

Same-Sex Attraction and Same-Sex Marriage
The Christian Faith and Contemporary Challenges
May 23, 2021

“Thou, O Christ, art all I want; More than all in Thee I find; Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, Heal the sick, and lead the blind: Just and holy is Thy Name, I am all unrighteousness; False and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace.” – Charles Wesley, “Jesus, Lover of My Soul”

“In this war of worldviews, Ken was there. Floy was there. The church that had been praying for me for years was there. Jesus triumphed. And I was a broken mess. Conversion was a train wreck. I did not want to lose everything that I loved. But the voice of God sang a sanguine love song in the rubble of my world. I weakly believed that if Jesus could conquer death, he could make right my world. I drank, tentatively at first, then passionately, of the solace of the Holy Spirit. I rested in private peace, then community, and today in the shelter of a covenant family, where one calls me ‘wife’ and many call me ‘mother.’ I had not forgotten the blood Jesus surrendered for this life. And my former life lurks in the edges of my heart, shiny and still like a knife.” – Rosaria Butterfield, “My Train Wreck Conversion”

I. Introduction: Identifying the Challenge

A. The Normalization of Homosexuality Today

II. What Does the Bible Really Say?

- A. **Gen 1:1, 26** – *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...’²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply ...’”*
- B. **Gen 2:18** – *“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ ...²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”*
- C. **Rom 1:21, 26–27** – *“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened ... 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.”*
- D. **Is 62:4** – *“You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”*
- E. **Eph 5:25–26, 31–32** – *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,²⁶ that he might sanctify her ... [Then he quotes from Gen 2:24] ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”*

III. Challenges in the Church

A. “Side A’ Christians” vs. “Side B’ Christians”

1. Side A = Since God affirms gay relationships, same-sex marriage and homosexuality are simply one of many forms of diverse sexuality that the church should welcome.

“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 (Robert W. Woodruff Professor Emeritus, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University)

2. Side B = God desires celibacy among those who are sexually attracted to members of the same sex, since homosexual activity is not God’s design for human beings. But such attraction (“orientation”), while a consequence of the fall, is not itself sinful unless acted upon, and may find healthy expressions through celibate “spiritual friendships,” co-habiting partnerships, and the like.

B. “Gay Christian” vs. “A Christian Struggling with Same-Sex Desires”

1. **1 Cor 6:9–11** – *“Or 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,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And 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.”*
2. **Rom 6:6** – *“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”*

C. Temptation vs. Sin

1. Temptation is not (always) sinful.
 - a) **Heb 4:15** – *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*
 - b) **James 1:14–15** – *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”*

“[Temptation] is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it will carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now, when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented unto; but the very proposal from within, it being the soul’s own act, is its sin.” – John Owen, Works, 6:194

“It is not with us as it was with Christ when Satan came to tempt him. He declares that he ‘had nothing in him,’ John 14:30. It is otherwise with us: he hath, for the compassing of most of his ends, a sure party within our own breasts, James 1:14, 15.” – John Owen, Works, 6:95

PCA Report on Sexuality and Gender Identity (Doctrinal and Pastoral!)

“We affirm that Scripture speaks of temptation in different ways. There are some temptations God [permits] in the form of morally neutral trials, and other temptations ... [that] arise from within as morally illicit desires (James 1:2, 13–14). When temptations come from without, the temptation itself is not sin, unless we enter into the temptation. But when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called sin.”

“Nevertheless, there is an important degree of moral difference between temptation to sin and giving in to sin, even when the temptation is itself an expressing of indwelling sin. While our goal is the weakening and lessening of internal temptations to sin, Christians should feel their greatest responsibility not for the fact that such temptations occur but for thoroughly and immediately fleeing and resisting the temptations when they arise. We can avoid ‘entering into’ temptation by refusing to internally ponder and entertain the proposal and desire to actual sin ... God is pleased with our sincere obedience, even though it may be accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections (WCF 16.6).”

– PCA “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality” (2020)

IV. Practical Guidelines

- A. Treat people as people, not as objects or projects.
- B. Become more accustomed to speaking frankly and openly about a Christian worldview.
- C. Get comfortable with talking about sin and the healing power of repentance.

WSC Q. 87. *What is repentance unto life?*

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

- D. Relish the inexhaustible sufficiency of Jesus Christ in the face of every sexual temptation to sin.

1. Heb 4:14–15 – *“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

“[N]ever any soul did or shall perish by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption, who could raise his soul by faith to an expectation of relief from Jesus Christ.” – Owen, Works, 6:82

“Therefore, let us not cease so to act that we may make some unceasing progress in the way of the Lord. And let us not despair at the slowness of our success; for even though attainment may not correspond to desire, when today outstrips yesterday the effort is not lost.” – John Calvin, Institutes, 3.6.5.

- E. Do not fail to show compassion to those with homosexual desires or refuse to see your own sin.

V. Further Reading

- A. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001).
- B. Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).
- C. Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible and Same-Sex Attraction* (London: The Good Book Company, 2013)
- D. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburg: Crown & Covenant, 2014).
- E. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Pittsburg: Crown & Covenant, 2015).
- F. PCA Study Committee Report (2020) – “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality” – <https://pcaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AIC-Report-to-48th-GA-5-28-20-1.pdf>