

Skeptical: “Why do Christians seem to be Homophobic?” 6/3/19

Nothing is more controversial for a Christian to talk about than this topic right now. Right out the gate when an LGBT+ person or affirming hears Baptist they **picture this...** For weeks I have prayed and considered **(Title Slide)** how I want to speak about this because in this room there are many perspectives, even among church going people, some of which is experiential and some generational. The way my grandparents thought about this sexuality is vastly different from the way my generation, and the one coming behind me thinks about it. In just 15 years the national perspective and laws have changed dramatically. In addition, sexuality is not *merely* an intellectual or rational *issue*, but experiential and personal *reality*. Many of you have family members or friends, as do I, who identify somewhere on LGBT+ spectrum. Some of you may identify as Gay or Lesbian, some of you may experience same-sex attraction, some of you may have experiences that make you question your sexuality, some are struggling with gender confusion. And I want you to know you are welcome here, even if you disagree or feel uncomfortable with some of what I say today. And so my desire today in this message is to speak with clarity and thoughtfulness as well as compassion and grace.

Before we get up close to the trees, we should back up and make sure we are gazing at the same forest. At Brandywine, we have a high view of Scripture- It is true, authoritative for our lives, and ought to be obeyed, that in its meaning and ethics that it transcends culture...and we believe it ought to be read with careful methodology so that we understand the context of the original writing, what it means, and how that is relevant to our lives and culture today. For some of you that is a non-starter, because you don't hold that belief about the Bible. So maybe some or most of what I say today for you holds no weight and I'm not really trying to change your mind on that, but what I would ask is for you to be tolerant and respectful of our views, because it is not something most of us arrive at subjectively. We actually believe this Bible is true and seek to live by it.

While the Bible clearly has something to say about our topic today, we need to understand that the Bible is NOT a book *about* homosexuality, or heterosexuality for that matter. The Bible is a book that primarily tells the story of a Holy God who came to rescue and restore an unholy people through Jesus Christ so that we can be in a loving relationship with Him forever in the new heaven and new earth.

What LGBT+ Affirming Christians/Churches Believe?

What does The Bible Teach about homosexuality?

LGBT+ Affirming Perspective: 5 Things

- All people are born good, innocent and perfect.
- God made LGBT+ people that way, therefore it is good.
- The Biblical passages that call homosexuality a sin are incorrect, no longer applicable or must be reinterpreted.
- Individual happiness, and sexual expression is a divine right.
- Our Sexuality is our identity.

Mayor Pete Buttigeig clip from From NBC News. Published on Apr 8, 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hViAbRitbmw> at 2:35

Luke Timothy Johnson, a well-respected New Testament scholar who affirms homosexuality agrees, but listen how he clarifies his position Biblically.

“I think it is 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.”

What does The Bible Teach about homosexuality?

1) God’s original intent for sexuality: One Male and One Female in a life-long, pro-creative, loving covenant commitment. This was the good, natural order of God’s creation at the beginning. (Gen 1-2, Affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6). This is why we support traditional marriage. Now I have heard Christians act as if all LGBT+ people are trying to destroy traditional marriage and the family and so they treat them as enemies, and Scripture like a political weapon. Let me just challenge us. Why don’t we focus on what we do ourselves to destroy marriage through men abdicating their roles as servant leaders, neglect, unfaithfulness, unjustifiable divorce, abuse, idolatry to our careers, bad parenting...

2) Because of “The Breaking of Shalom”, We are ALL born with desires and orientations not in harmony with God. We are all born with disordered sexual desires. I hear Christians sometimes say that people aren’t born that way, it is bad parenting....So does nurture play a role in sexuality, I think we would have to say yes it can and does, but that is not the full picture. It’s in our bones, in our DNA. We are all bent. None of us are straight. In fact, Scripture speaks of many disordered sexual desires and actions that fall outside of God’s intent and design, well beyond homosexuality...sex outside of marriage, pornography, lustful thoughts, fantasizing, adultery, rape, polygamy, incest, bestiality, pedophilia, orgies. And this ought to level the rhetoric...because, we can’t say those homosexual sinners out there and us heterosexual saints in here...a proper understanding of the fall doesn’t allow that. There is plenty of disordered heterosexual orientation as well. All of us are bent. Proper understanding must start with a good bit of humility.

3) Acting on and pursuing our disordered desires is sin, including homosexuality.

-Six passages in Scripture that address homosexuality directly. Three in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament. Genesis 19, Leviticus 18, 20, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Timothy 1. This tells us two things: On one hand, this is not in any way a major theme of Scripture. The Bible addresses the topic of greed 20x more than homosexuality. At the same time, just because it’s not a major theme of the Bible, doesn’t mean the Bible is silent or gives it a pass. For example, Bestiality is only mentioned 4 times, but I think we can all agree the Bible doesn’t give this disordered sexual desire a pass. It is not a gray area and there is a consistency in the

Biblical teaching on homosexual acts as sin. I don't have time to walk through them- "What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality" Kevin DeYoung. Even the majority of pro-gay theologians agree. One- After admitting that many Christians are eager to see homosexuality supported by the Bible, states plainly, "In this case that [gay affirming] support is lacking. Wherever homosexual intercourse is mentioned in Scripture it is condemned."

Now there is a movement of scholars looking to reinterpret these passages. Let me share with you the major argument that is being put forth today by proponents of a Christian LGBT+ affirming position, such as Matthew Vines and Dan Via.

Homosexuality in the Bible is not the same version as what we see today. Scripture addressing a harmful version, burning lust and promiscuity, where slaves were being taken advantage of, abusive, rape, the practice of pedophilia, which was happening in that day. The Bible does not talk about monogamous, loving same-sex relationships between consenting adults. The Bible and specifically, the New Testament, would not know about monogamous loving same-sex relationships, because that didn't exist.

The problem with that is the wide variety of evidence to the contrary. We have plenty of historical artifacts, pottery and writings from Paul's day and before, from the cities in the Roman empire that depict and describe adult, reciprocal, consensual same-sex relationships. One of the most renown biblical Scholars and historians alive today, N.T. Wright, while speaking about his conclusions about the practice of homosexuality says, it seems, "They knew just as much about it as we do. In particular, a point which is often missed, they knew a great deal about what people today would regard as longer-term, reasonably stable relations between two people of the same gender. This is not a modern invention, it's already there in Plato.

"The idea that in Paul's day it was always a matter of exploitation of younger men by older men or whatever...of course there is plenty of that then, as there is today, but it was by no means the only thing. They knew about the whole range of options there."

4) Homosexuality is not the "unpardonable sin", rejection of the Gospel is. I hear Christians sometimes act as if this is the worst and biggest sin you can commit and it is stigmatized. You don't go to hell for your disordered sexual desires...you don't go to hell for being gay. And heterosexuality doesn't get you to heaven. Being a glutton doesn't send you to hell and exercising and eating kale doesn't send you to heaven. What sends you to hell is a rejection of your need for Jesus Christ for salvation, it's pride...thinking you can earn it. What sends you to heaven is that fact that you can't save yourself, you need to be properly related to God through Jesus Christ. Disordered worship is our true disorder. This is beneath all the maladies of the world. Repairing this, through a relationship with Christ, not first our disordered sexuality, is our main business in life.

5) The goal is not heterosexuality but sexual holiness.

1 Corinthians 6:18

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

Some equate conversion to Christianity as conversion to Heterosexuality. That may not be the case and can be harmful...God is always after our holiness. You struggle with binge eating and gluttony, the goal isn't to pray your hunger away... it is to pray for discipline and holiness.

Jackie Hill-Perry in her book *Gay Girl, Good God* wrote about her journey with God in her lesbian orientation.

"I know now what I didn't know then. God was not calling me to be straight; he was calling me to himself. The choice to lay aside sin and take hold of holiness was not synonymous with heterosexuality. . . . In my becoming holy as he is, I would not be miraculously made into a woman that didn't like women; I'd be made into a woman that loved God more than anything."

6) Identity does not equal Sexuality or Gender, Identity is in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old [Identity] has passed away; behold the new [Identity] has come.

Again Jackie Hill-Perry says,

"Our sexuality is not our soul. I don't believe it is wise or truthful to the power of the gospel to identify oneself by the sins of one's past or the temptations of one's present but rather to only be defined by the Christ who's overcome both for those he calls his own. All men and women, including myself, that are well acquainted with sexual temptation are ultimately not what our temptation says of us. We are what Christ had done for us; therefore, our ultimate identity is very simple: We are Christians."

Church, sometimes we can make single point feel like the pinnacle of identity is marriage and having a family... and that anything else is less than. Just not true. And it makes an idol out of marriage, and it adds to feelings of marginalization.

We believe this is a sexually-faithful, biblical view. But I imagine many people struggle with this message, not because of the biblical arguments...but a much more visceral reason. **It just doesn't seem fair**, does it? You are thinking of a son or a daughter, a brother or sister, a friend or co-worker...yourself. "Why would God do this? Why would he give someone these desires and not allow them to be expressed. How can it be God's will to be unfulfilled for the rest of their lives?" I don't deny these are hard and real questions. Give us some pastoral thoughts:

1) Jesus does not call us to self-fulfillment but to self-sacrifice. Go back to my message on suffering a couple weeks ago. Sexual and relational unfulfillment of all kinds is a form of suffering, as Paul says in Romans 8 all creation groans like the pains of childbirth, and so do we. We don't understand it all and it's hard. But Jesus had a fondness for saying hard things.

Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

We have domesticated this verse to mean that we won't have 2nds or 3rds at dinner table. At the time of Jesus if you took up your cross it meant that you forfeited your life. And of all the symbols he could have used that is the one he went for.

The church has long known the pain of carrying the cross of persecution, infertility, injustice, addiction and singleness. The church is just starting to learn more about the pain of carrying the cross of sexual orientation. If that is you, what do you say to Jesus? Are you willing to deny yourself and pick up your cross? But here's where Grace comes in- You never carry your cross alone. He will carry it with you and ultimately he carried it for you.

2) We must carry each other's crosses. We must be ready to carry the cross with those struggling with this burden to bear. Which means we have to be ready to love like Jesus, not alienation, not affirmation- but full of Grace and Truth like Jesus was. Ready to walk with them and be known as a friend. Many who struggle will struggle with loneliness more than lust. The cure for loneliness and the desire for family is not always marriage. And if you are trying to cure loneliness through marriage you are probably setting yourself up for disillusionment. There are tons of lonely married people...swing by my office. **What we all need are deep, meaningful, loving relationships.** We ask the single Christian to be chaste, we can only ask them to carry that cross in community. We must be a loving church and hospitable church. We need to open up our homes, open up our comfortable circles we hang out with to be inclusive...after all, Jesus opened up his family to include a sinner like you! Would you let us walk with you?