

## **The New Normal? Understanding Same Sex Attraction and Gender Fluidity**

Homosexuality, gay marriage, and different expressions of gender are increasingly accepted in Europe and North America. There is increasing hostility to any who question this. Why has this happened so fast in recent years? Why do some people find themselves attracted to the same sex or confused about their gender? Are some people made this way? Does the Bible condemn it as sin? Is change possible? Does counseling help? How should the church respond? So many questions in search of answers!

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### **I. Where have we come? Attitudes to Homosexuality:**

- A. Hatred
- B. Health
- C. Healing

### **II. The Challenge of Love**

#### **A. Science and Same Sex Attraction**

##### **1. How common (US studies)**

	Males	Females
Exclusively SSA	1-2%	0.3-1%
Rep "Homosexual"	2-4%	1-2%
Lifetime Occurrence	5.2%	13% (same gender sex)
Some attraction	5-15%	15-25%
Reporting "Bisexual"	1-3%	2-5%
At least one s.s.sex ptr	4.9%	11.4% (in last year)

National Health Statistics Report.

US Department of Health & Human Services 2011

#### **B. "Liquid" "Fluid" sexualities**

#### **C. Beyond Gay and Straight**

D. Deconstruction of hetero-normative culture

### **III. The Shaping of Same Sex Attraction**

A. Between two worlds

B. Genetic influence?

1. Epigenetics
2. Possibly some influence in some people
  - a. Temperament?
  - b. Hormones?
  - c. Neurochemistry?
3. What is – not necessarily what ought to be!
4. Created or “Fallen”
5. Gender non-conformity?
6. Gay Sheep?
7. Psychological factors?
8. Sexual Abuse?
9. Sociological/Cultural Influences?
10. Interactional model

#### **IV. Assumptions and World Views**

#### **V. Another Story**

##### **A. Creation**

1. Genesis 1-2: Marriage
2. Complementarity of sexes in exclusive covenantal bond for life with expectation of children and creating secure environment for birth and nurture of children for the good of wider society

##### **B. Fall**

###### A. Need for fences Lev 18:22, 20:13

- Just exploitative or idolatrous sex condemned?
- Just part of purity laws?

###### B. Romans 1: 18-32

- Echoes of Eden

###### C. 1 Corinthians 5-6

###### D. Liberal critics

- a. Not unnatural for those who have only known SSA!
- b. Only refers to fertility cults or married men having sex with youths
- c. Not wrong if loving and consensual. Constitutional SSA not known to Paul
- d. Progressive liberation from:
  - e. Racism
  - f. Sexism and misogyny
  - g. Heterosexism

###### E. Other biblical themes

## VI. Christian responses through history

- A. Homosexuality the worst of sins
- B. Homosexual relations non-ideal but lesser of evils
- C. Homosexual relations God-given
- D. Creation/Fall perspective
- E. Homosexual desire a distortion of God's good creation as a result of the fall
  - 1. Homosexual orientation the result of being part of broken world where all of our sexuality is fallen
  - 2. SSA not chosen (sinful/fallen nature)
  - 3. The *ongoing practice* (in thought or action) is not the creator's intention and is therefore "sinful"
  - 4. Difference between temptation and sin
  - 5. Part of the struggle between sinful nature and new creation in Christ

## VII. Is Change Possible?

- A. Early research
- B. Religiously oriented approaches
- C. Robert Spitzer
- D. Jones and Yarhouse (2007/9)
  - 1. 98 subjects. Prospective study and follow up 7 years later
  - 2. 23% reported "conversion" to predominant heterosexuality
  - 3. 30% reported "chastity" + reduction in SSA
  - 4. 29% continuing change but uncertain success
  - 5. 15+% no change
  - 6. Change on continuum
- E. Conclusion
  - 1. Changes away from SSA and towards heterosexual functioning in some dimensions: 45-65%
  - 2. Majority do not experience complete change of orientation
  - 3. Changes on all dimensions:
  - 4. Males 10 - 15%
  - 5. Females 30%
  - 6. Change is slow and difficult

## **VIII. How can we be Agents of Redemption and Reconciliation?**

- A. How do we love?
- B. Gay Christians – Two sides
- C. Side B
- D. Spiritual Friendships
- E. Side A
- F. Gay Marriage
- G. Revisionist view of marriage
- H. Some consequences
- I. Following Christ

### **Some helpful books**

*Homosexuality and the Christian: A guide for parents, pastors and Friends.* Mark Yarhouse, (2010) Bethany House Publishing

*Washed and Waiting,* Wesley Hill, (2010)

*Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views,* Robert Gagnon, (2009)