

Interactive Sunday

WHY IS BEING GAY (LGBTQ) A SIN?

By Rev. Will Nelken

This is a fascinating question, which I am eager to respond to. I hope you will be as eager to hear my answer.

A Lifeway Research study asked, "Do you believe homosexuality is a sin?" 44% of respondents said "Yes." 43% said "No." And 13% were unsure.

I wonder if our results would be similar. Regardless, it's an important question. Your answer may indicate whether you get your theology from the Bible, or from the latest Tweets and blogs.

You may want to accuse me of semantic hair-splitting, but the question we are considering today is so important in these last days, that a clear and Biblical answer is necessary.

There is far too much non-Biblical nonsense being broadcast by professing Christians, slathered in bad attitudes, that reflect poorly on the Savior who loved us and gave Himself for us, and for the whole world.

Why is being gay a sin? I'll give you the short answer first, and then explain my position. Are you ready? Here it is.

The Bottom Line

Now, let me say this as plainly as I can, based on the Bible, the Word of God: Being gay is *not* a sin. That's right, being gay is not a sin. However, homosexual relations *are* sinful.

One is a matter of identity; the other is a matter of behavior.

God's Word is clear about homosexual behaviors, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament:

Leviticus 20:13 *If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.*

Romans 1:26-27 *God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

Homosexual behaviors are sinful because they pervert God's natural design for sex, just as fornication (sex before marriage) and adultery (sex outside of marriage) also pervert His design.

In the effort by some to normalize homosexuality in American culture, it is now presented as "same-sex attraction" (SSA), which sounds more scientific and less weighted with emotional baggage.

However, that is actually a great way to describe the process—as an *attraction* to people of the same sex.

Attractions = Temptations

People normally experience many kinds of attractions and imaginations, which if pursued, would prove inappropriate, or even harmful. Attractions of these kinds we Christians call by a Biblical name: "temptations."

Children may have a crush on their school teacher, teenagers may develop a crush on a celebrity, married people may find themselves attracted to people other than their spouse, and some (of any age or marital status) may find themselves attracted (perhaps only occasionally or for a season) to people of the same sex. Such attractions (temptations) are issues to be dealt with, but they are not in themselves sinful.

Fixing our minds on such attractions—in imaginative fantasies or obsessive contemplation—marks the beginning of sin. Following through with words and actions is, indeed, sinful behavior.

The Apostle James pronounces a divine blessing on those who wrestle with temptations (James 1:12):

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Then James outlines the process that transforms temptations into sinful behaviors (James 1:14-15; ESV):

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Desire leads to temptation. This is where we wrestle with right and wrong, and this is where we make our choice. If we choose to follow a wrong desire, then “desire conceives” and sin is born.

Sin is always a matter of personal choice, no matter how subtle its internal operations.

“Homosexuality”

The terms *homosexuality* and *heterosexuality* have only been around for 130 years (first appearing in print in 1886 in a book by psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing).

Homosexuality, or “being gay” (as a personal identity) is not addressed in the Bible (though some modern translations have adapted the term to reflect its contemporary use). But homosexual behaviors *are* addressed repeatedly, in both the Old and New Testaments, as detestable and sinful (meaning, contrary to God’s natural design and plan), along with numerous immoral heterosexual behaviors, such as pornography, fornication, adultery, and rape.

A passage in Paul’s Letter to the Romans, chapter one, is commonly referred to with regard to the sinful nature of homosexual behavior. While homosexual acts are the headliner in this passage (probably because they were among the common and accepted perversions of the Roman culture), they are just the tip of the iceberg:

Romans 1:26-32 *God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.*

Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and

boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

Under Whose Control?

As you can see, there are many other thoughts, imaginations, feelings, and cravings—besides sexual ones—which must also be arrested and controlled, through prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit's power, in order for a Christ-follower to remain faithful to the Lord.

Frankly, I think that the current promotion of the acceptance of homosexuality is simply the next natural step for a culture that is heavily sexualized. Now that heterosexual promiscuity and adultery and divorce-and-remarriage generally have been normalized, homosexual behavior is a logical next step. (I shudder to think what will come after that.)

There are many other sad results of our obsession with sex. One result that many do not recognize is the minimization of other (non-sexual) sinful behaviors, such as those mentioned in the Romans 1 passage—lying, covenant-breaking, cheating, disobedience to parents, stealing, angry outbursts, and coveting what belongs to someone else—even though these, too, are clearly condemned in the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments).

Who Are You?

In contrast to the message of our heavily sexualized culture, I say to you today, on the basis of God's Word, God did not make you a sexual being; He made you a spiritual being, in a sexual body.

Your sexuality does not define you in God's eyes. When you get to Heaven, there will be no marriages and no sexual relations, but we will be, in this respect, like the angels (Luke 20:34-35). So take up Heaven's definition of who you are.

If you experience same-sex attractions, and treat them like any other temptation to sin, submitting them to the Lord Jesus and praying for power to resist and walking in obedience, you will find freedom and confidence before Him.

If you experience same-sex attractions, and, instead, choose to follow that lifestyle and identify yourself as gay, then you have abandoned your Christian faith, for Christianity allows for only one primary and essential identity: Christian (belonging solely and wholly to Jesus Christ), regardless of the temptations or distractions we may face.

(By the way, identifying yourself as a Christian may conflict with other identities also—such as your ethnic heritage, your nationality, your political party, or your family lineage—if any of these should threaten to eclipse or pre-empt (rise above) your loyalty to Christ.)

There is no such thing as a “gay Christian,” any more than there is a “white Christian” or “black Christian” or “American Christian” or “Mexican Christian,” or even a “Jewish Christian.” There is just CHRISTIAN.

There are no ghettos or barrios in Heaven. No ethnic neighborhoods in the New Jerusalem.

Jesus died to make all kinds of people ONE PEOPLE—Christians.

I realize that many churches don't think this way, or speak this way, or live this way, but it is what the Word of God presents. It is the life to which we are called.

This has been my response to the question, “Why is being gay a sin?”

I believe this issue is primarily one of self-identification, and secondly, one of misbehavior. In both cases, Jesus is the answer and the Savior.

Whose Are You?

To ask whether people are “born this way” or not is misleading and inconsequential; the issue is how we behave, and whom we obey.

We are all tempted to do many things that are inappropriate (unrighteous). To simply cave in because we are tempted is not the right response.

Adam and Eve had an inborn taste for fruit—that was not the issue; their obedience was.

The fact that a person was born with other-sex interests does not give them a “free pass” on heterosexual immoral behaviors. Same-sex interests, the same.

¹ John 2:15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷ And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

Whatever in this world may attract or distract you, surrender it to the authority of Jesus Christ and follow Him.

Let's really be Christians! And let's show it by our actions.