

How Should the Church Respond to the Homosexual, Part Two

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Luke 9:51-56

Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵² and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. ⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. ⁵⁶ For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.

How does the church respond to culture when culture tells the church it is morally wrong to say that homosexuality is a sin? What should the church say in response to the same culture that makes it criminal to declare what the Bible says about homosexuality?

First, the church should respond to God. We respond to God, as did our Master who suffered before us as an example. He entrusted Himself to God who judges righteously, so that’s what we need to do. We need to commit ourselves to God in obedience. In answer to the question that Peter asked the civil and religious authorities, “Who should we obey, God or man?” Resoundingly, we answer we will obey God and leave the consequences to Him.

Secondly, we continue to follow the Lord’s example of suffering and not sin with our mouths. When reviled we will not revile in return, when we suffer we will not threaten but suffer patiently, for this is commendable to God (1 Peter 2:20-23). This is the response of courage necessary at this particular hour.

Our answer to our generation must also be tempered with compassion, not just courage or boldness, but also with love. We cannot answer in the same spirit of hate that many so-called Christians respond with to the homosexual community, such as the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. These folks are known for their hatred of the homosexual community and their hatred of America because of its pro-gay and lesbian agenda. They will protest fallen American soldiers who die in battle. They will protest at high-profile media events. They even tried to protest at the funerals of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in Newtown, Con-

necticut. Can you imagine protesting at the burial of the slain children with a sign that says God hates the homosexual and America? Thankfully, they were resisted and left.

We cannot hate the homosexual. Our response must not be one of animosity or prejudice. We know God is angry at that sin and at the sin of the nation but, as our text says, this is not the hour of God's judgment. It's the time of God's mercy and forgiveness. This is a time of healing. This is a time when the church reaches out its arms to every sinner of every stripe. Jesus's sacrificial and propitiatory death has temporarily set aside the demonstration of God's anger against the sinner, no matter the stripe, and has in the case of the saint removed it forever. Thank God! This is a time not of God's judgment but of His mercy to the sinner.

As we deal with our text considering the larger question, how should our church respond to the homosexual, I want to first deal with the question:

I. SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE ANGRY ABOUT SIN?

Should Christians be angry about the sin of homosexuality as well as any other sin? James and John were angry about the treatment the Samaritans gave Jesus. The Samaritans showed no respect for Christ and purposefully rejected Him. The reason for rejecting Jesus was due to racial and religious strife. The Samaritans were not fully Jewish and, being semi-pagans, the Jews hated the Samaritans and the Samaritans hated the Jews for the prejudice of them. Now Samaria was between Galilee and Jerusalem, therefore the straightest line from Galilee to Jerusalem was right through the heart of Samaria. Jesus was going to Jerusalem. He had some of His disciples with Him to announce His arrival and to prepare for the evening meal and a place of lodging. But when the Samaritans found out that Jesus' destination was Jerusalem, they refused Him any hospitality, meaning, they would have not refused Him if He weren't going to Jerusalem.

Now what's Jerusalem got to do with whether or not they give Him hospitality? Surely they knew Jesus was Jewish, as well as His disciples, so what's the big deal with Him going to the capital city of the Jews?

He had been in Samaria before and, even on one occasion, was warmly received when He met with the woman at the well. The whole town came out after that and many of them believed upon Him. What's the problem here in Luke 9 that this Samaritan village would not receive Him? Well the issue is solved when you consider why Jesus was going to Jerusalem. It was nearing Passover time.

Among the many contentions between the Samaritans and the Jews was the issue of where the Temple of God should be. The Samaritans believed it should be at their temple in Mount Gerizim, and, of course, the Jews believed it was Jerusalem. If you remember, even in the dialogue between Jesus and the woman at the well that issue was raised. The Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain and You say Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship" (John 4:20). There was a contention about who had the right kind of worship. Jesus answered that

the day was coming when worship wouldn't be tied to a location but it would be a matter of the spirit and heart. The answer seemed to be indifferent, but it was a great answer. It diverted the issue and Jesus brought the conversation back to her lostness.

But because it was nearing Passover, the Samaritans knew that Jesus was going to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, which meant He sided with the Jews on the issue of who's temple is legitimate. For that reason they were offended.

James and John were furious. They weren't called "sons of thunder" for nothing. Their blood boiled as they considered the indignity the Samaritans had heaped upon Jesus and, of course, themselves too. It hadn't been too many days since these two, James and John, had seen the old prophet Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration talking with Jesus. Surely having recently seen him conjured in their minds the story of him calling fire down from heaven upon soldiers, Samaritan soldiers at that. It made sense to James and John if soldiers sent from the Samaritan King to harass Elijah were greeted with fire, how much more appropriate should fire fall on those who had insulted the Messiah?

A. Angry About Sin Without Sinning.

Now to our question, should Christians be angry about sin? The answer is yes. Anger is not always a bad thing. Jesus was angry at least on two occasions that we know and I'm sure more than that, dealing with the unbelieving, prejudiced and foolish disciples. Even the Bible commands us in Ephesians 4:26 to be angry but with one condition, sin not.

So here is our answer, Christians ought to be angry about sin but without sinning. You should be angry with the advance of sin we are seeing in our nation. You should be angry with leaders who are siding with immorality rather than with God. Righteous indignation ought to grip our hearts, but we must exercise the greatest caution with this most dangerous of all emotions—anger. The Apostle Paul says to make sure your anger does not cause you to go further and to sin. In fact, he says in Ephesians 4:26,

“Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”

Paul knew all too well that anger on a very long leash, anger allowed to simmer too long, will lead to much more sin and much more grief.

B. Mistaking Prejudice for Holy Anger.

Righteous indignation was not James and John's problem. The kind of anger they had was not righteous. The anger they demonstrated was a better-than-thou-attitude. The Spirit of God was not motivating the anger of these two men; otherwise Jesus would not have rebuked them. Verse 55,

“He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.”

James and John entered this situation already believing themselves superior to the Samaritans. In other words, the anger was not so much a defense of Jesus as it was a hatred of the Samaritans. The prejudice and bigotry against the Samaritans was their desire to make the townspeople toast. They had fallen for a common ruse—*mistaking prejudice for holy anger*. It’s easy to fall a victim to that deception, especially when you’re struggling with prejudice.

Here’s what I want you to see: your anger toward any sin, especially the sin of homosexuality, cannot be motivated by any hostility you may have toward someone because you see them different than you or because you have an attitude of superiority over them. Christians should be angry toward sin, but Christians should be angry toward all sin, not just homosexuality. Homosexuality is the type of sin that it’s easy to have anger toward. It’s easy to have bigotry toward. It’s against the natural sexual orientation God designed so we can easily sin against the homosexual by a prejudice and a hateful heart because they are so different.

But you are not biased or bigoted against all sins. Isn’t that interesting? Do you know the sins you’re not so bigoted against, not so prejudiced against? The sins you often commit yourselves. You never have bigotry against sins that you struggled with in the past, but you do against the sins you believe yourself not capable of committing. Those are the ones we’re prejudiced against. It’s easy to exercise compassion against the person caught in the same sin you struggled with or are currently struggling with.

On the other hand, a sin you could never see yourself guilty is much more difficult to show any empathy toward. That’s why it’s so easy to be angry or even hateful, full of spite, toward a person caught in the sin of homosexuality, because you know you would never sin in that way. When it comes to the sin of homosexuality, most Christians are not inspired by the Spirit of God but are exactly like James and John whose anger over sin is more a contempt for certain classifications with nothing to do with the glory of God.

I’m not saying these two brothers had no regard for Jesus’ dignity and honor, surely they did, but what fueled them most was not the glory of God, otherwise Jesus would not have rebuked their spirit. They were more jealous of their moral virtue, believing they were the true worshippers of God and thus prejudiced over people who were different from them. Beloved, we may be angry at sin but we cannot be bigoted or prejudice over any person because this text shows me that God’s love for all sinners is indiscriminate.

II. GOD’S LOVE FOR ALL SINNERS IS INDISCRIMINATE

Jesus’ reply to James and John is our game plan. How should we respond to our culture that is accepting this other lifestyle as an acceptable, and soon-to-be legal lifestyle? Here is our game

plan: love and administer grace to all sinners, including the homosexual.

“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.” (Luke 9:56)

God’s desire for people to be saved crosses all boundaries and barriers: racial, geographical, religious, gender, sexual preference and sin barriers. There is no sin that separates people from the love of God. None whatsoever. “Ah,” someone answers and says, “Oh no, sin separates us from God.” Yes, but not from His love. He loves us in spite of our sin, whatever the sin is. The separation between God and us is by our own choice, not His. We separate ourselves from God when we choose to sin.

There is no abomination that God cannot forgive, not even blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. You’re going to need to listen to this because I’m going to challenge your thinking here. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is forgivable. Jesus says that particular sin will not be forgiven but He does not say He could not forgive it. He says He will not. He chooses not to forgive that one sin because the person who commits it will not seek to be forgiven.

What is the unpardonable sin? It is to finally and totally reject the work of the Holy Spirit concerning the work and testimony of Jesus. But also, the unpardonable sin is the sin that will not seek to be forgiven no matter what it is. God will not forgive a man or a woman who will not seek in brokenness and humility His forgiveness. Sin unconfessed is sin unpardonable. If a man could truly turn and repent from the sins of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, God would forgive him, but He will not because a man will never do so when he gets to that point.

Brothers, we’re not talking about homosexuality. We’re talking about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, man’s final rejection of the testimony of the Spirit of God about Jesus Christ. It is the intent of our God that people from all stripes, biases and sins will be redeemed and gathered around His eternal throne. John gives us a glimpse in Revelation when he saw a numberless multitude around God. He tells us that someone from all nations, all kindred, all tongues and peoples stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands. Did you know the Apostle Paul told us that every kind of sinner will be at the throne of God. Not just ethnic groups but every kind of sinner. In other words, every kind of sin that a sinner can commit will be forgiven.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

This isn’t an exhaustive list, there are other sins that aren’t mentioned here, but Paul is giving the idea that no sinner will get into heaven. But then notice what he says next.

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Every one of those sins he mentioned, including homosexuality, were sins the Corinthians struggled with. But Paul says, “you were washed, you were cleansed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Every kind of sinner will be gathered around the throne of God. There is no kind of sinner God will not forgive if he or she will humble themselves and repent and believe. God’s love for sinners is indiscriminate.

A. God’s Love For Sinners is Without Bias.

He has no bias. There are some who think they have sinned too badly for God to forgive, therefore God is biased against them because of those particular sins. While on the other hand there is a group that thinks that they can’t hardly do anything wrong in the sight of God and surely he would not hold their sins against them, their “omissions” as they would rather call them. Those two groups of people, the one who thinks God won’t forgive him because he’s sinned too greatly and the person who thinks God will do it because of who he is, are both suggesting that God is biased toward certain sins. They’re saying there are some sins that He won’t tolerate or forgive while there are some He will gladly look over.

Jesus is not biased in this regard. James and John thought this, I’m sure of it. James and John were completely wrong because their heart was not in alignment with Jesus’ heart. He so loves sinners—no matter the variety—that He came that whoever would believe upon Him would be saved. Not only were James and John’s hearts full of prejudice but they were wrong about Jesus’ heart. They assumed His heart was like theirs. “You want us to call down fire? Oh, yes, surely You do. This would be appropriate, don’t You think so, Jesus?” They were suggesting He would be like them—full of hate and prejudice and bias. They mistook their hearts to be like His, vengeful, bigoted and condemning. Far from it!

His heart is so full of compassion for the sinner, no matter what kind of sinner.

No matter the race or the religion.

Regardless of their sexual biases, Jesus loves people so much that He’s willing to suffer their indignity and disrespect because He loves them so very much.

You don’t give place to Jesus in your life just like the Samaritans; some of you dishonor Him because you will not allow Him a place in your heart for rest and refuge. Yet your dishonor of Him does not dam up His heart and cease the flow of His love for you. He still wants you. He still desires you and He still can save you from your sins, including your rejection of Him.

This is not the time of judgment. We are not ambassadors of judgment but ambassadors of reconciliation. This is the time of salvation, deliverance from all manner of sinful bondages.

B. God's Love For Sinners is Hopeful.

If Jesus would not administer judgment on people in our text who deserved judgment then His demonstration of love in not punishing them should give hope to every sinner. All sinners, including the homosexual, should take to heart that if he or she will come to Jesus He will not cast you away. He will not refuse you, nor will He will reject you. Even though your family has rejected you because of your sin, Jesus will not. Even if Christians have made you feel less than human and refused you, Jesus will not. I wish I could say that we Christians represent Jesus well, but often we do not. Therefore I plead with you, don't judge Jesus by us but judge us by Jesus. I fall so far below His compassion and mercy. We all fall so short of His perfect mercy and love. Judge me, judge us, but please, do not judge Jesus by us. As in this text, He is often very different from those who follow Him.

I agree it ought not to be this way but sadly it is, as we see here in this text, it does happen. Brothers and sisters in Christ, I implore you today, our response to the homosexual should be the response of Jesus, not James and John. We must stop hating the gay or the lesbian. In fact, we ought to stop hating every kind of sinner. We must stop the prejudice and start to love them for who they are—fellow human beings enslaved to sin. That doesn't mean we endorse same-sex marriage or accept the lifestyle of the homosexual, Jesus didn't and therefore we will not either, but He loves them without prejudice, hatred or animosity.

He loves them so much He took their unnatural sin, their vile acts and twisted lusts and embraced them as if they were His sins. That's how much He loves them. He bore them in His body on the tree. He suffered their shame before the eternal Father just as He did your sins. We must not treat any sinner differently. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All of us have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

Our love for the homosexual community should be to the caliber that they can taste the love of Jesus for them and have hope in Him.

Our love for them should spurn hope, hope that they can be saved. Hope that they can be transformed. Hope that a Christian community that will stand with them through the difficulties and temptations of a fallen body and mind.

III. MINISTRY TO THE HOMOSEXUAL

What should ministry to the homosexual look like?

A. Speak the Truth in Love.

If we love we tell the truth. We don't tell them it's okay, we tell them the truth. It's not love to deceive. It doesn't matter how much the lie makes the hearer feel good, it's still a lie and therefore it's wrong. But on the other hand, it's not love to use the truth like a weapon, like a stick and beat and inflict pain to punish someone, either. That's not love.

If truth is used to bring the fire of torturing condemnation down on someone then it is not love. Truth must be spoken in love to a person. Yes, sometimes the truth hurts, but the pain is necessary in order for the healing to take place. But, the person delivering the truth should not feel vindicated, should not feel superior, should not feel pleased by the pain the truth is inflicting. In fact, to speak the truth in love means *you hurt when the truth hurts the hearer*.

I want to give you four ways I believe God has given us to minister to the homosexual and any sinner. There is no difference.

1. We must biblically address the orientation argument.

We must talk about this morning and you must discuss it with the homosexual. A couple of weeks ago I told you there were many within and without the homosexual community who explained same-sex attraction as a genetic disposition. In other words, the gay or lesbian person is born with a genetic profile that makes them that way. As I told you in that last sermon, the preponderance of scientific evidence is that there is no homosexual gene. However, please don't be too quick to dismiss the biological.

Many who get trapped in the sin of homosexuality report that even as a small child they felt same-sex attraction. It would be safe to say that no one can be sure how it occurs in a person's life. I think there are multiple reasons, a convergence of things. The predominant factor seems to be environmental conditioning and what I mean by that is—the environment they grow up in the home conditions them. One of the number one environmental conditionings seems to be a significant adult of the same sex not loving them or paying attention to them. It seems not having a close relationship with a person of the same sex as a child has some factor, a father for a son or a mother for a daughter. Also, being sexually molested often can play a role in this.

But we can't be quick to dismiss the biological and theological factors. The homosexual wants to dismiss the theological answers for his or her same-sex attraction and say it's purely biological therefore they're not responsible. They want to say they're just like us only inclined differently, while the Christian wants to dismiss the biological reasons and says it's merely a sinful choice. I want to suggest today that the Bible does not choose one over the other but indicates both have a hand in same-sex attraction.

There is a biological factor to all sin. Sin has affected every component of man's being: spirit, soul and body. We're all dying because the process of death has affected us as a result of the fall. Another affect upon the mind and the body was the appetites—the inclinations or the desires of the mind and the body, were perverted and grossly enlarged. The moment Adam and Eve dis-

obeyed God and ate of the fruit something happened to them, not just spiritually, but also physically, the appetites of their body became distorted. The basic appetites, such as the appetite for food was given by God. The desire for acceptance, the desire of sex, all of these are God-given appetites—and were grossly perverted from that moment of the fall. Different people are inclined differently toward different sins. Every sinner has a set of desires and appetites that makes him more vulnerable to certain temptations. The Bible seems very clear that sin has power within the bodily functions. Let's look at this.

“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” (Romans 7:5)

The word *members* is Paul's way of saying your body parts, the different members of the body. Sin's passions were at work in us, in other words, sin aroused in our bodies desires that bear fruit to death.

“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Romans 7:14)

Carnal, fleshly, this is a reference to the human fallen nature.

“If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.” (Romans 7:16-18)

Paul is dealing with a man who is religious, he knows the will of God and wants to do God's law but he can't do it because his fallen nature has certain tendencies toward sin and he ends up doing that instead of obeying the law.

“Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” (Romans 7:20)

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:23-24)

It's clear to me that the Bible, not just here but in other places, shows us there is a biological component. Physically we are depraved and corrupted. These Scriptures don't deny but support the biological pull of the nature of sin. However, these verses are not saying that you can't help yourself or that you're not responsible. At the same time, the idea of orientation is still not right. To say you were born, oriented, to a certain kind of sexual preference is not right. It's a word selected to divert us from a word the Bible uses: *enslavement*.

Our particular orientation to certain sins, whether it's heterosexual sins—pornography, drug abuse, alcohol or lying—is more than an orientation, it's an enslavement to sin. It's not just bio-

logical although it's biologically inclined; it is an enslavement to sin. Orientation sure sounds nicer and it's politically correct, but most of the time political correctness is nothing more than deception.

There is also a moral factor to sin. Not only is there a biological pull, you have a choice. You can either choose to follow the appetites of your body and satisfy them any way you want to, or you can say no to them. You are responsible for your actions. The Bible does not excuse us because we're born with a fallen human nature. The Bible teaches that we have a choice and our choices will always follow our motivations, desires and affections. No one ever chooses apart from these. But desires, inclinations and affections can change. We have all seen a man enslaved to alcohol who does not even darken the door of a church and changes and defeats his alcoholism and never returns to it.

You can say no to yourself and you have a responsibility to do so.

A man may be physically attracted to a woman who is not his wife but that doesn't mean he cannot stop himself from molesting her. See what happens when you go down the orientation road? You then give people an excuse. Man is not to be ruled by his body or his appetites. The Apostle Paul writing to the Christians who before their salvation used to steal, he said to them,

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

You can choose.

2. *We explain to the homosexual the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Only Christ can save him or her. Only Christ can transform. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the only hope?

First, it means that sin's ruling power over the sinner is broken.

The moment they truly put their faith in Christ and repent, the power of homosexuality, the power of sin, that has enslaved them, is broken. This is true or none of us are saved.

“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17-18)

Instead of being slaves to sin you are now slaves to God.

In Ephesians two, the whole text puts our former lives in the past tense.

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

That's past tense. We've been delivered. The Captain of God has come and broken every chain. It means they can be set free.

It means that now the process of sanctification, which is the process of growing into the likeness of Christ, can now begin.

When sin's dominion is broken we are free to live for God but not until. That's why there are a lot of people who are religious and try to do the good things but are going to miss heaven because they've never really truly been set free from their own sin of self. But once that self is broken by the power of God through the Gospel, faith and repentance, uniting you to Jesus Christ, you can live for God. God puts within you the Holy Spirit who has promised and pledged Himself to help you conform to the image of Christ. Promised to help you overcome your temptations and struggles with sin. Besides that, guess what, God gives you a whole new set of affections, desires and motivations.

Which means, this is important, that God progressively redeems all of His children. This is good news. When He saved you He didn't completely save you. He broke sin's power, that was one of His saving works, but He did not deliver you from the presence of sin, not yet. He's in that process and He will complete it when you stand before Him. Which means God progressively redeems us. Conversion is a significant change so that now I can be involved in this progressive redemption.

That's the Gospel. God can deliver you so you can live for God.

3. Once a gay or lesbian has placed their faith in Christ and has been converted, the orientation issue must be revisited.

Why? Because in Evangelical Christianity a divide has arisen. There are some churches that are actually teaching that a person can be a homosexual, a member of their church, and still be oriented to the person of the same sex so long as they don't practice their orientation.

Some churches actually allow people to live with their same-sex partners so long as they don't involve themselves in the same-sex sin. Now who is kidding who? A man has a desire for a woman, are we going to tell him that he can live with her without the confines and blessings of marriage? We know what will happen. Their message is, *It's okay for you to be oriented that way, you were born that way, we understand, just don't practice it.* That's not the Gospel!

I know why churches do that. The first reason they do it is because they just don't know their

Bibles. They believe that a person with the orientation of the same-sex attraction isn't sinning if they don't act on their inclinations. But, listen to me, the orientation is really enslavement to sin. It is not okay to continually lust or think or desire somebody of the same sex no more than it's right for me to desire and think about somebody of the opposite sex who is not my wife. At conversion that enslavement is truly broken, the crown is removed from sin and given to Christ, therefore if anyone is in Christ Jesus He is a new creation. Thus there is no such thing as a Christian homosexual any more than there are Christian adulterers or Christian thieves or Christian murderers. Of course Christians can commit these sins but the Bible says if a man practices those sins he is not a Christian and eternal judgment awaits him.

We believe men and women were created to be heterosexual and as a result attracted to the opposite sex. Therefore when a husband sexually desires his wife or his wife sexually desires her husband it is not sin. It's one hundred percent legitimate. But if a man desires a man or a woman desires a woman it is sinful one hundred percent of the time. The Bible calls the sin of homosexuality unnatural and contrary to God's creative order. In that light, to argue that a Christian can maintain homosexual orientation is unbiblical. God does not accept that. It's false and it's dangerous for that Christian who will be struggling with same-sex attractions perhaps even after they are converted.

What we need to do as a church is help the former homosexual see that he is a former homosexual. He was once this but he is no longer. Paul says "and such were some of you, but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified." We need to show them that they are no longer a homosexual but a child of God. We don't say, "he's a Christian murderer", do we? We wouldn't use that term. Why do we use the term "Christian homosexual"? It is an identity of sin, an identity that is no longer true of them, if they have been converted.

4. We must stand beside a brother or sister who struggles with same-sex attraction.

This is where the rubber meets the road. This will determine whether we will be a God-filled community or not. Can we love somebody who struggles in this way?

If a person has shown signs of the life of God in their soul then we must come alongside of them and help them in their walk with God. We must not impose upon this person the idea that he or she should never have temptation with same-sex attraction. Why should we not say to the person who has just been saved who was formerly a homosexual, "Now this means you will never ever have a same-sex attraction"? The same reason I never told some of you when you got saved that you would never ever again be tempted the same way you were before you were saved. There are some things God immediately deals with us regarding our sins but there are some things we are still dealing with years after our conversion. Many Christians have to fight the same kind of temptation they dealt with before they were saved. That does not make them less a Christian.

It is wrong to insinuate that somehow salvation will remove all temptations. Absolutely not! As a church of the Lord Jesus Christ we must never be afraid to get into the trench with those who

are struggling and love them by telling them the truth with compassion and lend ourselves to their aid. We must patiently fight and not give up when a brother or a sister falls in their attempt to overcome temptation. And it doesn't matter what the sin is.

A man comes to me and says, *You know, I fell off the wagon. I've sinned again. I fell into temptation.* I have a specific thing that I will usually say to that person, "I'm very disappointed this has happened but, brother, I want you to know that I still love you and I want to commit to do whatever I can to help you not to give into that temptation again. Whatever I've got to do, spend time with you, counsel you, pray with you, let's do it. Because Jesus said He can overcome everything, He's broken every chain, He's a deliverer of sins, He's my Rescuer, my Refuge, my Hope, my Strong Tower. He is able."

We must be patient with all Christians no matter the temptation and we as a church must not be afraid of a brother or a sister who has the temptation of same-sex attraction. We shouldn't be afraid of them "for the Son of Man did not come to destroy lives but to save them," no matter the sinner. Amen.