

SESSION 5

READY WHEN HOMOSEXUALITY DECEIVES

The Point

Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

The Bible Meets Life

One of the most divisive issues in our culture is homosexuality. For more and more families, the conversation is moving into their homes and causing confusion. The world says complete acceptance is the only appropriate response, but the Bible is clear on the matter and directs believers how to lovingly stand firm on God's truth.

The Passage

Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

¹⁸ 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. ²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God delivered them over in the cravings 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 something created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen. ²⁶ This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

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⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, ¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. ¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. 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.



THE SETTING

Romans is Paul's most theological work. His focus is on the gospel as the power of God for salvation and righteousness. But before people will receive salvation, they must first recognize that their sinfulness leaves them in need of salvation. These verses from Romans emphasize the sinfulness of all Gentiles. Additionally, Paul's letter to the troubled church in Corinth reminds them of their personal sinfulness prior to the cleansing they received in Christ.

ENGAGE

(15 MINUTES)



ITEM
13

Leader Pack: Use the *Hope and New Life* poster to help in discussion of this session's point.

GET INTO THE STUDY

ENGAGE: Begin the session with one or more of the **Engage Options** on the next page. (This is optional. If you'd rather skip the **Engage Options**, just begin with the first discussion question.)

SAY: One of the most divisive issues in our culture is homosexuality. The world says complete acceptance is the only appropriate response, but the Bible is clear on the matter and directs believers how to lovingly stand firm on God's truth.

DISCUSS: Enlist students discuss the question, "When you have kids, what will be a rule you establish?"

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point**. Explain that this is the key idea to keep in mind throughout the session.

THE POINT

Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

READ: Read and summarize **The Bible Meets Life** for your group.

As students, we don't always appreciate the rules our parents lay down. Some rules cut into our idea of fun, and others may even have felt unreasonable. When we become adults, however, we will see the value of most of those rules and we'll even embrace many of them as good guidelines for our own families. Even so, the idea of "rules" often carries a negative connotation even into adulthood. We can still balk at rules, seeing them as restrictive. They keep us from doing what we want to do. Unfortunately, many look at God's rules in the same way. Popular culture has rejected God's rules for lifestyle issues as out-of-date ideas that hamper progress. If God loves me, He surely wouldn't keep me from doing what I want to do and living like I want to live. After all, He created me this way, right? Culture has become most vocal with this faulty thinking on the issue of homosexuality. The Bible shows us that God's rules—His commands for how to live—are for our benefit. The commands in Scripture are not arbitrary at all; they were given to help us. And God has given them all to us out of His love for us. That principle also applies to what God says about homosexuality. Let's consider what the Bible teaches on this subject and how we can respond with truth and love.

PRAY: Transition into the session by praying that the Holy Spirit would help us to know and stand firm for God's truth in a loving and effective way.

Engage Options

► **Lead with Action**

Play a game of Simon Says with your students. Say, **“Like in this game, the leader ‘Simon’ gave you specific directions. Not following the rules or his direction caused you to be out of the game. Similarly, God directed us that sex is meant to be between a man and a woman who are married. Some have decided God’s stipulations do not line up with their wants or desires. They choose to not follow His direction.”**

► **Lead with Atmosphere**

Place signs with a bunch of different rules around the room. Point out to the students that while some rules are obvious, all are necessary. Say, **“God’s design has specific rules in place. His design for marriage is between a man and a woman. It’s His design, not ours, and we must follow His rules. Like we discussed last week, these rules, or guidelines, give us freedom.”**

► **Lead with Media**

Play “How He Loves Us” by David Crowder. Say, **“No matter what you have done, what sin you have participated in, or what sin you are tempted by, God loves you deeply!”**

OPTION: For many students, the word “rules” has negative meaning. Remind your students that rules are made to protect us and give us direction. Talk about different types of rules that they benefit from.

OPTION: Ask your students to write down and then post around the room their answer to the question: What is one rule that your parents have established that you appreciate?

STUDY THE BIBLE

The Point: Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

¹⁸ 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. ²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

—ROMANS 1:18-23

ROMANS 1:18-23

SAY: We like to focus on God's grace, kindness, and compassion. And certainly, all of that is true of God, but it is not the complete picture of His character. Some things make God angry. The Bible uses the word translated "wrath" to describe God's reaction to certain things.

SUMMARIZE: Summarize God's anger toward sin in Romans 1:18-23.

So, what has angered God? We can summarize it in one word: sin. God hates evil and will display His wrath at sin. Unlike human anger, God's anger is not self-centered. God gets angry because sin always ends in self-destruction. God is rightfully angry. He is a holy God, and sin is offensive to Him.

Our sin is rebellion against God, but we do not rebel out of ignorance. Romans 1:19-20 clearly teaches that God has made Himself known. A billboard never exists for itself; it is used to point to something else. God has provided a cosmic billboard called "creation" that is meant to point us to God and His glory.

Although Paul wrote that these people knew God, the apostle wasn't saying they had a relationship with God. They were aware of God and had what we might call "head knowledge" of Him. By choosing not to glorify or give thanks to God, they were rejecting God's truth about Himself. This is followed by a clear path of rebellion where there is:

- ▶ Futile (worthless) thinking
- ▶ Moral insensitivity (darkened hearts)
- ▶ Idol worship

DISCUSS: Lead students to discuss the question, "What are some of the different responses to homosexuality in the culture and the church?"

Commentary

ROMANS 1:18-23

Earlier in Romans 1, Paul explained the gospel not only contains God's power for salvation, but is also the only revelation of how God's righteousness can be imparted to sinners. Contrary to the elusive achieved-righteousness the Jews pursued, the gospel Paul preached told people true righteousness is received, not earned. Paul then explained the sharp contrast between righteousness received by God's grace and unrighteousness people so willfully demonstrate apart from His saving power. Paul emphasized the lost person's problem—he is under God's wrath. God's holy anger is an expression of His response to sin. Paul didn't merely mean that sinful choices have horrible consequences. Because God is completely holy, He cannot ignore sin or be satisfied by a mere cause and effect system of morality. God's wrath has been revealed by God Himself in both the Old and New Testaments. Left alone mankind could never discover God's attitude toward sin. In His great mercy, God revealed both His holy opposition to sin and the solution to appease His anger. The gospel declares that God sacrificed His own Son so His wrath might be removed from all who come to Christ by faith (1 Thess. 1:10).

Although the gospel clearly displays the remedy for lost sinners, most of them suppress the truth of God's existence and attitude toward sin that can be seen in nature. Although lost people cannot change the truth about God, they seek to stifle or hinder the truth when they see it. What can be known about God is evident among them because God has shown it to them. God intentionally displayed His existence and power through the wonders of creation.

Paul concluded that all people have known God to some degree (v. 21). Nevertheless, people who remained in their sins chose not to glorify Him as God or show gratitude to Him. Although countless lost people have observed the handiwork of God and been thoroughly impressed, their thinking has come from senseless minds that are darkened. Consequently, much of the thinking of people who don't know God is nonsense. Down through the ages, people who reject the true God do so because they think they are wise. Sadly, they possess an earthly, demonic wisdom (Jas. 3:14-15). Paul declared such people to be fools who trade the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal beings.

TIP: Don't forget that this topic is an awkward one to many teenagers. Don't let any bias in your life overpower the truths of the lesson.

STUDY THE BIBLE

The Point: Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

²⁴ Therefore God delivered them over in the cravings 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 something created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

²⁶ This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions.

For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

—ROMANS 1:24-27

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SAY: God will not force people to follow Him. So, in verse 24 Paul said that the people were delivered, meaning abandoned or surrendered, to their desires. In other words, God surrendered the people to let them follow their own rebellious path.

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read the following:

Homosexuality is one of those sinful desires, and Paul spoke plainly and specifically about it. Verses 26–27 give us a clear and unequivocal passage on the consequences of deviating from God’s standard concerning sexuality. Sexual sin is evidence of rebellion against God’s design of all life and rejection of the design—and the Designer—of creation.

Paul made the case that when people lose their wonder for God and reject Him and His creative design, God gives them up to their own ways. And those ways have devastating consequences.

I understand that reading an indictment like this feels harsh in today’s culture of absolute tolerance. But it’s like going to the airport. Security agents scan our luggage in order to protect all travelers from anybody or anything dangerous. They look into our stuff—they challenge our “baggage”—and they do it to protect us.

In the same way, the Lord points at certain things and says: “That’s dangerous. It’s not in your best interest. You need to remove it or it will hurt you.” That’s what’s happening in Romans 1. God points His finger at several sins—including homosexuality—and says, “That’s dangerous; it will hurt you.” How does it hurt? Sin disfigures the image of Christ in us; it deprives us of the family God intended; and, if we remain unrepentant, it places us under God’s wrath.

DISCUSS: Lead students to discuss the question, “How do you show love to someone who is living in a manner you don’t agree with?”

DO: Instruct students to complete the **Action Point**, “Truth and Love.”

Truth and Love

Read John 4. How does Jesus talk to the woman caught in sin? What is the truth He shares? How does He show love to her? Discuss your answers with a partner and be prepared to share with the group if asked.

Commentary

ROMANS 1:24-27

God is not ambiguous in His response to man's rejection of Him and/or replacing Him with graven images (Ex. 20:3-4). In addition to passing eternal judgment on sin, He also addresses sin in our present world. Concerning people who persist in their rejection of God, Paul said God delivered them over in the cravings of their hearts to live according to the sins they loved, including sexual impurity. Consequently, their bodies are degraded among themselves. Delivered over shows that one way God pours out His wrath on sin is by removing His restraint and allowing sinners to reap the fruit of their spiritual rebellion. Consequently, God's wrath both responds to sin and opens the way for it to flourish as He allows hardened sinners to follow their godless desires (Ps. 81:11-12).

In verse 25, Paul addressed one of the foundational errors of unbelievers: they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. (Literally, "the" lie. Idolatry is not just one sin among many; it is the sin that causes people to worship something or someone that is not God.) Consequently, unbelievers have worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator, whom Paul described as praised forever. Paul shared these words as a brief doxology, reminding the Romans that worship is the only proper response to God's glory. The sin of idolatry occurs as people rob God of His praise and give it to man-made images unworthy of worship.

TIP: *Remind your students that just because someone doesn't agree with us does not mean we can't approach them with truth, love, and friendship.*

Paul returned to the sexual impurity mentioned in verse 24. He reiterated that God delivered them over to what he summarily called degrading passions. Both males and females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. Both genders chose to be inflamed in their lust for one another. Despite modern attempts to normalize homosexuality and even defend it biblically, Paul clearly condemned it as degrading, unnatural, lustful, and shameless sexual impurity.

Under the Old Testament law, homosexuality was condemned and punished with the death penalty (Lev. 18:22,29-30; 20:13). Far from merely enforcing a moral prohibition, the law served to support the creation design of people as male and female and the creation mandate to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). In contrast, the Greco-Roman culture of Paul's day was rife with homosexuality, and some considered it superior to heterosexuality.

Although the new covenant did not demand capital punishment for homosexuality, Paul reminded the Romans that God would hand down the appropriate penalty for such sexual error. While Paul did not give details as to the exact nature of the penalty, the Greek adjective gives the idea of that which is "necessary" as punishment.

STUDY THE BIBLE

The Point: Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, ¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. ¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. 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

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GUIDE: Lead students to understand 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

In these verses, Paul candidly confronted those who had certain habitual practices from which they were unwilling to repent and gave evidence they would not enter the kingdom of God. Paul wasn't speaking about people who have occasional moral failures. Instead, this passage refers to people who—by their habitual sinful practices—say to God, "I don't want any part of You."

As followers of Jesus, we can't ignore that God condemns the practice of homosexuality. But it's just as important to recognize God no more condemns practicing homosexuals than He does those who lust with their eyes or are greedy in their consumption. God is equally concerned with each sin listed in this passage.

Therefore, we must treat the act of homosexuality as we do other temptations and sins. We need to be forthright and truthful as we present the truth of the Scriptures, but we must do so with humility and compassion—not with a sense of condemnation or superiority.

SAY: Paul didn't leave us with condemnation. He gave us a powerful source of hope in verse 11. At the moment we place our faith in Christ, we were changed and made righteous before God. That is the beauty and the power of the gospel.

DISCUSS: Ask students to answer the questions, "Verse 11 reminds us there is hope for all in Christ. How do we reflect that hope to people impacted by homosexuality?"

Commentary

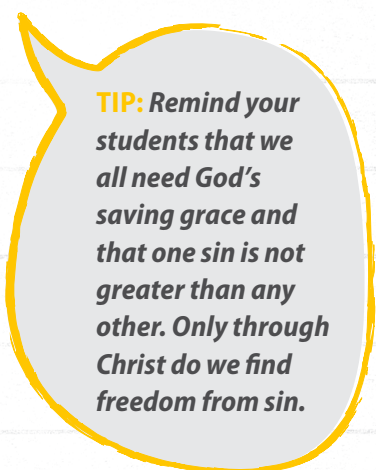
1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

Paul asked a rhetorical question to segue from his discussion of the impropriety of lawsuits among Christians (1 Cor. 6:1-8) to the necessity of believers using their bodies to the glory of God. He addressed believers' tendency to slide back into the sexual immorality of their pre-conversion days: Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom?

Although the answer was obviously affirmative, Paul needed to remind the church at Corinth that no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. While the first group of sins includes homosexuality, it encompasses heterosexual sins as well. This list reflects Paul's declaration in Romans 1:18 that the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all forms of godlessness and unrighteousness. No one who continually practices these sins will inherit (receive) God's kingdom. Regardless of temporal affiliation with a local body of believers, no person who lives in habitual sin is part of God's kingdom in its present form. Furthermore, these rebels will not receive the glorious inheritance of eternal citizenship in God's kingdom if they do not turn from their sins and turn to Christ by faith.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that some of them used to be involved in these sinful lifestyles when they were dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1), but he draws a sharp contrast between the Corinthians' former sinful lives and their new lives in Christ. By the grace of God they had been washed, sanctified, and justified. *Washed* refers to the believer's regeneration, having been made alive in Christ. Christians have experienced the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). This word does not refer to baptism but to the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit by which we are born again and "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10). *Sanctified* speaks of being set apart unto Christ for holy living. By God's power, the bondage of sin is broken. His people are free to obey and bring glory to Him. As people who have been set apart, Christians continue to experience the process of sanctification throughout their lives. Justified describes the believer's new standing before God: he is declared righteous. Because of Christ's redeeming death on our behalf, our sin has been taken away and exchanged for the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

The name of the Lord Jesus Christ encompasses all of the characteristics of the Son of God, not just His given name or title. While God's people are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on their behalf, salvation is made effectual by the Spirit of our God.



TIP: Remind your students that we all need God's saving grace and that one sin is not greater than any other. Only through Christ do we find freedom from sin.

APPLY IT

TIP: Remind your students that their words matter. The Bible is clear about the issue of homosexuality, but it's also clear about how we should treat each other. Encourage your students to boldly stand for truth with the humility, love, and grace of Christ.

SAY: There will always be rules, and there will always be those who dislike them. God's rules and standards have not changed, but neither has His love. Choose to be a channel of His truth and love. How will you respond to the truths explored in this passage?

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud a few ways students can take what they have learned and **Apply It**.

- ▶ **Reject hate.** Ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light of conviction on any judgmental or unloving attitude you may have toward those who practice homosexuality.
- ▶ **Seek knowledge.** Research books, articles, or podcasts to learn more about the biblical approach to homosexuality.
- ▶ **Build relationships.** It's hard to love those we don't know. Seek to make positive connections with people who live a different lifestyle in your spheres of influence. Look for opportunities to show Christ's love and proclaim His truth.

GUIDE: Lead students to consider which of the three suggested responses to the Bible study most closely applies to them and their current circumstances.

ASK: Which of these responses do you personally need to focus on most as you live this session out? Allow time for responses.

WRAP UP

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to give students opportunities to show His love and proclaim His truth.

ASK: Ask students about last week's **Live It Out** options. Discuss any responses and encourage students as they choose to apply the Bible to their lives.

GUIDE: Encourage students to complete one or both of the **Live It Out** activities for the week. Let them know you will discuss them next time you meet.



For **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife

LEADER LIVE IT OUT

Before the session, challenge yourself to grow with your students through this Live It Out.

Show Love | 1 John 4:7-8

Our culture today tells us that if we don't accept people the way they are, then we are hateful. But Scripture tells us that God is love. Those that know God should reflect His love, even as we uphold His standard. As we stand against sin, we must still reflect God's love—a love so overwhelming that God willingly sacrificed His Son to take our place. Jesus Christ took on our sin—giving us His blamelessness—so that we could be reunited with our heavenly Father. That's a love that should compel us to tell others about Him. This love should give us boldness to stand for His Truth and compassion to love those who do not know Him yet.

Write out 1 John 4:7-8. Underline every use of the word love. Then, above each time love is used, write someone's name that you need to show love to this week. Pray for that person and commit to show them God's love this week.

Notes:

ONE CONVERSATION™

Use these discussion starters to help foster a spiritual conversation with your family.

Scripture: Romans 1:18-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE: One of the most divisive issues in our culture is homosexuality. For more and more families, the conversation is moving into their homes and causing confusion. The world says complete acceptance is the only appropriate response, but the Bible is clear on the matter and directs believers how to lovingly stand firm on God's truth.

STUDENTS

THE POINT: Regardless of the sin you struggle with, there is hope and new life found in Christ.

- Discuss with your student the differences in what the culture says is acceptable but what the Bible says is sin.

Discuss the following quote: "Churches must be safe places who will love, support, and walk with those who are struggling with identity and relational issues, as they move toward Christ."¹ —Living Hope Ministries

1. "Get Help," Living Hope Ministries, [cited 5 May 2014]. Available from the Internet: <http://livehope.org/audience/churches>.

LIVE IT OUT: Your student has been encouraged to do one or both Live It Out activities in the Personal Study Guide. Here are some suggested ways to help your student:

*If your student chooses to do **Authentic Prayer**:*

- Talk to your student about what culture says about homosexuality and what God's Word says.
- Pray that the Lord would give your student a heart that loves all people.

*If your student chooses to do **Title**:*

- Read 1 John 4:7-8 with your student.
- Ask your student if he/she needs to show someone love this week.