterosexual relationships. Hence the specific biblical ban on prostitution, pre-marital intercourse, adultery and homosexual behaviour (1 Cor. 6:13–18; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thes. 4:3; Ex. 20:14; Rom. 1:26–27). — D. H. Field⁴

⁴ "Sexuality.," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 638.

The union of man and woman in marriage is a mystery because it conceals, as in a parable, a truth about Christ and the church. The divine reality hidden in the metaphor of marriage is that God ordained a permanent union between His Son and the church. Human marriage is the earthly image of this divine plan. As God willed for Christ and the church to become one body (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13), so He willed for marriage to reflect this pattern—that the husband and wife become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). — John Piper⁵

Not only do we depend on each other, but we depend on each other in a particular way. One illustration of this ... is found in the natural difference between the sexes, which is the basis for the division of roles in the family. Short of divine provision for people called to celibacy, there is something missing in the man that must be provided by the woman, and something missing in the woman that must be provided by the man. This is most obvious in the physical dimension. In the case of all other biological functions, only one body is required to do the job [eg. food digestion, eyesight, walking, etc.]. Each of us can perform every vital function by himself, except one. The single exception is procreation. What this demonstrates is that among human beings the male and female sexual powers are radically incomplete and designed for each other...The union of opposites is the only possible realization of their procreative potential; unless they come together as a single organism, as one flesh, procreation does not occur.— J. Budziszewski⁶

Human beings come into existence with a dimorphically differentiated sexuality, clearly ordered at the biological level towards heterosexual union as the human mode of procreation. It is not possible to negotiate this fact about our common humanity; it can only be welcomed or resented. — Oliver O'Donovan⁷

Every vice list in the New Testament includes “sexual immorality” or “impurity,” usually at the head of the list (see Mark 7:21-22; Rom. 1:24-31; 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Col.3:5-9; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; Rev. 21:8). We can point out that God cares about other sins too or argue that Christians today make too much of sexual immorality, but no one can reasonably argue that the New Testament is indifferent toward sexual sin. Clearly, the Bible understands that certain sexual behaviors and lusts are illicit and that these behaviors and lusts can have no place in the life of a Christian.

Having established that point—one that should not be controversial if we are willing to take the New Testament on its own terms—the question then becomes, “What constitutes sexual immorality?” There is no honest way we can make the God of the Bible into the “God-of-anything-goes” when it comes to sex. — Kevin DeYoung⁸

⁵ “A Metaphor of Christ and the Church,” *Desiring God*, February 12, 1984.

⁶ *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide, Revised and Expanded Edition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 96–97. In the first edition of the book (2003), this same author wrote: “Conjugal sex means self-giving, making one flesh out of two. By contrast, when a man puts the part of himself which represents life into the cavity of another man which represents decay and expulsion, at the most basic of all possible levels he is saying, ‘Life be swallowed in death.’ We cannot overwrite such meanings with different ones just because we want to.” J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know*, 86–87 quoted in David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 36 n20.

⁷ *Transsexualism: Issues and Argument* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2007), 6

⁸ “Is Some Sexual Activity Wrong?” *The Gospel Coalition*, September 3, 2013.

The Problem: We all experience sexual brokenness

Attractions and behaviors that are contrary to God's original design for us. These attractions and behaviors manifest themselves with the opposite sex, same sex, or a mixture a both.

*For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, **22** adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within and defile a person.— Mark 7:21–23*

*For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, **19** since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse... Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. **25** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.— Romans 1:18–20, 24–25*

Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. — Romans 2:1

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. — Romans 3:23

Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, **2** and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. **3** But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints... **6** Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for God's wrath is coming on the disobedient because of these things. **7** Therefore, do not become their partners. **8** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light— **9** for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth— **10** testing what is pleasing to the Lord. **11** Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. **12** For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. — Ephesians 5:1–3, 6–12.

*We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, **10** for the sexually immoral and males who have sex with males, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching **11** that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me. — 1 Timothy 1:9–11*

*If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. — 1 John 1:8–10*

C. Background Reality #3

The Bible's View of *Sin*

- The Bible teaches a distinction between how God **created** us and how sin has **distorted** us.
- We are all created in God's image, but we are also born with a **Sinful Nature**
- Jesus and the Biblical authors assume the presence of deeply felt attractions and desires that we must say "**No**" to if we are to experience true, abundant life in Christ.

Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. — Psalm 51:5

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. — Romans 5:12

*But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. **22** For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:21–22*

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins **2** in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. **3** We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. — Ephesians 2:1–3*

***34** Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. **36** For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? **37** What can anyone give in exchange for his life? **38** For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." — Mark 8:34–38 (cf. Luke 9:23–25).*

***12** Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. **13** Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. — Romans 6:12–13 NLT*

Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. — Colossians 3:5

There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death. — Proverbs 14:12 (cf. Proverbs 16:25).

D. Background Reality #4

The Modern Notions of Identity⁹

Phase 1:

- Prior to the 1800s, sexuality was primarily understood as behavior, not as a person's identity.
- Sigmund Freud (and his contemporaries) began using the terms heterosexual and homosexual to describe people's sexual attractions.
- In 1886, Germ psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing was the first to distinguish between heterosexuality and homosexuality as two forms of sexual orientation
- Prior to this, there was no word to describe an individual with exclusively same-sex attractions.

Phase 2:

- **Romanticism**: a secular, European philosophy that elevated **personal feelings** over human reason (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Blake, Samuel Coleridge, etc.)
- Highest Virtue: Self-Expression
- **Existentialism**: a secular, European philosophy that elevated **personal freedom** above everything else (Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simone De Beauvoir, etc).
- Highest Virtue: Authenticity

Taken Together

- The entire concept of human identity became radically **sexualized** and **emotionalized**
- Sexuality is no longer what we have; it's who we are.
- Personal **experience** became the defining foundation for understanding human identity and personhood.

The strong influence of these philosophies and movements on Western culture produced a vacuum. In the absence of any objective foundation for true human identity, experience essentially became God. Experience reigned supreme and everything else had to bow before it In such a climate, the idea that sexuality represents our core identity quickly took root. — Christopher Yuan¹⁰

⁹ For a full account of this, see Carl Truman *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022).

¹⁰ *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desires, and Relationships Shaped by God's Grand Story* (New York: Multnomah, 2018), 11

E. Background Reality #5

The *Reparative Therapy* Movement¹¹

- Led by organizations like Exodus International, this movement sought to help people experience a **conversion** in their sexual orientation — from gay to straight.
- The short hand for this movement is the “**ex-gay** movement.”
- The movement ministered to over **700,000** people with some kind of homosexual orientation.
- Today, almost all of the **leaders** from this movement support LGBTQ relationships and believe reparative therapy caused more harm than good.
- The **legacy** of this movement hangs over the Christian witness today.
- Common Phrase: “You can’t pray the gay away.”
- Many LGBTQ people have this in the back of their minds when we talk to them about “change” or “transformation.”
- The Big Idea for them: “I didn’t **choose** this; I can’t **change** this — and I shouldn’t have to.”

Is That Kind of Change Possible?

- Yes—it is **possible**. God can heal anyone of any kind of brokenness (physical, sexual, emotional, etc.).
- There are even *some* reported cases of this happening¹²
- But, while it is **possible**, it is not **promised**. We all have our “crosses” to bear and our “thorns” to endure.

23 Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. **24** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it. **25** For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself? — Luke 9:23–25

Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. **8** Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. **9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. **10** So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. — 2 Corinthians 7:7b–10.

- **A Basic Paradigm:** Focus more on **care** more than **cure**.

¹¹ For more on this see Greg Johnson, *Still Time to Care: What We Can Learn from the Church’s Failed Attempt to Cure Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021). For a helpful review that points out the strengths and weaknesses of this work, see Hans Madueme and John Wingard, “Responding to Homosexuality: Culture of Care versus Culture of Cure,” *The Gospel Coalition*, April 25, 2022.

¹² See for example Peter Sprigg, “Evidence Shows Sexual Orientation Can Change: Debunking the Myth of ‘Immutability,’” *Family Research Council*, March 2019 <https://www.frc.org/sexualorientation>; Lisa Diamond, “Sexual Fluidity in Male and Female,” *University of Utah Current Controversy Series*, November, 2016 https://psych.utah.edu/_resources/documents/people/diamond/Sexual%20Fluidity%20in%20Males%20and%20Females.pdf; Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007);

F. Going Forward

- We must acknowledge all 5 of these realities
- We must be **committed** to #1,2, & 3 (The Biblical Sex Ethic), **aware** of how #4 (The Modern Notion of Identity) is the *default assumption* for most people, and incredibly **sensitive** to #5 (Reparative Therapy Movement)
- This enables us to do at least two things: **Interpret Biblically** and **Respond Lovingly**.

Interpret Biblically

- **Theologically:** we recognize the role of the **human body** when interpreting “who we are” and “how God made us.”
- **Theologically:** We recognize the distinction between **original design** and **inherited brokenness**
- **Theologically:** We recognize the *true* identity God has given us as His image bearers.
- **Personally:** “Just because you find someone **attractive** doesn’t mean you are *sexually attracted* to them.”
- **Personally:** “We *all* struggle to surrender our brokenness to God and submit to His Word.”

Conversation Moment: “Mom, Dad — I think I’m gay”

Response Ideas:

1. **Don’t freak out!**

A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge attractive, but the mouth of fools blurts out foolishness. — Proverbs 15:1–2

*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. **20** Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. — James 1:19–20 NLT*

2. **Thank Them and Honor Them:** “Thank you for trusting me with this. I really respect you for telling me this. I see you, I hear you, I appreciate where you’re coming from.” (Romans 12:10)
3. Be **Curious:** “Oh really? What makes you say that?” (Proverbs 18:2)
4. Ask a **Question:** “What would you say if I told you that I also think other men/women are attractive?”
5. Help them **Interpret:** “It’s very normal to recognize the attractiveness of others as you get older. It’s part of God’s design for recognizing strength and beauty in the world. But it doesn’t necessarily mean you’re gay.”

Respond Lovingly

- At the same time: it shouldn't surprise us if a child comes to experience same-sex attraction as an element of their sinful nature.
- Our goal should not be to stifle or silence them, but to help them interpret their attractions under the authority of God's Word.

For Example:

- "No matter what your attractions are, you are deeply loved by *God* and by *us*."
- "We *all* have attractions and desires we must say, "No" to in order to follow Jesus faithfully and experience His joy within us. For example...."

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. 26 For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life? — Matthew 16:25–26

- "Sin is always **Self-Defeating**: it may feel great for a while, but it never ends well for us. For example...."

See, the wicked one is pregnant with evil, conceives trouble, and gives birth to deceit. 15 He dug a pit and hollowed it out but fell into the hole he had made. 16 His trouble comes back on his own head; his own violence comes down on top of his head. — Psalm 7:14–16

For a man's ways are before the Lord's eyes, and he considers all his paths. 22 A wicked man's iniquities will trap him; he will become tangled in the ropes of his own sin. 23 He will die because there is no discipline, and be lost because of his great stupidity. — Proverbs 7:21–23

But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. 15 Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. — James 1:14–15

- "God wants us to **Surrender** our broken desires to Him so he can meet our needs in His time and in His way."

Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him **deny himself**, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.— Mark 8:34–35 CSB

"For we walk by **faith**, not by *sight*." — 2 Corinthians 5:7 CSB

Modern Biblical Challenges

A. Challenge #1: The Bible vs. Modern Psychology

“Because of a couple [of] words and ideas, written down by desert-dwelling “barely not cave-people anymore” humans, in a massively patriarchal society with *zero insight into human psychology and sexuality* (at least, in comparison to today)... just a handful of thousands year old words have LOCKED people into a way of thinking where they CANNOT SEE the full humanity of queer people. What a tragic shame... *Put your damn Bible down* for a second and *listen to the stories* of those who’ve been told your whole life by the church that they are an abomination.” — Colby Martin (Facebook and Twitter Post)

Response

1. People in the LGBTQ+ community have been hurt by the church.
2. This is something to ***lament*** and ***learn*** from.

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. **24** Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel! — Matthew 23:23–24

3. At the same time: rejecting the ***authority*** of Scripture is *not an option* for faithful followers of Jesus. If the Scriptures are true, then they reveal God’s heart on this issue. We are not more loving than He is.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. — John 17:17

4. This is the key difference separating ***progressive*** Christianity from orthodox, evangelical Christianity.¹³

Every heretic has a Bible verse. — Matthew Barrett¹⁴

What would cause someone to run to progressive Christianity in the first place? There’s an almost endless list of reasons. Childers mentions several: abuses of power, unanswered doubts, high moral demands, troubles with the Bible, social concerns, reacting to hyper-fundamentalism, and suffering...But that doesn’t mean the solutions from progressive Christians lead to any better results than the culture they’re reacting against. Rather than reforming their churches to adopt healthy practices more in line with Jesus, they’ve embraced Christian history’s oldest heresies—like Gnosticism and Marcionism—and called them new and revolutionary. In seeking to reform the faith, they’ve redefined it. In seeking to improve it, they’ve left it behind. — Ian Harber¹⁵

5. Better Option: ***learn*** from the modern sciences without ***compromising*** our commitment to God’s Word as our ultimate authority.

¹³ For two full length treatments on this see Michael J. Kruger, *The Ten Commandments of Progressive Christianity* (Cruciform Press, 2019); Alisa Childers, *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity* (Eugene, O.R.: Tyndale, 2020).

¹⁴ *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021), 35.

¹⁵ “How Progressive Christianity Preaches Another Gospel: A Book Review of ‘Another Gospel?’ by Alisa Childers,” *The Gospel Coalition*, October 23, 2020.

B. The Classic Texts in the Debate

Old Testament

- Genesis 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13

New Testament

- Romans 1:26–27
- 1 Corinthians 1:9–11
- 1 Timothy 1:10

Some Perspective

- For almost 2,000 years, there has been almost universal *agreement* on what the Bible teaches about homosexuality.
- New interpretations didn't arise until the sexual revolution in the 1960s.
- Today, scholars and thinkers who advocate these new interpretations are known as *Revisionists*
- There is a *mountain* of scholarship responding to these claims.

C. Challenge #2: Old Testament Objections

Genesis 19: Sodom and Gomorrah (See Appendix #1 :D)

*The two angels entered Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in Sodom's gateway. When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them. He bowed with his face to the ground **2** and said, "My lords, turn aside to your servant's house, wash your feet, and spend the night. Then you can get up early and go on your way." "No," they said. "We would rather spend the night in the square." **3** But he urged them so strongly that they followed him and went into his house. He prepared a feast and baked unleavened bread for them, and they ate.*

***4** Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom, both young and old, the whole population, surrounded the house. **5** They called out to Lot and said, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so we can have sex with them!"*

***6** Lot went out to them at the entrance and shut the door behind him. **7** He said, "Don't do this evil, my brothers. **8** Look, I've got two daughters who haven't been intimate with a man. I'll bring them out to you, and you can do whatever you want to them. However, don't do anything to these men, because they have come under the protection of my roof." **9** "Get out of the way!" they said, adding, "This one came here as an alien, but he's acting like a judge! Now we'll do more harm to you than to them." They put pressure on Lot and came up to break down the door. **10** But the angels reached out, brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. **11** They struck the men who were at the entrance of the house, both young and old, with blindness so that they were unable to find the entrance. — Genesis 19:1–11*

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 (See Appendix #2 :D)

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. — Leviticus 18:22

If a man lies with a male with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. — Leviticus 20:13

Two Basic Objections:

1. **Inconsistency:** Christians don't obey the Mosaic law on things like animal sacrifice, clothing material, or diet. Why should we obey it when it comes homosexuality?
2. **Fulfillment:** Since the Mosaic law was fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 5:17), it is no longer binding on believers today.

The Big Idea: If an OT law is *explicitly repeated* in the NT, then is still **morally binding** on believers today.

Very Important

- The Leviticus passages do not say that **people** are an abomination.
- The Leviticus passages say that the **acts** are an abomination.
- We must make it clear to people that *God* does not see them as an abomination, but as people worth loving and giving his life for.

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. — Romans 5:8

D. Challenge #3: New Testament Objections

This argument takes many forms, but usually relies on some sort of cultural distance argument that says: “The biblical authors didn’t condemn the kind of homosexuality we see today. The Authors of the Bible certainly condemned certain kinds of homosexuality — like pederasty, prostitution, and rape. These were based on excess or exploitation, but they never condemned monogamous, mutually loving gay relationships.”

“Same-sex relations in the first century were not thought to be the expression of an exclusive sexual orientation. They were widely understood to be the product of **excessive sexual desire** in general...The most common forms of same-sex behavior in the Greco-Roman World were **pederasty, prostitution, and sex between masters and slaves**. The majority of men who indulged in those practices **also engaged in heterosexual behavior**, often during the same times in their lives...Paul wasn’t condemning the expression of same-sex **orientation** as opposed to the expression of opposite sex **orientation**. He was condemning **excess** as opposed to **moderation**.” — Matthew Vines¹⁶

Kevin DeYoung expands on this in his excellent response article:

Of all the arguments in favor of same-sex behavior, the cultural distance argument is the most foundational and the most common (at least among those for whom biblical authority is still important). Although the Mosaic Law and Paul’s letter to the Romans and the vice lists of the New Testament speak uniformly against same-sex behavior, these texts (it is said) were addressing a different kind of same-sex behavior. The ancient world had no concept of sexual orientation, no understanding of egalitarian, loving, committed, monogamous, covenantal same-sex unions.

- The issue was not gender (whether the lovers were male or female), but gender *roles* (whether a man was overly feminized and acting like a woman)
- The issue was not men having sex with men, but men having sex with boys.
- The issue was not consensual same-sex intercourse, but gang rape, power imbalances, and systemic oppression.

The revisionist case can take many forms, but central to most of them is the “not that kind of homosexuality!” argument. We can safely set aside the scriptural prohibitions against homosexual behavior because we are comparing apples and oranges: we are talking in our day about committed, consensual, lifelong partnerships, something the biblical authors in their day knew nothing about.¹⁷

¹⁶ *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 103–105.

¹⁷ Kevin DeYoung, “Not That Kind of Homosexuality?” *The Gospel Coalition*, November 14, 2014.

Romans 1:26–27 ESV

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged ***natural relations*** for those that are ***contrary to nature***; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up ***natural relations*** with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

A Response:

1. ***Speculation***: This argument assumes that *if* Paul would have known about mutually loving, committed same-sex relationships (like we see today) *then* he would't have condemned them. It's a *massive* argument from silence.

It is very possible that Paul knew of views which claimed some people had what we would call a homosexual orientation, though we cannot know for sure and certainly should not read our modern theories back into his world. If he did, it is more likely that, like other Jews, he would have rejected them out of hand, as does Philo after reporting Aristophanes' bizarre aetiology [i.e., the study of causation] of human sexuality. — William Loader¹⁸

2. **Important Point**: Always let ***Scripture*** interpret ***Scripture***

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” **4** He answered, “***Have you not read*** that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” — Matthew 19:1–6

3. Paul condemns homosexual behaviors because it is “***Contrary to Nature***”¹⁹
 - “Contrary to nature” (*para physin*) was consistently used in the ancient world to describe many forms of deviant sexual activity — which specifically included *homosexual activity*
 - Paul's point is that people engaged in sexual behavior that was contrary to their ***Biological Design***

Minimally, Paul is referring to the ***anatomical and procreative complementarity of male and female***. Put in more crude terms, Paul in effect argues that even pagans who have no access to the book of Leviticus should know that same-sex eroticism is ‘contrary to nature’ because the primary sex organs fit male to female, not female to female or male to male...***What is ‘contrary to nature’ is at one and the same time contrary to divinely created structures.*** — Robert A.J. Gagnon²⁰

¹⁸ William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2012), 84.

¹⁹ For an excellent article summarizing the way this phrased was used in the ancient world and in Paul, see James B. DeYoung “The Meaning of ‘Nature’ in Romans 1 and it's Implications for Biblical Proscriptions of Homosexual Behavior,” *JETS* 31/4 (December 1988): 429–441 available at https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/31/31-4/31-4-pp429-441_JETS.pdf

²⁰ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 254; 258–259

Paul is talking about God's **created order**, about the natural **functions** of male and females, not about people individually doing what was (allegedly) contrary to their normal sexual attractions. — Michael Brown²¹

“Pleasures in mating is due to nature (*kata physin*) when male unites with female, but **contrary to nature** (*para physin*) when male unites with male (*arrenon*) or female with female (*theleion*). — Plato (*Laws*, 636c).

In 1:26 Paul uses *physis/physikos* to denote natural and unnatural relations, that is, those consistent with human nature (*kata physin*) or contrary to human nature (*para physin*), a usage consistent with what is found in both Greek and Jewish literature. For example, Plato condemns pederasty and marriage between men as ‘contrary to nature’; *T. Naph.* 3:4–5 charges people: ‘Do not become like Sodom, which departed from the order of nature’; Philo combines the Greek notion of things contrary to nature with the Jewish idea of things contrary to law, and regards sexual aberrations as violations of ‘the law of nature’ (*Abr.* 135–136); Josephus speaks of women’s menstruation and the union of a man and wife as ‘according to nature’ (*Ag. Ap.* 2.199), while he describes sodomy as ‘unnatural’ (*Ag. Ap.* 2.275); Seneca condemned homosexual exploitation (*Ep.* 47.7–8), and Plutarch regarded homosexual practice as ‘contrary to nature’ (*The Dialogue on Love* 751c–e; 752b–c). The early church fathers interpreted Paul’s statement in 1:26 that their ‘women [lit. ‘females’] exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones’ as female homosexual practice. — Colin G. Kruse²²

Given the meaning of “contrary to nature” (*para physin*) and comparable expressions used by Jewish writers of the period to describe same-sex intercourse, the meaning of the phrase in Paul is clear. Minimally, Paul is referring to the anatomical and procreative complementarity of male and female. Put in more crude terms, Paul in effect argues that even pagans who have no access to the book of Leviticus should know that same-sex eroticism is “contrary to nature” because the primary sex organs fit male to female, not female to female or male to male...For Paul it was a simple matter of commonsense observation of human anatomy and procreative function that even pagans, otherwise oblivious to God’s direct revelation in the Bible, had no excuse for not knowing...what is ‘contrary to nature’ is at one and the same time contrary to divinely created structures.” — Robert A.J. Gagnon²³

²¹ Michael L. Brown, *Can you Be Gay and Christian? Responding with Love and Truth to the Questions About Homosexuality* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House Book Group, 2014), 179.

²² *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2012), 101–102.

²³ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 253–54; 258–59.

4. **Vines' Argument is Simply Not True:** The biblical authors were aware of the *full spectrum* of homosexual expression — including monogamous, committed, mutually loving relationships.
- Every form of homosexual behavior and relationships (i.e. committed, long term) was known in the first century.
 - Homosexual practice increasingly defined a person's ideological beliefs.
 - "Homosexuality in this era may have ceased to be merely another practice of personal pleasure **and began to be viewed as an essential and central category of personal identity.**" (Pg. 386).²⁴

It seems to me [people in the ancient world] knew just as much about [homosexuality] as we do. In particular...they knew a great deal about what people today would regard **as longer-term, reasonably stable relations between two people of the same gender.** This is **not a modern invention.** — N.T. Wright²⁵

According to [one] interpretation, Paul's words were not directed at 'bona fide' homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well-intentioned, **seems strained and unhistorical.** Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations **under any circumstances.** The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by **mutual devotion** would have been **wholly foreign to Paul or any Jew or early Christian.** — Louis Crompton²⁶

5. Paul's language — the inclusion of women in particular — indicates **mutuality**, not exploitation or excess.

Historically speaking, female homosexual relations were for the most part consensual in the ancient world. They weren't pederastic or driven by power differences like many male same-sex relations were. — Preston Sprinkle²⁷

The fact that he condemns both female and male malpractice at one and the same time, together with his use of language that does not specifically identify pederasty as the male abuse, gives his statements a generic force. There was no equivalent to pederasty on the female side. — D. F. Wright²⁸

²⁴ Thomas K. Hubbard, ed. *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 7-8.

²⁵ John L. Allen Jr., "Interview with Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright of Durham, England," *National Catholic Reporter*, May 21, 2004, <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/word/wright.htm> (accessed November 11, 2014).

²⁶ Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 114.

²⁷ Sprinkle, *People to be Loved: Why Homosexuality is not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 91.

²⁸ "Homosexuality," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 414.

6. Paul gives a **categorical** rejection of homosexual activity — regardless of its origin (eg. sexual orientation) or various expressions it may take (eg. pederasty, rape, etc.)

Paul could have believed that *tribades* and the ancient *kinadoi* [active female and passive male partners] and other sexually unorthodox persons were born that way **and yet still condemn them as unnatural and shameful...** I believe that Paul used the word 'exchanged' to indicate that people knew the natural sexual order of the universe **and left it behind...** I see Paul as condemning **all forms of homoeroticism as the unnatural acts of people** who had turned away from God. — Bernadette J. Brooten²⁹

Differentiating between sexual orientation and sexual practice is a modern concept; 'to suggest that Paul intends to condemn homosexual acts only when they are committed by persons who are constitutionally heterosexual is to introduce a distinction entirely foreign to Paul's thought-world', in fact a complete anachronism.— John R. W. Stott

In their vertical relationship to God the gentiles ignored the obvious truth about God visible in creation in order to pursue an absurd course of action—a course of action that they alleged was a product of wise rational reflection. God responded to their idolatry with the punishment of allowing them to debase their bodies in their horizontal relationships with one another. With no divine restraint on their passions, they continued to ignore the obvious truth —now about heterosexual complementarity so evident in nature—and pursued the absurd course of action of having sexual intercourse with members of the same gender. — Robert A.J. Gagnon³⁰

He uses the adjectives "female" and "male" rather than the nouns "women" and "men", possibly because he is concentrating on sexual differentiation. Hendriksen points out that "A person's sexual orientation, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is not the point at issue. What matters is what a person does with his sexuality!" He goes on to remind us that "According to the plain teaching of Scripture sexual intercourse was intended for a husband and his wife, for no one else!" — Leon Morris³¹

7. Paul situates the condemnation of homosexual behavior in the **Creation Story** of Genesis 1–2, not in the **cultural customs** of the Graeco-Roman world.
- The creation and creator are mentioned in (Romans 1:20; 25).
 - The language of animals, birds, and creeping things in v. 23 echoes Genesis 1:30)
 - The Greek in v. 23 mirrors the Greek version of Genesis (LXX) 1:26, with both passages using identical words for image, likeness, man, birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things.
 - The language of lie (v.25), and shame (v.27), and the sentence of death (v.32) are all allusions to the fall in Genesis 3.³²

²⁹ Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 244.

³⁰ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 267.

³¹ *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; InterVarsity Press, 1988), 92.

³² Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015),. 49–57

In keeping with the biblical and Jewish worldview, the heterosexual desires observed normally in nature are traced to God's creative intent. Sexual sins that are "against nature" are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul's appeal to "nature" in this verse includes appeal to God's created order. — Douglas Moo³³

Paul singles out homosexual intercourse for special attention because he regards it as providing a particularly graphic image of the way in which human fallenness distorts God's created order. God the Creator made man and woman for each other, to cleave to each other, to be fruitful and multiply. When human beings "exchange" these created roles for homosexual intercourse, they embody the spiritual condition of those who have "exchanged the truth about God for a lie." — Richard B. Hays³⁴

Gagnon summarizes the logical flow of Paul's thought this way:

- **Stage 1:** God's invisible transcendence and majesty is visibly manifested in creation (1:19–20)
- **Stage 2:** Humans knowingly and thus foolishly "exchange" the true God for idols (1:21–23; recapitulated in 1:25 and 1:28a).
- **Stage 3:** God "gives over" humans to their desires/passions and to an "unfit mind" which aim at self-degrading and self-destructive forms of conduct (1:24, 26, 28).
- **Stage 4:** Many humans then dishonored themselves by "exchanging" natural intercourse for manifestly self-degrading and unnatural intercourse (1:26–27); all engaged in some form of "improper" and evil conduct (1:28–31).
- **Stage 5:** The self-degrading evil behavior to which God "gives over" humans ends in the ultimate recompense of "death" (1:32).³⁵

³³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 115.

³⁴ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 388

³⁵ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 252–53.

1 Corinthians 6:9–10 CSB

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or **males who have sex with males** (neither **malakoi** nor **arsenokoitai**),¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom.

1 Timothy 1:9–11 CSB

We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ for the sexually immoral and **males who have sex with males (arsenokoitai)**, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching¹¹ that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me.

Recent Challenge: “1946: The Mistranslation that Shifted a Culture” | Summary

- The translation team of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) mistranslated the Greek word *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 to say, “Homosexual.”
- A 21 year old seminary student realized this, wrote to the committee, and asked them to change this error.
- The RSV committee changed this in 1971 updated edition (to “sexual perverts”) but the damage had already been done.
- This mistranslation led to decades of mistreatment of the LGBTQ community.

Some Advice

- If it sounds like a conspiracy theory, it probably isn't
- Always be suspicious of “mistranslation” arguments
- They give the complete wrong impression about how translation work is done.
- Modern translations are not dependent upon previous translations. Instead, they utilize the best original language manuscripts (Greek and Hebrew) that we have and are able to determine the best English translation from the original languages. Every translation committee has certain goals and philosophies, so other translations are considered, but they are by no means determinative within the translation process.

Problems with this Argument:³⁶

1. *arsenokoitai* literally means “man bedders” or “men who lye with males.”
 - It is the combination of two Greek words: *arsen* (“male”) and *koites* (“lying”)
 - Note: You don't always know what a word means just by combining its parts (eg. “Butterfly”) but sometimes you can (eg. “playwright”).
 - How do you know? *Context* always determines the meaning.
2. This is the same language used in the Greek version (Septuagint) of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.
3. It's true that the word “homosexual” wasn't in the English *Bible* until this time, but that's because it wasn't popular in the entire English *Vocabulary* prior to this.
4. The **word** wasn't in use, but the **concept** certainly was.

³⁶ For more on each of these see Alan Shlemon, “The Claim about Homosexuality in the Film 1946 is Irrelevant,” *Stand to Reason*, May 4, 2021; cf. DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* 59–70; Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 303–336.

A Final Objection: “Jesus Never Said Anything About Homosexuality”

Response:

1. Jesus Believed in the Jewish *Sexual Ethic*
2. Jesus Affirmed God’s Design for *Marriage* (Matthew 19:1–6)
3. Jesus Condemned all *Sexual Immorality* (Matthew 15:19–20; Mark 7:20–23)
4. Jesus was amazingly *Gracious* to the sexually broken of his day (John 4)
5. Bottom Line: We should follow Jesus :)

Question: Where Did All of This Come From?

Response:

1. **Satan** has always been asking the question, “Did God really say?”

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” — Genesis 3:1

44 *You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. 45* *Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. — John 8:44–45*

15 *“Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. — Matthew 7:15*

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 *They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. — 2 Timothy 4:3–4*

There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. 2 *Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them. 3* *They will exploit you in their greed with made-up stories. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep.*

17 *These people are springs without water, mists driven by a storm. The gloom of darkness has been reserved for them. 18* *For by uttering boastful, empty words, they seduce, with fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error. 19* *They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, since people are enslaved to whatever defeats them. 20* *For if, having escaped the world’s impurity through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in these things and defeated, the last state is worse for them than the first. 21* *For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy command delivered to them. 22* *It has happened to them according to the true proverb: **A dog returns to its own vomit, and, “A washed sow returns to wallowing in the mud.” —2 Peter 2:1–3, 17–22***

2. Horrible experiences in the **Church** community—leadership, family, youth group, etc.

Many studies actually show the connection between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and LGBTQ identities. This doesn't mean that everyone with same-sex attraction experienced traumatic abuse or divorce as a childhood, but the evidence does suggest a strong correlation between these two realities.³⁷

A new study led by researchers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Vanderbilt University found that 83% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) individuals reported going through adverse childhood experiences (ACE) such as sexual and emotional abuse, and worse mental health as adults when compared to their heterosexual peers.³⁸

3. The Biblical Sexual this *is* difficult and counter-cultural

4. When people try to reconcile the Bible with personal experience, it's very easy to make personal experience the ultimate **Authority**

"I have little patience with efforts to make Scripture say something other than what it says, through appeals to linguistic or cultural subtleties. **The exegetical situation is straightforward: we know what the text says.** But what are we to *do* with what the text says?"

I think it important to state clearly that **we do, in fact, reject the straightforward commands of Scripture, and appeal instead to another authority when we declare that same-sex unions can be holy and good.**

And what exactly is that authority?

We appeal explicitly to the weight of our own experience and the experience thousands of others have witnessed to, which tells us that to claim our own sexual orientation is in fact to accept the way in which God has created us." — Luke Timothy Johnson (NT Scholar)³⁹

³⁷ Tran NM, Henkhaus LE, Gonzales G. "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Distress Among US Adults by Sexual Orientation," *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2022;79(4):377–379; Kristen Clements-Nolle, et al., "Sexual Identity, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Suicidal Behaviors," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2017; Andersen, Judith P, and John Blosnich. "Disparities in adverse childhood experiences among sexual minority and heterosexual adults: results from a multi-state probability-based sample." *PLoS one* vol. 8,1 (2013).

³⁸ Jake Lowary, "Study finds LGBQ people report higher rates of adverse childhood experiences than straight people, worse mental health as adults," *Vanderbilt University Reporter*, February 2022;

³⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson and Eve Tushnet, "Homosexuality and the Church: Two Views," *Commonwealth* (June 15, 2007): 15.

Modern Practical Challenges

A. A Modest Goal

Put a rock in their shoe.

- Ask a **Question** before giving a *statement*
- Some version of: “What do you mean by?” (define terms; ask them to unpack)
- Some version of: “What do you think about ...?” (specific biblical ethic, passage, etc).
- Some version of: “What’s your opinion on.... ?” (personal story or example that is contrary to their conclusions or takes their argument to it’s logical conclusion)

34 “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work,” Jesus told them. **35** “Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest’? Listen to what I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ready for harvest. **36** The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. **37** For in this case the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ **38** I sent you to reap what you didn’t labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor.” — John 4:34–38

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. — 1 Corinthians 3:5–8

Some people are good “closers.” They’re good at getting the sale. They’re gifted in evangelism and they harvest with almost no effort. “You don’t need all that fancy stuff. Just give them the simple Gospel. It always works for me.”

What they don’t realize is that harvesting often comes easily for them because, in God’s sovereignty, many ambassadors came before them planting, watering, and weeding, one by one tending to the plant, cultivating healthy growth until it was ripe and ready to reap.

Think of your own journey to Christ. Chances are you didn’t go from a standstill to total commitment. Instead, God dealt with you over a period of time. There was a season of reflection as you sorted out the details, hobbling about on the little stones other ambassadors had dropped into your shoe. You can do the same thing for someone else.

Follow the strategy I use when God opens a door of opportunity for me. I don’t know how long the door will be open, so I pray quickly for wisdom (James 1:5), then ask myself, “In this circumstance, what is one thing I can say, one question I can ask, one thought I can leave that will get him thinking?” Then I try to put a stone in his shoe. — Greg Koukl⁴⁰

⁴⁰ “A Stone in the Shoe,” *Stand to Reason*, February 1, 2002.

B. Practical Objection #1: Homophobia

Response:

1. This is not an **argument**; it's an **insult**.
2. “What do you mean by ‘homophobic’?”
3. “Do you consider yourself ‘**heterophobic**’?”
4. “Are you willing to have a **Conversation** about this?”
5. “Do you consider yourself an **open-minded, tolerant** person — even of views you disagree with?”
6. “What would you say if I told you I have gay friends who disagree with me, but we still have a good relationship?”

The term homophobia has “extended beyond its original technical and psychological meaning of irrational hatred and is sometimes used to denote any opinion on gay issues which questions a presumed consensus.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Church of England, *Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality* (London: Church House Publishing), 54

C. Practical Challenge #2: Born This Way

“There is *no consensus among scientists* about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, *no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors*. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.” — American Psychological Association (2008)

- **The American Psychiatric Association (2015):** “Some people believe that sexual orientation is innate and fixed; however, sexual orientation develops across a person’s lifetime.”
- **Scientific American (2019):** “Massive Study Finds No Single Genetic Cause for Same-Sex Sexual Behavior.
- **Consensus:** There are multiple factors — biological and developmental, but there is no one genetic or biological cause for same-sex attraction.

Response:

- This claim is not supported by the scientific **evidence**.⁴²
- Sexuality is much more **Fluid** than is often portrayed. There is a complex interplay between the innate and environmental conditions — along with personal choices — that combine to form a person’s sexual attractions, preferences, and decisions.⁴³

Now we have a number of large, random, representative surveys that have been done on people’s sexual attractions, and actually bisexual patterns of attraction are far more common than exclusively gay or lesbian patterns of attraction....over time, regardless of where they started, whether they were lesbian, or bisexual, or some of the women were like, 'well, I don't know what I am, but I'm somewhere,' there was a lot of movement.

As time went on, some of the women who started out as lesbian ended up falling in love with their male best friends and getting involved with them. Some of the women who were predominantly bisexual then ended up switching to be exclusively lesbian. And I just found that there was a lot more flexibility in women’s sexuality than most of the literature at that time had suggested...

I found that the longer I followed them, the more women started to change, so that, by the time I reached the 10 year point, and now I'm at the 20 year point, change is substantially more common than stability....The trick comes when you let their lives unfold. And most of our lives are a lot more complex than we think. And it looks like our human species just has a lot more capacity for fluidity and for plasticity than most of us imagine. — Lisa Diamond (Lesbian & Psychologist)⁴⁴

⁴² For a thorough treatment on this subject see J. Alan Branch, *Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures* (Bellingham, W.A.: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁴³ Bailey, J. M., Dunne, M. P., & Martin, N. G. (2000). “Genetic and environmental influences on sexual orientation and its correlates in an Australian twin sample.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, pp. 524-36.

⁴⁴ “The New Science of Sexual Fluidity (Interview),” *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, February 13, 2021; cf. Deborah L. Tolman and Lisa M. Diamond, eds. *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* vols. 1 and 2 (2014).

Diamond has also found that women who experience bi-sexual attractions are by far the largest group of same-sex attracted people. About 14 percent of women experience attraction to other women, while only 1 percent are never attracted to men. For men, it's roughly 7 percent who are attracted to other men, while only 2 percent are never attracted to women. Additionally, about 42 % of self-identified lesbians and 31% of self-identified gay men report having had an opposite-sex sexual fantasy in the last year.⁴⁵

Far from being a fixed preference, the findings suggest that sexual identity and attraction undergo extensive and often subtle changes throughout a person's life, continuing long past adolescence and into adulthood, with women showing slightly more fluidity than men. — Carly Cassella⁴⁶

Sexual fluidity, in short, means your sexual orientation isn't permanently fixed. Yes, everyone has an underlying orientation — asexual, pansexual, or heterosexual, for example. Yet there's room for it to expand a little, based on your experiences and current situation. It can help to think of orientation as a spectrum that includes people of all genders. Sexually fluid people tend to experience attractions at different points along the spectrum as they go through life. — Healthline Website⁴⁷

Unfortunately, what many communities share in conceptualizing sexual identity, is a belief in its fixed nature. From the “born this way” rhetoric of the mainstream gay rights movement seeking to root gay and lesbian identity as established at birth, or the search for a “gay gene” seeking to legitimate gay and lesbian identity through biology, sexual identity — more colloquially described as ‘sexuality’ — is cast as a characteristic or trait that does not change. Mainstream LGBTQ discourse subscribes to a model of identity formation and development that assumes an early discovery of same-gender attraction, a period of hiding that attraction (being “in the closet”), an explosive coming-out process by which that attraction becomes a publicly held identity, and finally a stabilizing of that identity over the long-term — typically, the remainder of an individual's lifetime. For some people, sexual orientation and attraction are very fixed; however, this is not the case for all. — Stanford University, Vaden Health Services⁴⁸

Who are you today? Who were you a decade ago? For many of us, shifts in our lives — relationships, jobs, friendships, where we live, what we believe — are the only constant. Yet it's a common misconception that sexual orientation develops at an early age and then remains stable throughout one's life. Rather, changes in sexual orientation are a common thread in many people's lives. People may experience changes in who they are attracted to, who they have sex with, and which labels they use to describe their sexual orientation. Such changes in sexual orientation are called sexual fluidity. — Sabra L. Katz-Wise, PhD⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Lisa Diamond, “Just How Different Are Female and Male Orientation,” Lecture at Cornell University, *YouTube*, October 17, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1wa1kYQAJQ>

⁴⁶ “Here's More Evidence Sexual Orientation Is Fluid Right Into Our Adult Years,” *Science Alert*, May 5, 2019.

⁴⁷ Crystal Raypole, “What Does it Mean to Be Sexually Fluid?” *Healthline Website*, December 22, 2020

⁴⁸ “Sexual Fluidity,” *Stanford University, Vaden Health Services*, <https://vaden.stanford.edu/medical-services/lgbtqia-health/sexual-fluidity>

⁴⁹ “Sexual Fluidity and the Diversity of Sexual Orientation,” *Harvard Health Publishing*, Harvard Medical School, March 31, 2022 <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/sexual-fluidity-and-the-diversity-of-sexual-orientation-202203312717>

No causal theory of sexual orientation has yet gained widespread support. The most scientifically plausible causal hypotheses are difficult to test. However, there is considerably more evidence supporting nonsocial causes of sexual orientation than social causes. This evidence includes the cross-culturally robust finding that *adult homosexuality is strongly related to childhood gender nonconformity*; moderate genetic influences demonstrated in well-sampled twin studies; the cross-culturally robust fraternal-birth-order effect on male sexual orientation; and the finding that when infant boys are surgically and socially “changed” into girls, their eventual sexual orientation is unchanged (i.e., they remain sexually attracted to females). — J. Michael Bailey⁵⁰

Childhood gender nonconforming behavior is a consistent early predictor of future nonheterosexual orientations.” — Gu Li⁵¹

- Even if it were true, it wouldn’t change the Bible’s ultimate answer or response.

Just because I didn’t choose this orientation, it doesn’t follow that I was “born this way” or that “God created me gay.” While genetics influences these traits, there is not a fixed predetermination. It is not hardwired like eye or skin color. I can look back and understand where it came from in my own life. Of course, others’ experiences may be different from mine. But ultimately, the etiology doesn’t matter. Same-sex sexual activity is outside the design and will of the good plan of God. To claim otherwise requires ignoring Scripture, historical Christian authority, and natural law. So I need help in living chastely, regardless of how my same-sex desires came to be. — Jean Lloyd⁵²

It doesn’t matter whether we’re born this way. The fact is that there are plenty of genetically influenced traits that are nevertheless undesirable. — John Corvino (Gay Advocate)

⁵⁰ J. Michael Bailey, et. al, “Sexual Orientation, Controversy, Science,” *Association for Psychological Science* 17, no. 2 (2016): 45–101.

⁵¹ Gu Li, Karson T.F. Kung, and Melissa Hines, “Childhood Gender-Types Behavior and Adolescence Sexual Orientation: A Longitudinal Population-Based Study,” *Developmental Psychology*, Feb. 20, 2017.

⁵² “Seven Things I Wish My Pastor Knew About My Homosexuality,” *The Public Discourse*, December 10, 2014.

Remember our Sinful Nature:

- All of us are born with a sinful nature full of desires, attractions, and inclinations that we did not choose.
- We don't always choose our attractions, but we can choose our **behaviors**.
- **Important Distinction:** Just because you are **tempted**, doesn't mean you're living in sin — Jesus was tempted, but never sinned (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. — Hebrews 4:15

A Rock in the Shoe

- “Is it possible that there are things we're all born with that God wants to help us overcome (e.g., anger, bitterness, addictions, etc.)?”
- “How do you understand the Bible's view of original / inherited sin?”
- “Do you think we are born with desires, attractions, etc. that should say ‘No’ to?”
- “What do you think about verses like Jeremiah 17:9 that speak about the deceitfulness of our hearts?”

The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable— who can understand it? — Jeremiah 17:9

D. Practical Objection #3: Acceptance

Remember: this is a very *modern*, very *new* understanding of human identity.

Thought Experiment: The Anglo Saxon Warrior and the Modern Manhattan Urbanite

Imagine an Anglo-Saxon warrior in Britain in AD 800. He has two very strong inner impulses and feelings. One is aggression. He loves to smash and kill people when they show him disrespect. Living in a shame-and-honor culture with its warrior ethic, he will identify with that feeling. He will say to himself, *That's me! That's who I am! I will express that.* The other feeling he senses is same-sex attraction. To that he will say, *That's not me. I will control and suppress that impulse.* Now imagine a young man walking around Manhattan today. He has the same two inward impulses, both equally strong, both difficult to control. What will he say? He will look at the aggression and think, *This is not who I want to be*, and will seek deliverance in therapy and anger-management programs. He will look at his sexual desire, however, and conclude, *That is who I am.*

What does this thought experiment show us? Primarily it reveals that we do not get our identity simply from within. Rather, we receive some interpretive moral grid, lay it down over our various feelings and impulses, and sift them through it. This grid helps us decide which feelings are “me” and should be expressed - and which are not and should not be. So this grid of interpretive beliefs - not an innate, unadulterated expression of our feelings - is what gives us our identity. Despite protests to the contrary, we instinctively know our inner depths are insufficient to guide us. We need some standard or rule from outside of us to help us sort out the warring impulses of our interior life.

And where do our Anglo-Saxon warrior and our modern Manhattan man get their grids? From their cultures, their communities, their heroic stories. They are actually not simply “choosing to be themselves” - they are filtering their feelings, jettisoning some and embracing others. They are choosing to be the selves their cultures tell them they may be.⁵³

What Does This Teach Us?

- Our surrounding **culture(s)** powerfully shapes our sense of authentic, self-identity.
- We need a better, more objective **Standard** to tell us who we really are.
- Left to ourselves, we are at the **mercy** of the surrounding culture we inhabit.

Response

1. We *should* accept people, regardless of their struggles.
2. Acceptance does not equal **Endorsement**.
3. The very nature of Christian friendship is to help each other grow in **holiness**, not in more sinfulness.

⁵³ Tim Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 135-36

A Rock in the Shoe

1. “What do you mean by ‘**Accept**’?”
2. “Do you think we should define (or reduce) someone by their sexual desires and attractions?”
3. “What role does the **body** play in how you define someone?”
4. “How do we determine which aspects of a person to accept and which aspects to push back against? What authority should we use to determine this?”
5. “What if someone made the claim about an addiction, abusive personality, or another sexual attraction (eg. pornography, incest, adultery, etc.) ?”

All of us have desires that are warped as a result of our fallen nature. Desires for things God has forbidden are a reflection of how **sin has distorted me**, not of how **God has made me**.” — Sam Allberry⁵⁴

I was born this way: female. God did create me a woman. Please don’t fall into the gnostic dualism that divides my spiritual life from the life I now live in my body. Christ became incarnate; my very body is now part of His body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. To act against its design in same-sex sexual action harms the dignity of my body. For my homosexually attracted brothers, same-sex sex harms their bodies even more because of their physiological design and the physical effects of going against that design. These bodies will be raised again. They matter. — Jean Floyd⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction* (The Good Book Company, 2015), 32.

⁵⁵ “Seven Things I Wish My Pastor Knew About My Homosexuality.”

E. Practical Objection #4: God is Love

Response:

- This is a quotation from 1 John 4:8.

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. — 1 John 4:7–10

- In context, John is telling believers that we should love each other sacrificially the way that God has loved us sacrificially in Jesus (cf. 1 John 3:11–24).
- He is not telling us that God is “whatever we think love is.” In other words, “love” has a particular meaning in this passage—sacrificial, self-giving love in the way of Jesus. It is not gullible or undiscerning.

The response to the “God is love” argument is to point out that God being love doesn’t mean he approves of everything we think is love. It means God knows far more about love than we do, and so we must listen to him if we are to know how to order our loves—and thereby love one another appropriately and well. — Sam Allberry⁵⁶

- Just before saying “God is love,” John has also warned against the deception of false teachers and exhorted Christians to exercise biblical discernment about the claims they make. Paul echoes the same reality — false teachers will make appealing claims, but they should be rejected if they don’t align with the truth of Scripture:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. — 1 John 4:1⁵⁷

Christian faith is not spiritual gullibility. The unseen spiritual influences that guide people’s speech and actions can be “tested” by observing their doctrine and conduct as well as by the gift of spiritual discernment (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29). False prophets are people who claim to speak for God but are actually speaking by demonic influence (1 John 4:3–4). In today’s age of “tolerance,” discriminating discernment can be viewed as being judgmental (cf. “Judge not,” Matt. 7:1). Yet Jesus also taught, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24).⁵⁸

Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ. — Colossians 2:8

⁵⁶ “Where to Find Hope and Help amid the Sexual Revolution,” *The Gospel Coalition*, November 5, 2018.

⁵⁷ Paul says something very similar: *For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will be according to their works.* — 2 Corinthians 11:13–15

⁵⁸ Lane T. Dennis and Wayne Grudem, eds., *The ESV Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), paragraph 24573.

- John makes it clear that love for the ways / beliefs of the world are inconsistent with loving God:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17** And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever. — 1 John 2:15–17

- While the Bible makes it clear that God is love (1 John 4:8), it also says that God is *light* (1 John 1:5), God is *holy* (Isaiah 6:1–6), and that God is a *consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:28–29). It is never wise to take one attribute of God (eg. his love) and elevate it to a supreme status that effectively mutes or silences His other attributes. Instead of seeing God’s love in isolation, we must see how God’s love infuses everything He does: His justice is a *loving* justice, His mercy is a *loving* mercy, etc. Rather than abstract one attribute from the others, we must interpret each attribute within the whole of Scripture that reveals to us who God is in His totality. If we refuse to do this, then we will attach modern definitions to God’s love that are foreign to the biblical text and inconsistent with how God has revealed Himself to us:

In present-day Western culture many other and complementary truths about God are widely disbelieved. What the Bible says about the love of God cannot long survive in people's thinking if it is abstracted from the sovereignty of God, the holiness of God, the wrath of God, the providence of God, and the personhood of God, to mention only a few nonnegotiable elements of basic Christianity. The result, of course, is that the love of God in our culture has been purged of anything the culture finds uncomfortable. The love of God has been sanitized, democratized, and above all sentimentalized. — D.A. Carson⁵⁹

- God does not intend for us to pit his attributes against each other. Rather, God wants us to see his love as one of his many attributes that total up to his perfection and glory. Whatever it means to say that God is love, it does not mean at the same time that God is *not* angry with sin (Psalm 7:11 or that God is *not* holy (Isaiah 6:1–6) or that God is not *sovereign* (Isa. 46:9–10; Eph. 1:11). Rather than make an either/or choice between the attributes of God, we must submit to the full council of Scripture and hold these attributes together. Paul said it well, “Therefore, consider God’s *kindness* and *severity*...” (Romans 11:22).

⁵⁹ “On Distorting the Love of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (January–March 1999): 4.

Rock in the Shoe

1. “Yes, God *is* love — but what do you think the Bible *means* by that?”
2. What do you think about 1 Corinthians 13:6?

Love finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth. — 1 Corinthians 13:6

3. Is it ever loving for God to say, “**No**” to us?

*But the house of Israel says, ‘The Lord’s way isn’t fair.’ Is it my ways that are unfair, house of Israel? Instead, isn’t it your ways that are unfair? **30** “Therefore, house of Israel, I will judge each one of you according to his ways.” This is the declaration of the Lord God. “Repent and turn from all your rebellious acts, so they will not become a sinful stumbling block to you. **31** Throw off all the transgressions you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, house of Israel? **32** For I take no pleasure in anyone’s death.” This is the declaration of the Lord God. “So repent and live! — Ezekiel 18:29–31*

10 “Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘You have said this: “Our transgressions and our sins are heavy on us, and we are wasting away because of them! How then can we survive?”’ **11** Tell them, ‘As I live—this is the declaration of the Lord God—I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live. Repent, repent of your evil ways! Why will you die, house of Israel?’ — Ezekiel 33:10–11

14 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: **15** “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” — Mark 1:14–15

4 You adulterous people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God. **5** Or do you think it’s without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit he made to dwell in us envies intensely? **6** But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says:

**God resists the proud
but gives grace to the humble.**

7 Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. — James 4:4–10\

4. Does ‘God is love’ mean that God approves of everything **we** love?

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. **2** Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. — Romans 12:1–2 NLT

F. Practical Objection #5: Civil Rights

Today, when people see Christian opposition to gay marriage, they think it's just the same son, second verse. The reasoning runs like this: just as Christians have oppressed and terrorized African Americans, so Christians have oppressed and terrorized gay and lesbian people. Just as we are now ashamed of 1960s segregationists, so one day our descendants will be ashamed of us, if we continue to oppose gay marriage...In the minds of many secular people, if we're going to become more just, we must become less biblical. — Rebecca McLaughlin⁶⁰

Response:

1. This claim rests on the **Assumption** that sexual desires / attractions are created by God — just like gender and ethnicity.
2. Sexual orientation is **internal**; Gender/Ethnicity are **external**.
3. Unlike sexual orientation, a person's gender and race do **not** change, fluctuate, or modify over time — they are permanent, biological features of human identity (see above section on sexual fluidity).

We've advocated for civil rights of LGBT people on the basis of them being LGBT. We have used categories [eg. "group rights" or the immutability of sexual identity] as a part of our strategy for social policy and for acceptance, and that is really, really tricky now that we know it's not true... We can make strong claims for civil rights protection that don't rely on the immutability of these groups...As a community, the queers have to stop saying "please help us. We were born this way and we can't change" as an argument for legal standing. I don't think we need that argument. — Lisa Diamond (Lesbian, Psychologist).⁶¹

4. The LGBTQ movement **Minimizes** the body in determining human identity. The Civil Rights movements have historically done the opposite: they've **Honored** the body in determining human identity.
5. **Regarding Marriage Equality:** The very notion of civil rights depends on the notion that people are created in God's image — which *essentially* and *fundamentally* connects to their *their biological form as male and female*.

That every human being possessed an equal dignity was not remotely a self-evident truth. A Roman would have laughed at it. To campaign against discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality, however, was to depend on large numbers of people sharing in a common assumption: that everyone possessed an inherent worth. The origins of this principle . . . lay not in the French Revolution, nor in the Declaration of Independence, nor in the Enlightenment, but in the Bible. — Tom Holland⁶²

Nothing about interracial marriage changes what marriage was designed to be: a picture of Jesus' love for the church and a partnership for bearing and raising children. The case of same-sex marriage is different. There are significant biological differences between men and women. In many life situations, such differences don't matter. For example, to do most jobs, it doesn't matter if you're male or female. But the differences between men and women are highly relevant in marriage. In fact, this is the setting in which they're most relevant, because the differences enable to have babies together. — Rebecca McLaughlin⁶³

⁶⁰ *The Secular Creed: Engaging Five Contemporary Claims* (Austin: The Gospel Coalition, 2021), 44–45.

⁶¹ Lisa Diamond, "Just How Different Are Female and Male Orientation," Lecture at Cornell University, *YouTube*, October 17, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1wa1kYQAJQ>. This quotation comes from a segment beginning at 37:28.

⁶² *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 494.

⁶³ *The Secular Creed*, 52

Rock in the Shoe

1. “Whose sexual attractions can we say ‘No’ to?”
2. “Do all ‘sexual orientations’ deserve civil and legal protection?”
3. “Do you think we should extend legal protection to all sexual minorities — regardless of what expression they take?”
4. “Where would you say the notion of civil rights come from?”
5. “Do you see any difference between other civil rights movements (eg. Women’s suffrage, African American rights, etc) and the sexual movements today?”
6. “What do you think about the evidence of sexual fluidity among people? Would that undercut the claim for civil rights?”
7. “Do you make a distinction between basic *human* rights (eg. respect, love, justice) and *civil* rights (legal recognition, protection, etc)?”

G. Practical Objection #6: Family Structure

“All a child needs is a loving, supportive family environment.”

“The only things kids need to grow up healthy and happy are to be safe and loved.”

Response

1. The sociological evidence and personal testimony of many individuals says the opposite: biological **Gender** really, really matters in childhood development.⁶⁴

Dismissing the importance of biology ignores the decades of research on family structure and the scientific consensus that children raised in the home of their married biological father are the most likely to be safe and loved. Thus, if you agree that children should be safe and loved, you must also agree that biology and marriage are critical to their well-being. — Katy Faust⁶⁵

2. In their absence, the child often develops “Father” or “Mother” **Hunger**

I grew up surrounded by women who said they didn’t need or want a man. Yet, as a little girl, I so desperately wanted a daddy. It is a strange and confusing thing to walk around with this deep-down unquenchable ache for a father, for a man, in a community that says that men are unnecessary. There were times I felt so angry with my dad for not being there for me, and then times I felt angry with myself for even wanting a father to begin with. — Heather Barwick⁶⁶

3. Family **Structure** is just as important as the emotional, relational connection parents have with their children (see below).
4. It is not **sufficient**, but it is incredibly **important**.
5. In fact, evidence consistently shows that the presence of married, biological parents significantly decrease a child’s chances of negative developmental experiences (eg. physical, emotional, or sexual abuse) and positively contributes to their well-being.

If we were asked to design a system for making sure that children’s basic needs were met, we would probably come up with something quite similar to the two-parent family ideal. Such a design, in theory, would not only ensure that children had access to the time and money of two adults, it would provide a system of checks and balances that promote quality parenting. The fact that both adults have a biological connection to the child would increase the likelihood that the parents would identify with the child and be willing to sacrifice for that child and it would reduce the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child. — Sara McLanahan (Professor of Sociology @ Princeton)⁶⁷

“Most scholars now agree that children raised by two biological parents in a stable marriage do better than children in other family forms across a wide range of outcomes.” — Sara McLanahan and Isahel Sawhill⁶⁸

⁶⁴ For two articles that cite and summarize the sociological evidence see Katy Faust, “Biology Matters” *Them Before Us* May 6, 2017 and Katy Faust, “Gender Matters,” *Them Before Us*, May 3, 2017.

⁶⁵ *Them Before Us: Why We Need a Global Children’s Right’s Movement* (Nashville: PostHill Press, 2021), 30.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Katy Faust, *Them Before Us*, 80.

⁶⁷ *Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Harvard University Press, 1997), 38

⁶⁸ Sara McLanahan and Isahel Sawhill, “Marriage and Child Wellbeing Revisited: Introducing the Issue,” *Future of Children*, v25, Fall 2015: 3–9.

Rock in the Shoe

1. What do you mean by “safe” and “loved” ?
2. Do you think it’s wise for a child to be *intentionally* raised without a mother or father?
3. What do you think about the wounds a child experiences from not knowing their mother or father?
4. What do you think about the stories of people who were raised by gay parents, but who are speaking about the emotional scars and trauma associated with it?

More Evidence from the Social Sciences

Parenting styles correlate to biological differences between men and women. Women, compared to men, have higher levels of oxytocin—the hormone responsible for emotional bonding—and oxytocin receptors. Oxytocin serves to calm anxiety, reduce motor activity, and foster an increase in touch. In contrast, testosterone—present in men at levels tenfold higher than women—is correlated to an increase in motor activity in infant boys and may be responsible for higher levels of physical activities in men compared to women. — Scott Haltzman (Psychiatrist)⁶⁹

As far as biological sex goes, men tend to be firmer and more nondirective than women as parents, while women tend to be more responsive, structured, and regimented than men. Fathers are more demanding of children in regard to problem solving than mothers and make more action-related demands for accomplishment of tasks. Fathers tend to be more unconventional in their toy and object use than mothers and use objects to engage in physical contact with children to a greater degree than mothers. Fathers also destabilize children during play through the use of teasing to a greater extent than mothers. — Rob Palkovitz (professor of family studies)⁷⁰

The evidence is in, and it is clear that fathers do matter in the lives of their children. Literally hundreds of studies over the past two decades have consistently demonstrated that fathers have a measureable impact on children (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, and Lamb 2000; Parke 2002; Paquette 2004). Studies show that infants are positively affected by the interactions and care given by their fathers (Pedersen 1980; Yogman 1982). Good studies have found that the quality of parenting exhibited by the father as well as the resources they bring to their family predict children’s behavior problems, depression, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction. — David J. Eggebeen (Professor of Sociology)⁷¹

Research clearly demonstrates that family structure matters for children, and the family structure that helps children the most is a family headed by two biological parents in a low-conflict marriage. Children in single-parent families, children born to unmarried mothers, and children in stepfamilies or cohabiting relationships face higher risks of poor outcomes than do children in

⁶⁹ “The Effect of Gender-Based Parental Influences on Raising Children: The Impact on Couples’ Relationships,” in *Gender and Parenthood: Biological and Social Scientific Perspectives* ed. by W. Bradford Wilcox and Kathleen Kovner Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 304-21

⁷⁰ “Gendered Parenting’s Implications for Children’s Well-Being: Theory and Research in Applied Perspective” in *Gender and Parenthood: Biological and Social Scientific Perspectives* ed. by W. Bradford Wilcox and Kathleen Kovner Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 215-48

⁷¹ “Do Fathers Uniquely Matter for Adolescent Well-Being” *Gender and Parenthood: Biological and Social Scientific Perspectives* ed. by W. Bradford Wilcox and Kathleen Kovner Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 249.

intact families headed by two biological parents. — Kristin Anderson Moore, Susan M. Jekielek and Carol Emig⁷²

Girls and boys who grow up with a father are more familiar and secure with the curious world of men. Girls with involved, married fathers are more likely to have healthier relationships with boys in adolescence and men in adulthood because they learn from their fathers how proper men act toward women. They also learn from mom how to live in a woman's world. This knowledge builds emotional security and safety from the exploitation of predatory males. Mothers help boys understand the female world and develop a sensitivity toward women. They also help boys know how to relate and communicate with women.

When we disregard the gender distinctions of parental influence as unimportant or unnecessary, we seriously diminish the proper development of children. Kids need the active participation of a mother and a father, and both parents need to be true to their gender designs. Both bring different and equally important things to the parenting project. We impoverish children and society when we deny our kids the influence of a mother and father, because we limit their development into full, healthy adults. — Glenn Stanton⁷³

Talk to any child with gay parents, especially those old enough to reflect on their experiences. If you ask a child raised by a lesbian couple if they love their two moms, you'll probably get a resounding "yes!" Ask about their father, and you are in for either painful silence, a confession of gut-wrenching longing, or the recognition that they have a father that they wish they could see more often. The one thing that you will not hear is indifference.

What is your experience with children who have divorced parents, or are the offspring of third-party reproduction, or the victims of abandonment? Do they not care about their missing parent? Do those children claim to have never had a sleepless night wondering why their parents left, what they look like, or if they love their child? Of course not. We are made to know, and be known by, both of our parents. When one is absent, that absence leaves a lifelong gaping wound.

The opposition will clamor on about studies where the researchers concluded that children in same-sex households allegedly fared "even better!" than those from intact biological homes. Leave aside the methodological problems⁷⁴ with such studies and just think for a moment.

If it is undisputed social science that children suffer greatly when they are abandoned by their biological parents, when their parents divorce, when one parent dies, or when they are donor-conceived, then how can it be possible that they are miraculously turning out "even better!" when raised in same-sex-headed households? Every child raised by "two moms" or "two dads" came to that household via one of those four traumatic methods. Does being raised under the rainbow miraculously wipe away all the negative effects and pain surrounding the loss and daily deprivation of one or both parents? The more likely explanation is that researchers are feeling the same pressure as the rest of us feel to prove that they love their gay friends. — Katy Faust⁷⁵

⁷² "Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It?", *Child Trends Research Brief*, June 2002.

⁷³ "Marriage Matters: Why Children Need a Male and Female Parent," *World Foundations*, July, 2017 <https://www.worldfoundations.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/why-children-need-stanton.pdf>

⁷⁴ Faust here cites "Mark Regnerus, "Is Same-Sex Parenting Better for Kids? The New Australian Study Can't Tell Us," *The Public Discourse*, July 9, 2014.

⁷⁵ "Dear Justice Kennedy: An Open Letter from the Child of a Loving Gay Parent," *The Public Discourse*, February 2, 2015.

H. Practical Objection #7: Love is Love

Rock in the Shoe

1. “Does love *really* have no labels/limits?”
2. “What about: Polyamory, Incest, Adultery, Pedophilia, etc?”⁷⁶
3. The behavior is not the same, but the *logic* is.

Moral Logic

1. Premise #1: If I truly love someone, then I should be with them
2. Premise #2: I truly love _____
3. Therefore, I should be with them.

Diana is a leader in support of polyamorous families and nontraditional family structures.⁷⁷

“We’re moving toward more of that unbundling, deconstructing of marriage...so we can allow for more creativity in family configurations.”⁷⁸

“Consensual incest advocates are rooting for an anonymous New York parent who wants to marry their own adult child. Australian Richard Morris, who is pushing to change incest laws in about 60 countries, said he supports the legal push in Manhattan Federal Court and that such behavior between consenting adults “should not be criminalized.” ... Fighting for true “marriage equality” is “the right thing to do, isn’t it?” Morris said. “It seems to be as unjust as the law that used to imprison gay people, and the law that used to stop people of different races marrying.”
— The New York Post⁷⁹

Response

1. Without a divine standard of marriage, any imposed limits becomes *arbitrary* and meaningless—some would even say, “oppressive.”
2. Many people say, “*Consent* is the issue!” But *Why*?⁸⁰
3. Sadly, many people view the Christian view of marriage as overly restrictive, oppressive, and joyless.
4. Practically speaking, not all expressions of love are *equally good* for the people who engage in them.

⁷⁶For examples of this see Andrew Solomon, “How Polyamorists and Polygamists are Challenging Family Norms,” *The New Yorker*, March 15, 2021; Kathlanne Boniello, “‘Consensual Incest’ Should be Decriminalized, Advocates Say,” *The New York Post*, April 17, 2021; Renee Sorrentino and Janette Abramowitz, “Minor-Attracted Persons: A Neglected Population,” *Current Psychiatry*, no.7 (July 2021): 21–27.

⁷⁷ “Diana Adams, Esq., Executive Director and President,” Chosen Family Law Center Website, accessed May 18, 2022.

⁷⁸ Interview with Diana Adams, quoted in in Steve Friess, “Marriage, deconstructed: The next battle for marriage equality could mean the end of marriage,” *Impact Magazine*, June 4, 2018 <https://www.mic.com/articles/189531/marriage-deconstructed-the-next-battle-for-marriage-equality-could-mean-the-end-of-marriage>

⁷⁹ Boniello, “‘Consensual Incest’

⁸⁰ For a detailed critique of this see Trevin Wax, “Why ‘Consent’ Isn’t Enough for a Sexual Ethic,” *The Gospel Coalition*, March 31, 2022; Mark Regnerus, “Cheap Sex is the ‘Inconvenient Truth’ in the Retreat from Marriage,” *Institute for Family Studies*, November 2, 2017.

Tragic Consequences

- **Disease:** gay men & women who participate in gay behavior and relationships consistently have higher numbers of STD cases. In 2008, 82% of all sexually-transmitted AIDS cases were from male-to-male sexual contact. Gay men also accounted for 60% of all new syphilis cases, even though they only made up roughly 3–5% of the population. In addition, a 2009 review of 100 years of literature conducted by the National Association for Research and Therapy for Homosexuality (NARTH) determined that homosexuals represent the highest number of STD cases over the past ten decades.⁸¹
- **Mental Health:** A 2016 CDC Study: “compared to other men, gay and bisexual men have higher chances of having: *major depression, bipolar disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder.*”⁸²
- **Relational Health:** 2017 *Journal of Human Sexuality*: Monogamous Same-Sex Relationships = 5% chance of lasting 25 years, compared to 50% with Monogamous Heterosexual Relationships.⁸³
- **Suicide:** 2011 Denmark study: gay men *in relationships* = 8x more likely to commit suicide.⁸⁴

Gay and bisexual men may also face other health threats that usually happen along with mental health problems. These include more use of illegal drugs and a greater risk for suicide. Gay and bisexual men are more likely than other men to have tried to commit suicide as well as to have succeeded at suicide. — CDC⁸⁵

While environmental and cultural factors can certainly play into this, it’s also statistically true that as a group of people, gay people have much higher rates of sexual activity than heterosexuals do.

⁸¹Center for Disease Control, Cases of HIV Infection and Aids in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2006 HIV/Aids Surveillance Report, Volume 17, April 2008; Joseph E. Phelan, Neil Whitehead, and Phillip M. Sutton, “What Research Shows: NARTH’s Response to APA Claims on Homosexuality,” *Journal of Human Sexuality* 1 (2009), 87.

⁸² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Gay and Bisexual Men’s Health,” updated February 29, 2016, accessed December 7, 2017 <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/mental-health.htm>

⁸³ N.E. Whitehead, “Are Gay/Lesbian Relationships Really as Short as They Seem?” *Journal of Human Sexuality* 8: 99-125 (2017). Other studies make the opposite conclusion, but with interesting caveats. For example, a 2010 study found that 77% of gay men were in a monogamous relationship or planning to be in one. However, the study also found “a small but significant number of couples described themselves as monogamous even though they had occasional three-ways or sex with people outside the relationship.” Lanz Lowen and Blake Spears, “New Trends in Gay Male Relationships: The Choices Study,” *The Mandanna Group*, Nov. 2, 2016. A small study of 61 gay men by Australian researchers found “Although some gay men idealise monogamy, particularly in the early stages of a relationship, couples often become non-monogamous over time...Most often, relationship expectations shifted from monogamy to non-monogamy, over a period of time...The most common motivation for moving from monogamy to non-monogamy was sexual dissatisfaction. Some men were more interested in sex than their partner, had sexual interests that their partner could not accommodate, or were less attracted to their partner than before...Non-monogamy offered a practical solution to the issues they faced in maintaining a regular and satisfying sexual life without the risk of losing their primary relationship.” Philpot SP et al. “Negotiating gay men’s relationships: how are monogamy and non-monogamy experienced and practised over time?,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* as reported by Roger Peabody, “Gay men’s stories of monogamy and non-monogamy: change, flexibility and tensions,” *AidsMap Website*, November 17, 2017. See also, Spencer Macnaughton, “Sleeping with other people: how gay men are making open relationships work,” *The Guardian*, July, 2016 who writes, “In 2005, a study found that more than 40% of gay men had an agreement that sex outside the relationship was permissible, while less than 5% of heterosexual and lesbian couples reported the same.” Clinical psychologist Michael Radkowski writes about this at length in, “Why do so many gay couples open up their relationships?” *The Washington Blade*, September 4, 2020.

⁸⁴ Jorn Olsen, Vickie M. Mays, R. M. Mathy, S. D. Cochran, “The Association Between Relationship Markers of Sexual Orientation and Suicide: Denmark, 1990–2001,” *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol* (2011) 46:111–117

⁸⁵ “Gay and Bisexual Men’s Health,”

- **1970s study of male and female homosexuals:** 43% of white male homosexuals had sex with 500 or more sexual partners, while 28% said it was over 1000.⁸⁶
- **1990s Australia Study** published in the *Journal of Sex Research*: only 2.7 % claimed to have had sex with one partner only. The most common response (21.6 %) was of having between 101–500 sexual partners over the course of their life.⁸⁷
- **2012 U.S. Study found:** “Men who have sex with men (MSM) have longer periods of *partnership acquisition*, a higher prevalence of *partnership concurrency*, and *more age-disassortative mixing* than heterosexuals. These factors likely help explain higher HIV/STI rates among MSM.”⁸⁸
- **2016 Study in *Journal of Adolescent Health*:** “Lesbian and bisexual adolescents reported significantly more lifetime and past-year sexual partners than heterosexual girls.”⁸⁹

Gay male couples tend to approach sex differently. We all know that gay male couples are much more likely to entertain the idea of, or even be in, a non-monogamous relationship...Gay men... can separate sex from love more easily. Without a woman's particular sexual makeup in the equation, it changes the sexual equation. — Ken Howard (Gay Men's Therapist).⁹⁰

One huge and consistent benefit I have observed in gay male relationships over straight ones is that gay couples consistently demonstrate a youthfulness, playfulness, and sense of fun, especially with peers but also alone with each other...having sexual three-ways...[is] just [one example].” — Ken Howard⁹¹

“Gay men have always engaged more often in consensual non-monogamous relationships, and society has consistently stigmatized their decision to do so.” — Michael Bronski (Harvard Professor)⁹²

Around 82 percent of gay men reported extra-partnership sex in 1975, whereas 59 percent did in 2000—a significant decrease, but still that later rate is more than four times higher than comparable rates found among straight men (14.7), straight women (13.5) and lesbians (8.2). — Karen Schrock (Journalist, *Scientific American*)⁹³

⁸⁶ AP. Bell and M. S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 308.

⁸⁷ Paul Van de Ven, Pamela Rodden, June Crawford, and Susan Kippax, “A Comparative Demographic and Sexual Profile of Older Homosexually Active Men.” *Journal of Sex Research* Vol. 34, No. 4, 1997.

⁸⁸ “A Comparison of Sexual Behavior Patterns Among Men Who Have Sex With Men and Heterosexual Men and Women” *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, (May 2012) Volume 60: 83-90.

⁸⁹ Michelle Ybarra, et al., “Sexual behaviors and partner characteristics by sexual identity among adolescent girls,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 58 (3): 310–316 (Spring 2016).

⁹⁰ Ken Howard, “Gay Men's Relationships: 10 Ways They Differ From Straight Relationships,” *The Huffington Post*, July 26, 2016, accessed December 7, 2017 https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gay-mens-relationships-ten-ways-they-differ-from_us_57950dd0e4b0b3e2427c9022

⁹¹ “Gay Men's Relationships.”

⁹² Quoted in Spencer Macnaughton, “Sleeping with other people: how gay men are making open relationships work,” *The Guardian*, July, 2016.

⁹³ “Monogamy Is All the Rage These Days,” *Scientific American*, August 7, 2009.

Big Idea: True Freedom is not the *Absence* of limitations,
but the presence of the *Right* ones.

Modern people like to see freedom as the complete absence of any constraints. But think of a fish. Because a fish absorbs oxygen from water, not air, it is free only if it is restricted to water. If a fish is 'freed' from the river and put on the grass to explore, its freedom to move and soon even to live is destroyed. The fish is not more free, but less free, if it cannot honor the reality of its nature. The same is true with airplanes and birds. If they violate the laws of aerodynamics, they will crash into the ground. But if they follow them, they will ascend and soar. The same is true in many areas of life: Freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones, those that fit with the realities of our own nature and those of the world. — Tim Keller⁹⁴

So now, sons, listen to me, and don't turn away from the words from my mouth. 8 Keep your way far from [the adulterous woman]. Don't go near the door of her house. 9 Otherwise, you will give up your vitality to others and your years to someone cruel; 10 strangers will drain your resources, and your hard-earned pay will end up in a foreigner's house. 11 At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed, 12 and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction. 13 I didn't obey my teachers or listen closely to my instructors. 14 I am on the verge of complete ruin before the entire community." — Proverbs 5:7–14

24 Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. 25 Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. 26 So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. 27 Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified. — 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. — 1 Timothy 4:7b–8 NASB1995

⁹⁴ *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 38–39

Big Idea: True freedom is not the *permission* to do whatever we want; it's the *ability* to live as God *Designed* us.

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. **14** How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it. **15** “Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves... **24** “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. **26** But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash.” **28** When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29** because he was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes. — Matthew 7:13–15, 24–29

11 So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. **13** And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. **14** For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace. **15** What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not! **16** Don’t you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? **17** But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, **18** and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. **19** I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. **20** For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness. **21** So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. **22** But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Romans 6:11–23

For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm, then, and don’t submit again to a yoke of slavery... **13** For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don’t use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. **14** For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** **15** But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another. **16** I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don’t do what you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, **21** envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. — Galatians 5:1, 13–26

Big Idea: you don't have to **Affirm** someone in order to **Love** someone.

Love is not synonymous with undifferentiated approval of everything the beloved person thinks and does in real life. . . . [nor is it] the wish for the beloved to feel good always and in every situation and for him to be spared experiencing pain or grief in all circumstances. "Mere 'kindness' which tolerates anything except [the beloved's] suffering" has nothing to do with real love. . . . No lover can look on easily when he sees the one he loves preferring convenience to the good. — Josef Pieper⁹⁵

*Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. **14** But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."* — John 4:13–14

4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, **5** is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. **6** Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. **7** It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. — 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. — Ephesians 4:15

3 For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up. **4** In struggling against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons:

***My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly
or lose heart when you are reprovved by him,
6
for the Lord disciplines the one he loves
and punishes every son he receives.***

7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? **8** But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. **9** Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. **11** No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your tired hands and weakened knees, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed instead. — Hebrews 12:3–11.

⁹⁵ Faith, Hope, and Love, 187.

Remember Jesus

- Jesus was the most loving person who ever lived
- But Jesus affirmed God’s original design for sex and marriage to be between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:1–6)
- Jesus made it clear: all of us must die to ourselves if we want to experience abundant life.

23 Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. **24** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it. **25** For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself? — Luke 9:23–25

7 Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. **9** I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. **10** A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. — John 10:7–10

- There is not true and lasting fulfillment without **repentance** from sin and **surrender** to Jesus.

Surrendering my sexuality hasn’t been easy. I still struggle with vestiges of same-sex attraction, but denying myself, taking up my cross, and following Jesus is an honor. *Any struggles I experience pale in comparison to the joy of a personal relationship with the one who created me and gives my life meaning. My identity is no longer in my sexuality; it’s in Jesus*— Becket Cook ⁹⁶

14 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: **15** “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” — Mark 1:14–15

18 In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer. **19** Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, **20** that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah. — Acts 3:18–20

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: **The righteous will live by faith.** — Romans 1:16–17

9 I now rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you were grieved as God willed, so that you didn’t experience any loss from us. **10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. **11** For consider how much diligence this very thing—this grieving as God wills—has produced in you: what a desire to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what deep longing, what zeal, what justice! In every way you showed yourselves to be pure in this matter. — 2 Corinthians 7:9–11

⁹⁶ Cook, “Why Hollywood Praises Elliot Page (and Blacklists Me),” *The Gospel Coalition*, December 10, 2020.

I. Practical Objection #8: Singleness, Identity, and Fulfillment

- We must acknowledge and be sensitive the significant distress people feel at the possibility of life-long singleness and celibacy.
- At the same time, we must not make an identity out of our struggles.
- Instead, we must communicate the fulfillment and identity found through **Jesus** and other human relationships — especially in the **Church**

The person who leaves a gay relationship to fall into the arms of Christ should feel more love, not less. The arms of those who are Jesus's body here on earth should be his tangible embrace. — Rebecca McLaughlin⁹⁷

One of the most powerful things we can do is fold into our churches men and women who have same-sex attraction and surround them with a bigger vision of life and love and relationships that make it possible for them to flourish in families and friendships. — Desiring God Ministries⁹⁸

- One of the best ways to do this: tell **stories** of same-sex attracted Christians who are faithful and following Christ—either as single people or as someone in a mixed-orientation marriage.

Our sexuality is not our soul, marriage is not heaven, and **singleness is not hell**...Jesus said there will be no marriage in the new creation...We will have the reality, we will no longer need the signpost. By foregoing marriage now, **singleness is a way of both anticipating this reality and testifying to its goodness**. It's a way of saying this future reality is so certain, that we can live according to it now. If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, **singleness shows us its sufficiency**. It's a way of declaring to a world obsessed with sexual and romantic intimacy **these things are not ultimate**, and that **in Christ we possess what is**. — Jackie Hill Perry⁹⁹

The third and most important factor which led to a shift in the way I saw myself, and consequently which enabled me to be open to the possibility of marriage, was the simple recognition that the sexual identity which God has given me is expressed in the plain, tangible fact that I am a man...Indeed, I came to think that in fact my feelings were what were relatively superficial, in comparison to my physical identity...

What I mean is that, without denying or ignoring my sexual feelings, I stopped regarding them as being who I was, sexually, and started regarding my physical body as who I was. And this did lead me to experience some significant changes in my sexual desires, so much so that I fell in love and got married (to a woman who had been a good friend for several years already). Rather than trying to change my feelings so that I could change my label, I changed my label and my feelings started to follow suit. This is not to say that the overall pattern of my sexual desires has

⁹⁷ *The Secular Creed*, 40.

⁹⁸ Resource Page, "Homosexuality" Desiring God Online <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/homosexuality#fighting-same-sex-desire-with-the-surpassing-worth-of-christ>

⁹⁹ *Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and the God Who Has Always Been* (Nashville: B&H, 2018),

changed. I would say that I am still predominantly same-sex attracted in general, but as a result of ceasing to define myself as gay, in a sense this ceased to matter. — Sean Doherty¹⁰⁰

“I had always thought that the opposite homosexuality was heterosexuality. But actually the opposite of homosexuality is holiness...” — Christopher Yuan¹⁰¹

“[My] newfound identity in Christ compelled me to live in obedience to God whether my temptations changed or not. Biblical change is not the absence of struggles but the freedom to choose holiness in the midst of our struggles.” — Christopher Yuan¹⁰²

“I was that fifteen-year-old girl in the tuxedo, but my experience was very different from the one promoted by the social values of 2015. What ensued thereafter was a long and sometimes arduous and painful journey of becoming, working out my sexual identity from the cauldron of confusion that surrounded my development.

I have written a little about this journey, wherein I embraced and then renounced an active lesbian life to follow the God who made me and called me by name into His love. I began to trust the One who knew the truth of my identity more than I did, who wrote His image into my being and body as female, and who designed sexuality and set boundaries upon it for my good. I spent well over a decade as a celibate single person. During this time, I felt a wholeness in body, a growing wholeness in my soul, and a greater peace than I could ever have imagined at the age of fifteen. This was more than enough transformation for me, and I was deeply content. However, fifteen years after my tuxedo debut, to my utter surprise, a flicker of heterosexual desire emerged. As I approached forty, I certainly never dreamed I would marry. But now, as I write, I struggle to finish because my youngest child is tugging at my arm. My beloved husband, my children’s father, will soon be home from work. — Jean Lloyd¹⁰³

I should be credited with the same moral agency and responsibility as everyone else in the Christian community. If unmarried heterosexuals are called to celibacy and are presumed in Christ to have the power to live out His commands, then so should I be. To treat me according to a different standard is to lower my dignity before God. I too am called to be holy. — Jean Lloyd¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Doherty, “Love Does Not Delight in Evil, but Rejoices With the Truth.’ A Theological and Pastoral Reflection On My Journey Away From A Homosexual Identity,” *Anvil* 30, no. 1 (March 2014),

¹⁰¹ Christopher and Angela Yuan, *Out of a Far Country* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2011), 187.

¹⁰² Christopher Yuan, “Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays vs. Christians Debate,” Book Review, *The Gospel Coalition*, January 7, 2013.

¹⁰³ “The Girl in the Tuxedo: Two Variations on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” *The Public Discourse*, February 5, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ “Seven Things I Wish My Pastor Knew About Homosexuality.”

What Can We Do?

1. Create an **emotionally healthy climate** in your home

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. — Colossians 3:12–14

Our children will act like it annoys them to see us kissing each other or embracing each other too long. Who cares? It is better for them to be a little uncomfortable than to wonder if Mom and Dad even like being together. If this does not come easy for you, work on it anyway. It's worth the work because it provides a layer of confidence and security for children. — Jimmy and Kristen Scroggins¹⁰⁵

Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. — Ephesians 6:4

The degree of the father's active, involved affection toward his children is the most important factor related to normal heterosexual role development in his child. Research studies have shown that the father who is affectionate and involved with his child is most likely to foster masculinity in his son. Appropriate sex-role development has been correlated with father-son interactions that can be characterized as warm, nurturant, and affectionate. The warm affection of the father was more important than the father's actual, literal encouragement of masculine behaviors... Many different studies have shown that appropriately masculine boys come from families with fathers who are affectionate, nurturant, and actively involved in childrearing. Boys are more likely to identify with their fathers if their fathers are rewarding and affectionate toward them than if they are not. — George Alan Rekers¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *Full Circle Parenting: A Guide for Crucial Conversations* (Nashville: B&H, 2021), 73

¹⁰⁶ "Psychology: Psychological Foundations for Rearing Masculine Boys and Feminine Girls" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 303.

2. Don't focus on "the talk." Instead, focus on "**Multiple** conversations."

Some Recommended Online Resources:

- Passport to Purity by Family Life
- *Learning about Sex* resources from Concordia Press
- *Full Circle Parenting* by Jimmy and Kristen Scroggins
- *Mama Bear Apologetics* by Hillary Ferrar

Even the talk is just an introduction to more conversations. There is no way you can explain everything or answer every question in a single session or even a single weekend. Still, we would encourage you to err on the side of earlier, not later, and more information, not less. You want to get the information to your kids before someone else does. This allows you to present God's design proactively instead of reactively.

...

As part of these conversations, parents need to give their kids room to fail. Sexual temptation is so pervasive that many (if not all) of our children will make sinful choices in this area Our kids will inevitably experience some level of brokenness when it comes to their sexuality. Christen parents should be in tensional about communicating that no matter what happens, there is always a party to restoration. The gospel always makes it possible to recover and pursue God's design." — Jimmy and Kristen Scroggins¹⁰⁷

Children can begin learning God's sign when they are very young. Parents shouldn't wait for 'the' talk—kids need a lifetime of modeling and conversations about gender, sexuality, and family structure. When little boys and girls ask questions about their bodies, parents should respond by pointing them to God's design. Parents should speak clearly to boys about their masculinity and to girls about their femininity. Boys should be taught that God made them to be strong and wise and to work hard so they can protect and help provide for their wife and children. Girls should be taught that God made them special — that one day girls grow up to be women, wives, and mommies. God made women to be strong and wise and to work hard so that they can influence their children and help provide for their families. Kids need thousands of short, age-appropriate conversations that help them learn God's design for their sexuality and appreciate God's design for families. — Jimmy and Kristen Scroggins¹⁰⁸

Generally speaking, parents really should be the ones who initiate conversations with their children about sex, because the children's health-education teacher or kids on the playground might not share the same values, and it is values — more than biological and anatomical diagrams — that matter....Your children are *already* forming an understanding of sex. But what kind of input is shaping that understanding? — Sam Crabtree¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Full Circle Parenting*, 78, 79.

¹⁰⁸ *Full Circle Parenting*, 75; cf Megan K. Beckett, Marc N. Elliott, Steven Martino, David E. Kanouse, Rosalie Corona, David J. Klein, Mark A. Schuster; Timing of Parent and Child Communication About Sexuality Relative to Children's Sexual Behaviors. *Pediatrics* January 2010; 125 (1): 34–42.

¹⁰⁹ "How Do I Talk to My Children About Sex?" *Desiring God*, February 6, 2021.

3. Help them understand the *Why*, not just the *what*. | “God’s ‘No’ to one thing is always a ‘Yes’ to something else — something better.”
 - Jesus did this when he explained how marriage is between man and woman because it reflects God’s intention in creation (Matthew 19:1–6; Genesis 2:24).
 - Paul did this when he explained that marriage points beyond itself to the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22–33). This is why the genders are not interchangeable in marriage and why proper gender-roles between husband and wife should be honored and pursued.
 - Paul also did this when he explained that sexual temptation is a legit reason why people should get married and why husband and wife should have frequent sexual union with each other (1 Corinthians 7:1–5)

4. Focus on the *Heart*, not just on the behavior

Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. — Proverbs 4:23

36 “Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?”³⁷ He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. **38** This is the greatest and most important command. — Matthew 22:36–38

*But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, **18** and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.* — Romans 6:17–18.

5. Place wise limits and boundaries on technology — especially *social media*.

Psychologically, however, they are more vulnerable than Millennials were: Rates of teen depression and suicide have skyrocketed since 2011. It’s not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades. Much of this deterioration can be traced to their phones...the twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we’ve not seen in a very long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we’ve placed in young people’s hands are having profound effects on their lives—and making them seriously unhappy. — Jean Twenge¹¹⁰

For our improvement, or to our demise, we are fundamentally creatures of imitation, copying the habits and behaviors we see in those around us (Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:21; 3 John 11). — Tony Reinke¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” The Atlantic, September 2017 available online <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>

¹¹¹ “Instagram Generation: Four Ways Smartphone Cameras Are Changing Us,” *Desiring God*, April 24, 2017

6. Teach and Affirm the **Goodness** of God's Design for Sex.

God designed marriage as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman for their mutual joy, the good of society, and the procreation of children. Marriage ultimately displays the glory and grace of God by picturing the unbreakable relationship between Christ and his church.
— Desiring God Ministries¹¹²

*How happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk according to the Lord's instruction!
2 Happy are those who keep his decrees and seek him with all their heart.* — Psalm 119:1–2

Turn my eyes from looking at what is worthless; give me life in your ways. — Psalm 119:37

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” — Matthew 11:28–30

7. Help them **Interpret** their desires and natural attractions.

Far from being being a fixed preference, the findings suggest that sexual identity and attraction undergo extensive and often subtle changes throughout a person's life, continuing long past adolescence and into adulthood, with women showing slightly more fluidity than men.
— Carly Cassella¹¹³

8. Be **Honest** about your own struggles with sin and temptation. Let them know how you are choosing to die to yourself and follow Jesus.

9. Help them see people with same-sex attraction as **People** we should *love* and not enemies we should *hate* or *avoid*.

10. **Remember:** the gospel is big enough for *everyone* who will repent of their sins, trust in Jesus, and surrender themselves to Him.

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived:** neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such **were** some of you. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.** — 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 ESV

**Please reach out to the elders anytime for council, guidance, and/or prayer about any specific issue you and your family may be facing:
elders@stonegatefellowship.com**

¹¹² Resource Page, “Marriage,” Desiring God <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/marriage>

¹¹³ “Here's More Evidence Sexual Orientation Is Fluid Right Into Our Adult Years,” *Science Alert*, May 5, 2019.

The Big Question

- Who / What will be our ultimate **Authority**?
- **Option A:** Man's Word (culture, attractions, etc).

*When the Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, **6** the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. — Genesis 6:5–6*

The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? — Jeremiah 17:9

For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. — Romans 7:11

- **Option B:** God's Word

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is trustworthy. — Psalm 33:4

*I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **15** I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. — John 17:14–17*

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. — 2 Timothy 3:16–17*

- Who will we **Trust** ???

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; **6** in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. — Proverbs 3:5–6*

Trust in the Lord and do what is good; dwell in the land and live securely. — Psalm 37:3

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humanity. — Psalm 118:8

*He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. **30** Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, **31** but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint. — Isaiah 40:29–31.*

Recommended Resources

A. The Bible, Sexuality, and Homosexuality

- *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel* by Christopher Yuan.
- *Love Thy Body* by Nancy Pearcey
- *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* Kevin DeYoung
- *Openness Unhindered* by Rosaria Butterfield
- *Is God Anti Gay?* and *Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?* by Sam Allberry
- *Can you be Gay and Christian?* by Michael L. Brown
- *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert A.J. Gagnon

B. Loving our LGBTQ Friends and Neighbors

- *Messy Grace and Messy Truth* by Caleb Kaltenbach
- *Loving My LGBT Neighbor* by Glenn Stanton.

C. Homosexuality, Science, and Culture

- *Love Thy Body* by Nancy Pearcey
- *Born This Way?* By J. Alan Branch
- *The Secular Creed* by Rebecca McLaughlin
- *Them Before Us* by Katy Faust

D. Homosexuality and History: Cultural and the Church

- *A Strange New World* by Carl Truman
- *A Queer Thing Happened to America* by Michael Brown
- *Still Time to Care* by Greg Johnson

E. Stories of Christians with Same-Sex Attraction

- *Gay Girl, Good God* by Jackie Hill Perry
- *A Change of Affection* by Becket Cooke.
- *Born Again This Way* by Rachel Gilson
- *Out of a Far Country* by Christopher Yuan
- *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* by Rosaria Butterfield

F. Parenting Books | General

- *The Mama Bear Apologetics Guide to Sexuality* by Hillary Ferrar
- *Full Circle Parenting* by Jimmy and Kristen Scroggins
- *Are My Kids on Track?* by Sissy Goff and Melissa Trevathan
- *Parenting* by Paul David Tripp
- Anything by Kathy Koch :)

G. Children and Teenagers Books

- *God Made All of Me* by Justin Holcomb (Children's Book)
- *Tell God How You Feel: Helping Kids with Hard Emotions* by Christina Fox
- *Chasing Love* by Sean McDowell (Book for Teenagers about sex, love, and relationships).
- *A Practical Guide to Culture* by Brett Kunkle and John Stonestreet (Teenagers)

H. Technology and Screens

- *The Tech-Wise Family* by Andy Crouch
- *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You* Tony Reinke
- *Good Pictures, Bad Pictures* by Kristen Johnson (screens and pornography)

I. Online Resource Pages

- The Gospel Coalition Resource Pages: Homosexuality, Marriage, and Gender
- Desiring God Resource Pages: Homosexuality, Marriage, and Gender
- Stand to Reason
- Sean McDowell
- Focus on the Family

Appendix #1 Sodom and Gomorrah

Basic Objection: God didn't destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of *homosexuality*, but because of *inhospitality*. Specifically, the cities didn't practice biblical, social justice as God intended. This is confirmed in Ezekiel when God says:

48 As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.
— Ezekiel 16:48–49 ESV

Response:

1. This objection ignores the surrounding context of the Ezekiel passage. Notice the whole passage in context:

46 And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. 47 Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. 48 As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. — Ezekiel 16:46–50 ESV

A Few Significant Features are Worth Noting:¹¹⁴

- The word abomination translates the Hebrew word *to'ebah*. God indicates a specific “abomination” in v.50 that is separate from the sins listed in v.49, but it is part of a larger list of abominations indicated in v.47
 - The same word for “abomination” is used in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to specifically describe male-male sexual contact in contrast to male-female sexual contact.
 - The use of *to'ebah* in Ezekiel, therefore, is an echo of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Sodom had many sins: price, social injustice *and the pursuit* homosexual behavior.
2. The NT specifically refers to homosexuality as the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day — 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. - Jude 1:6–7 ESV

Some would say that the “unnatural desire” pursued was sex with angels, but this is unlikely. The visitors didn't *know* Lot's visitors were angels—they presumed Lot's visitors were men. As Gagnon observes:

Since Gen. 19:1–11 nowhere intimates that the men of Sodom were aware that the visitors were angels, or that the men desired to have sex with angels, this interpretation appears strained. A better understanding is that in their lust for sexual intercourse with other men, the men of Sodom inadvertently put themselves in the sacrilegious position of pursuing sexual intercourse with angels.— Robert A.J. Gagnon¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Adapted from Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 35–36.

¹¹⁵ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 87–88.

3. Literature from Second Temple Judaism (the time between the reconstruction of the temple in 516 B.C. and the final destruction of the temple in A.D. 70) shows that same-sex behavior was synonymous with Sodom and was not a later interpretive invention.

“But ye shall not be so, my children, recognising in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created things, the Lord who made them all, that ye become not as Sodom, which changed the order of its nature. in like manner also the Watchers changed the order of their nature, whom also the Lord cursed at the flood, and for their sakes made desolate the earth, that it should be uninhabited and fruitless.” — Testimony of Naphtali 3:4–5

Gagnon concludes:

Sodom is singled out as the most atrocious example of inhospitality mentioned in the Scriptures of Israel (a reasonable interpretation given the cataclysmic judgment of God on the city). What made it so atrocious? Many factors, to be sure, but the height of the town’s evil was epitomized by the attempt to rape visiting strangers and a resident alien [Lot], and worse still, sexual intercourse with males.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 91.

Appendix #2: The Leviticus Passages

Objection #1: Inconsistency and Fulfillment. Because Jesus fulfilled the OT, it's inconsistent for Christians today to hold up Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 as morally binding when we wouldn't do that for the other commands (ie. about diet or clothing). John Boswell argues, for example:

[Evangelicals] extreme selectivity in approaching the huge corpus of Levitical law is clear evidence that it was not their respect for the law which created their hostility to homosexuality but their hostility to homosexuality which led them to retain a few passages from a law code largely discarded.¹¹⁷

There are some things in Leviticus no one objects to. For example: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

Many moral prohibitions like:

- Incest (18:6–18; 20:11–14, 17, 19–21)
- Adultery (18:20; 20:10)
- Bestiality (18:23; 20:15)
- Theft (19:11)
- Lying (19:11)
- Slander (19:16)
- Making your daughter a prostitute (19:29)
- Oppressing your neighbor (19:13)
- Taking the Lord's name in vain (19:20).

How Do We Know Which Ones Apply Today??

- The Mosaic Law had three broad parts: Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral.¹¹⁸
- The Ceremonial and Civil laws were Fulfilled in Jesus (Matt. 5:17; Hebrews) or directly rendered Obsolete by God (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:8–11:18; Ephesians 2:11–3:6)
- The Moral Law is consistently Reaffirmed in the New Testament (Mark 7:20–23; 1 Timothy 1:8–10; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11)
- This is true for basic moral issues (lying, stealing, slandering) and for sexual moral issues (incest, adultery, fornication, etc.)
- The Ceremonial and Civil Laws were unique to the nation of Israel, but the moral laws reflect the eternal character of God.
- In one sense: all of the law is moral. Even still, the NT assumes a distinction between what was fulfilled in Jesus (eg. Ceremonial and Civil) and what was continued (Moral/Ethical).

With this in mind, we can give the following response:

¹¹⁷ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1980)

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Bayes, *The Threefold Division of the Law* (The Christian Institute, 2017) available for download at <https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/the-threefold-division-of-the-law.pdf>. It's important to note that this threefold division is not a complete picture of the Christian's relationship to the law. It's broad and general, but could be more specific. For more on this see, Mike Ricardi, "Schreiner, the Threefold Division, and the Law of God," *The CrippleGate Blog*, March 30, 2012.

1. We shouldn't be cavalier in our dismissal of OT laws — especially when their meaning is clear in their original context. Just because they are given under an old system doesn't mean their underlying moral logic is invalid for believers today. Kevin DeYoung comments:

To be sure, discipleship under the new covenant is different from life under the old. All foods have been declared clean (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:8–11:18); holy days have been rendered optional (Rom. 14:5–6); the entire sacrificial system of temple, priest, and sacrifice has been superseded (Heb. 7:1–10:18). Jesus brings the scripture to completion, to its climax, to its intended goal... [But] Every law in the Old Testament reveals something about God's character and the nature of our obedience. If the underlying principle from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is something other than "God does not approve of homosexual behavior," then that needs to be proven from Scripture, not simply asserted based on a casual dismissal of Old Testament instruction.¹¹⁹

2. The NT authors have no problem quoting from Leviticus to invoke morally binding commands for believers today. For example:¹²⁰

1. Jesus quoted from Leviticus 19:18 more than any other verse and the NT refers to this verse several times (Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jam. 2:8).
2. Peter and Paul quote from Leviticus as part of their summons to practical holiness for NT believers (2 Cor. 6:16, quoting Lev. 26:12; 1 Pet. 1:16, quoting Lev. 11:44).
3. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul appeals directly to the law of Moses — Leviticus 18:8 and Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20 — to establish the sinfulness of incest. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, Paul does this same thing with respect to homosexuality.

DeYoung concludes, "The sexual ethic of the Old Testament was not abrogated like the sacrificial system, but carried forward into the early church. The law is good if one uses it lawfully (1 Tim. 1:8)."¹²¹

3. While "abominations" is a term applied to many sins in Leviticus 18–20, only homosexual sex is specifically singled out as a unique abomination in its own right. "In the entire Book of Leviticus, homosexual practice is the only specific sin singled out as an 'abomination,' which is certainly saying something."¹²²

¹¹⁹ DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* 43.

¹²⁰ DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* 43–44

¹²¹ DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* 44.

¹²² Michael L. Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* 116.

Objection #2: Temple Prostitution. Some say the Leviticus prohibitions only applied to practices associated with temple or cult prostitution. Outside of such a context, the prohibition wouldn't apply. As one advocate has said:

The term *to'evah* (and its plural, *toe'voṭ*) occurs 103 times in the Hebrew Bible, and almost always has the connotation of a non-Israelite cultic practice ... *To'evah* is culturally relative... This isn't about abomination or nature, or even morality—this is about ritual purity law that distinguishes Israelites from foreigners.¹²³

Response:

1. This is simply incorrect. The word *toevah* is a general term that speaks about what is morally detestable to God. This could certainly apply to ritual practices, but it would also apply to much more (eg. Proverbs 6:16–19).¹²⁴
2. In the history of interpretation, these prohibitions were never limited to temple cult prostitution. Instead, they were considered universal in nature.¹²⁵
3. Context: The immediate context doesn't limit the application to cultic practices. In fact, the prohibition against homosexuality is sandwiched between other sexual prohibitions, indicating their universal application. Gagnon observes:

The repetition of the prohibition against homosexual intercourse in 20:13 does not follow immediately upon the references to child sacrifice in 20:2-5, but rather is sandwiched in between prohibitions of adultery and incest (20:10-12) and prohibitions of incest and bestiality (20:14-16). The link with child sacrifice in Lev 18:21 probably involves nothing more than threats to the sanctity of the Israelite family....¹²⁶

4. The prohibition against homosexuality is consistent with the overall focus of holiness codes in Leviticus: to forbid Israel for participating in the moral, social, and sexual practices of the surrounding nations. This indicates that God's rejection of homosexual behavior is not limited to Israel, but universally applies to all nations (at all times). Gagnon states:

Male cult prostitution was not the only context in which homosexual intercourse manifested itself in the ancient Near East generally. It was merely the most acceptable context for homosexual intercourse to be practiced in Mesopotamia, certainly for those who played the role of the receptive partner. In our own cultural context we think that the banning of male cult prostitution does not take into account consensual, non-cultic, loving homosexual relationships. In the cultural context of the ancient Near East the reasoning has to be reversed: to ban homosexual cult prostitutes was to ban all homosexual intercourse. In any case, the authors of Lev 18:22 could have formulated the law more precisely by making specific reference to the *qedeshim* [= 'the consecrated ones,' an ironic reference to these cult figures] (as in Deut 23:17-18), if it had been their intent to limit the law's application. That they did not do so suggests that they had a broader application in mind. Moreover, the Levitical rejection of same-sex intercourse depends on Canaanite practices for its validity about as much as the rejection of incest, adultery, and bestiality.¹²⁷

¹²³ Jay Michaelson, *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 62–63.

¹²⁴ Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* 117–119.

¹²⁵ Timothy Dalrymple, "Does Leviticus Only Condemn Idolatrous Homosexual Practice? – An Open Letter from Robert Gagnon," *Patheos Website*, March 28, 2013.

¹²⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 130.

¹²⁷ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 130.

Appendix #3: Singleness & Fulfillment

Myth #1: Singleness is a lesser calling than Marriage

Response: What do you do with Jesus and the apostle Paul?

I wish all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one person his gift, and another that. — 1 Corinthians 7:7

Myth #2: Marriage would solve my relational / emotional problems.

Response: God certainly blesses us relationally and emotionally through marriage. But as any married couple will tell you, marriage also *creates* a whole host of new relational and emotional problems to work through.

*I want you to be without concerns. **The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.** ³³ **But the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife— and his interests are divided.** The unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and **so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.** — 1 Corinthians 7:32–35*

Myth #3: I cannot be relationally fulfilled outside of marriage

Response: The worst thing you can do is place the weight of your expectations for relational fulfillment on another person — they were never meant to be Jesus for you.

In reality, many married couples experience loneliness. While there can be a range of reasons for this, one contributing factor is that some people enter into marriage expecting it to fulfill their greatest relational needs, and as a result, fail to cultivate other important relationships. Given their disappointment, some leave their marriages hoping to find their real “soul mate. — Sean McDowell¹²⁸

Response: What do you do with Jesus and the apostle Paul? Neither of these men ever had sex or were married, but they were fulfilled by their relationships with God and His people.

[Theologian] Todd Wilson observes, ‘No one was more fully human or sexually contented than Jesus,. Yet Jesus never engaged in a single sexual act.’ Let that sink in. Although Jesus experienced sexual temptations, He never touched a woman inappropriately or indulged a single sexual fantasy. And yet He lived the most relationally satisfied life ever! What this tells us, quite powerfully, is that sexual activity is not necessary for a meaningful and abundant life. Jesus found meaning through obedience to God and in loving, faithful relationships family and friends. He was content in His sexuality as a single man even though He abstained from sex. The life of Jesus portrays something utterly countercultural: **sex is not required for a flourishing life.** This was true when Jesus walked the earth and it is true today. — Sean McDowell¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 125–26.

¹²⁹ *Chasing Love*, 126.

Myth #4: Singleness means I'll always be alone

Response: In one sense, that's true — if you never get married, you won't know the experience of marital affection.

Response: At the same time, that's completely wrong — you don't have to be alone just because you're single. If you are in Christ, you are also in his family. As such, there is great and genuine potential for authentic, fulfilling human connection within a life of singleness.

*While he was still speaking with the crowds, his mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to the one who was speaking to him, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For **whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**" — Matthew 12:56–50*

*Love one another deeply as **brothers and sisters.** Take the lead in honoring one another. — Romans 12:10*

Myth #5: Singleness is too hard

Response: Discipleship to Jesus is hard, but God doesn't call you to follow Him on your own strength.

*Dear Friends...Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For **God is working in you,** giving you the **desire** and the **power** to do what pleases him. — Philippians 2:12–13 NLT*

Our sexuality is not our soul, marriage is not heaven, and **singleness is not hell**...Jesus said there will be no marriage in the new creation...We will have the reality, we will no longer need the signpost. By foregoing marriage now, **singleness is a way of both anticipating this reality and testifying to its goodness.** It's a way of saying this future reality is so certain, that we can live according to it now. If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, **singleness shows us its sufficiency.** It's a way of declaring to a world obsessed with sexual and romantic intimacy **these things are not ultimate,** and that **in Christ we possess what is.** — Jackie Hill Perry¹³⁰

Response: Anything meaningful is often difficult, but through such difficulties God molds us into the likeness of Jesus and slowly frees us from the tyranny of sins power.

*Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. — James 1:2–4*

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, **4** endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. **5** This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. — Romans 5:1–5*

*But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. **8** For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. — 1 Timothy 4:7–8*

¹³⁰ *Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and the God Who Has Always Been* (Nashville: B&H, 2018),