

Gay and Christian? Can I Be? – Dan Hitz

Dan is the Director of Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan. The culture wars promoting homosexuality have heated up substantially in the recent months and have made significant headway into the Christian Church. Many who have once been strong advocates for the traditional view of Biblical sexuality are now supporting the views that one can identify as a gay-Christian, engage in homosexual sexual activities and still go to Heaven. Some even say that God blesses homosexual relationships. This article will briefly examine such beliefs and compare them to the teachings of Scripture. It is meant to be a brief overview of some issues currently facing Christianity and culture, and is not intended to be a comprehensive look at these complex subjects.

“Has no one condemned you?” “No one sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” John 8:10b-11 NIV



The simple truth of John 3:16 is that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” It is through grace we are “saved through faith” and have become “new creations” (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:17). We can do nothing to earn our salvation. We cannot be “good enough” to qualify for Heaven. We are simply called to surrender our lives to the authority of Jesus Christ and receive His Spirit within us. In reality, that is a huge surrender of our lives and an even greater gift of His eternal salvation.

What do we do after salvation? Does God want to leave us as He found us? Paul writes in Romans 12:2 that we are not to “conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. Upon salvation, the Lord calls us actively participate in the transformation process. The same Savior who said to the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you,” also instructed her, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus calls all who follow Him to take up their cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23).

I want to draw a parallel between homosexuality and other sins, especially sexual sin. God’s intent for sexual expression is solely within the context of the marriage covenant between one biologically born male and one biologically born female. Homosexuality is not the sin of all sins. It is just as sinful for a man and a woman to engage in sexual activity outside of the marriage covenant as it is for two people of the same gender to engage in sexual activity. It is just as sinful for one person to view heterosexual pornography as it is for two people to engage in homosexual sexual activity. Sin is sin. God calls every person, everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

Pro-gay theology has made several inroads into many denominations and Christian organizations. Some who identify themselves as Christians have thrown out the Bible altogether claiming it has been corrupted by men through the centuries. Others state that the Bible is not to be taken literally and disregard Scriptures stating that homosexuality is sin. Still others misinterpret or reinterpret Biblical passages to support their pro-gay beliefs. For an in-depth look at pro-gay theology in comparison to traditional Biblical beliefs, read *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* by Joe Dallas.¹ Dallas himself spent six years as an openly gay man trying to live as a Christian. In the end, he had to wrestle with the question, “Am I basing my decision to embrace the ‘gay and Christian’ identity on the belief that this is God’s will for my life... or on the hope that this is what God might *allow*?” (Quoted from back cover.)

There are many passages in the Old and New Testaments that clearly identify homosexual activity as sin. Leviticus 18:22 reads, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable,” while verse 20:13a reads, “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.” 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and Romans Chapter 1 in the New Testament identify homosexuality as one sin among many other sins that must be repented of.

One of the main arguments that the pro-gay apologists use is the claim that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. They interpret this absence as Christ's acceptance of homosexuality. However, Jesus never said anything about child abuse or bestiality, yet who would argue that either of those activities is acceptable? The Gospels do not claim to be an exhaustive collection of Jesus' statements. In fact, John writes that Jesus did so many things that the whole world could not contain all of the reports if they were written down (John 21:25). Therefore, the lack of a recorded statement is not proof that Jesus said nothing about the subject. Jesus did declare the created intent for man and woman in Matthew 19:4-6:

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

In all areas of life, not only did Jesus preached a standard of holiness based on the foundation used by the Jews of His time, the Old Testament Scriptures, He raised the standard of holiness to include the thoughts and intents of the heart. "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28). We can also see the call to sexual purity in the counsel of Jerusalem in Acts 15 when the apostles met to discuss which of the laws the converted Gentiles must follow. Abstaining from sexual immorality was one of only four areas of the Jewish laws the converted Gentiles were required to keep. Those laws on sexual immorality would have been taken directly from the Old Testament law.

Another argument of the pro-gay theologians is that Paul coined his own words which he did not intend to be translated as homosexuality. Joe Dallas writes about this in his book, *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible*.¹ He reports that Paul actually coined 179 words in his epistles. Dallas explains that the Greek words Paul used to create the word *arsenokoite*, which we translate as homosexual, came from two words with very specific meanings. *Arsenos* is used to emphasis the physical definition of a male as in a male infant. *Koite* is used to specify a bed or couch used in a sexual context such as the marriage bed in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable... and the bed [koite] undefiled". Dallas writes, "When Paul coined the term *arsenokoite*, he took it directly from the Greek translation of Leviticus's prohibitions against homosexual behavior. His intent couldn't be clearer. Though *arsenokoite* is unique to Paul, it refers specifically and unambiguously to sex between men." (page 213)

There are numerous arguments from the gay-affirming community that are based on anecdotal observations rather than Scripture. Among them are the many accounts of men and women, some formerly in ex-gay leadership, who have fallen away. The reality of Scripture shows that there will always be men and women who fall away from the faith for a wide variety of reasons. (See the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8.) This does not invalidate the reality that there are many others who have continued to walk in faith. The pro-gay community cites many scientific studies that claim to show that homosexuality is inborn and unchangeable. They ignore studies which show that many have overcome homosexuality and studies that have failed to show a biological cause for homosexuality. There is a wealth of information on scientific research on this topic on the website for the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality [NARTH] at www.narth.org. No one has ever been able to find a conclusive genetic link to homosexuality, yet scientists have found genetic links to alcoholism and rage. Who in the scientific community would ever encourage anyone to embrace their alcoholism or rage simply because it is genetic? Gay-advocates also claim that since a person continues to have same-sex attractions he/she hasn't changed his/her sexual orientation at all. They hold to an "all or nothing" approach to evaluating change rather than a more realistic continuum of change. Although we have been redeemed through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we continue to live in a fallen world. When we were fully given over to our sin, we trained our minds and bodies to respond to sinful stimuli.



Transformation is a process. We will continue to struggle with sin and temptation just like the Apostle Paul described in Romans 7:15-25 in his famous “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do,” passage. Our continued temptation is merely a reflection of the reality that we are redeemed saints living in a fallen world and in need of continued transformation into the finished work of Christ. Remember that Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet was without sin. No matter what sin we struggle with, if we are in Christ our orientation toward that sin has changed – and will continue to change – as we take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

Some in Christianity view homosexual activity as sin and seek to live a celibate life while still maintaining the label of gay-Christian. While I applaud their desire to honor God and not engage in homosexual sexual activity, I cannot applaud their use of the label “gay”. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul identifies a variety of activities as sinful.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Of the ten sins identified in this passage, only homosexuality is used as a label by those who struggle with such temptations while resisting the temptation to act upon them. Most (if not all) heterosexual married men do struggle with heterosexual lust, yet no one goes around identifying themselves as an adulterous-Christian with the explanation that they do not engage in sexual activity outside of their own marriage. Nor does anyone identify his/herself as a Christian thief, or a Christian slanderer. One exception may be those in recovery programs who identify themselves as an alcoholic, yet I prefer the focus of the Celebrate Recovery programs. These programs do not accept the label of alcoholic, but state that they are “celebrating recovery from” alcoholism or any of life’s “hurts, hang-ups, and habits”.²

Identifying as a gay-Christian keeps one linked to a sinful identity and world view. Therefore the label of gay-Christian is not a Biblical label for one to embrace. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:22-24:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

For those who are true Christ followers, it is essential to hold fast to our true identity of a redeemed saint; “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). As 1 Cor. 6:11 states, “And that is what some of you were. 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.” Redemption and an identity in Christ is available for all.

We need to make some significant distinctions as we look at sin in the life of the believer. It is not a sin to be tempted or to have same-sex attractions. Jesus, Himself, was tempted in **every way that were are, yet was without sin** (Hebrews 4:15). Temptations and attractions become sin when we start engaging them and acting upon them in thought or deed. There are also significant differences in the motivations of people who deal with homosexuality. First, there are those who struggle with homosexuality, recognize it as sin, resist it, yet occasionally fall into pornography or sexual encounters. This group responds to their sinful actions with brokenness and repentance. They are quick to confess their sin, and seek to change. Secondly, there are those who believe that homosexual activity is sinful but choose to freely engage in homosexual activity anyway for a variety of reasons. Some have given up in the fight and became angry at God. Some choose the pleasure of sin over the righteousness of God. Others abuse the grace of God and turn it into permission to sin. This group responds to sexual sin with a hardened, calloused heart. Thirdly, there are those

who are truly deceived into believing that God blesses homosexuality and engage in homosexual activity celebrating it as a gift from God. One wonders if this group lives their lives secretly conflicted between their spirituality and their sexuality.

As we look at these three groups we need to remember that Philippians 2:12 tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. It is not our job to judge the motivations of a person's heart, or to judge whether one is truly saved or not. God alone knows the true intent of a person's heart; however, a repentant person will produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:7-9, Matt. 7:15-23). God's grace is abundant for the first group of people who struggle with sin and are quick to repent. 1 John 1:9 reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Hebrews 10:26-27, 29 presents a strong warning to those in the second group who have received the truth and chose to walk in sin.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Those in the third group who have been deceived into believing that homosexuality is a gift from God are also under a strong warning in Galatians 6:7-8 which states,

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

The good news is that the mercy and grace of God is available to people in all three of the groups described above. Peter is an excellent example of the mercy of God to reach out to us in our sin and call us to repentance. We see the mercy of Jesus targeting Peter who after boasting that he was not like the others, and that he would never deny the Lord did just that (Mark 14). In John 21 we see Jesus reaching out to Peter in love. We see the process of Jesus helping him to acknowledge the depth of his sin, the need for repentance, and the need to look past the actions or callings of others to walk in the specific calling that the Lord had for him. Repentance is available for those in all three of the groups described above. There are leaders in the ex-gay movement who have publically stated that they were involved in the gay-affirming church when the Holy Spirit convicted their hearts to repent of their homosexuality. No one is beyond the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are experiencing unwanted homosexual attractions, there is hope. If you have been struggling with homosexuality for a long time and are growing weary in the fight, reach out for help. Do not walk alone. Call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114 and find out about ministry resources, groups, and services that can assist you in your journey out of homosexuality. If you feel like you've struggled far too long, or fallen too far from grace to ever return, remember that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). There is hope and healing in Jesus Christ for everyone who seeks Him.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin . But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2

References and Recommended Resources:

¹ Dallas, Joe. *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible*. Harvest House Publishers, 2007.

² Celebrate Recovery, Inc. website. Retrieved from <http://www.celebraterecovery.com/> on April 29, 2012.

³ Gagnon, Dr. Robert. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice Texts and Hermeneutics*. Abingdon Press, 2002.

⁴ National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality. www.nARTH.com.