

Homo- sexuality



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A quote from a newspaper in a country town, following the death by suicide of a young man:

“The tragic story of Nicholas, a young homosexual man who failed to come to terms with his sexual desires. His friends described Nicholas as an outgoing and confident boy who was always charming to the girls and popular with the boys because Nicholas had a sensitive side - always ready to listen, always ready to give advice. In his suicide letter, Nicholas apologised to his mother for the grief he would cause her and the utter desolation she would feel. But Nicholas felt alone, misunderstood and trapped.”

The subject of homosexuality has been very much a hush-hush topic for several generations. However it is now spoken about quite freely in spite of the considerable ignorance and prejudices about it. Even the mentioning of the word “homosexuality” arouses strong feelings of anger and hostility in some people, and revulsion in others. Still others, though not sure why, feel uncomfortable when they hear it.

Sadly, many people have already very strong opinions in regard to homosexuality and link the so-called homosexual with child molesters, rapists, prostitutes, etc. The annual Australian Gay Mardi Gras has done little to present the homosexually oriented individual as able to be a respon-

sible person in society. Dramatic media reports of homophobia and “gay bashings” have reinforced society’s prejudice.

I personally dislike the use of the label “homosexual”. Just as it is politically appropriate to talk about “person with diabetes” rather than a “diabetic” - to acknowledge that the person is more important than their medical condition, so also I believe that it is more appropriate to refer to “persons with a homosexual orientation or inclination”, rather than use terms such as “homosexual”, “gay”, “butch”, “lesbian”, etc. We are talking about an individual, a person with desires leaning in a certain direction, not a powerful freak of nature dragging the individual in its wake.

I truly believe that we ought to think seriously about the difference between the Biblical precedent of accepting the individual and the Biblical caution against approving with their behaviour.

The homosexually oriented individual faces rejection by the family and others, hostile attitudes of society, living a dual life - pretending to be “straight” and covering their feelings. The homosexually oriented individual faces a lowered self esteem, identity confusion, inappropriate counselling (even from “professionals”) and discrimination and other difficulties in school and employment. The homosexually oriented individual faces a lack of friends and appropriate role models, a higher risk of AIDS, isolation (especially in rural communities), and ostracism by religious organisations.

Further, Dr E Rofes in a 1993 study found that approximately 30% of gay men and lesbians have problems with alcoholism.

Homosexuality has been defined as being drawn emotionally, physically and sexually toward another of the same sex.

Homosexual orientation can present the same emotional range as heterosexual orientation - from mild sensuality to erotic intimacy.

The full nature and cause of homosexual orientation is still largely unknown. Many persons with a homosexual orientation that I have counselled believe that they were born this way. Others blame their circumstances on childhood maladjustment predisposing them to homosexuality later in life.

Reliable researchers have been able to agree on only one thing, and that is that the strength of emotion is the same as that for persons with a heterosexual orientation and unfulfilled desires result in the same types of frustration. Even the Bible recognises the enormous strength and power of these feelings when it uses the expression: *"...uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves"* Romans 1:24

For the serious thinking individual with a homosexual orientation there is a greater frustration in that homosexual desires are not able to find their resolution in the Biblically prescribed path for sexual fulfilment. This creates, both in society and in the homosexual, an apparently unresolvable dilemma.

The strong dislike of homosexuals promoted by our society is called "*homophobia*." This attitude among Christians, I believe, also stems from a misinterpretation of the passages in the Bible which talk about homosexual behaviour.

The Biblical record unmistakable reveals that homosexual practices were at least one of the causes of the destruction of Sodom. Genesis 19:4-11 describes how a number of men were struck blind when they forcefully desired to "know" (in a sexual sense) the angels who visited Lot in the city. The record of Sodom's sins in Ezekiel 16 (verses 48-50) includes the phrase "committed abomination before me", an expression repeatedly used for sexual sin.

For example, in Leviticus 18:22-25 we read, "*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination.... / Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: / And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants*", a reference to the cities God destroyed: Sodom, Gomorrah and the anti-deluvian nations.

The same expression, referring to homosexual behaviour "*committed abomination*", is used in Leviticus 20:13 where the death penalty for such behaviour was to be exacted.

Many argue from the context that such laws no longer apply, but I believe that no-one can really argue that God, who changes not, who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, is any the less offended by homosexual behaviours, irrespective of His way of publicly dealing with the sin.

So then how should we regard a person with a homosexual orientation?

In the 1989 US Department of Health Report on Youth Suicide, a Dr Gibson asserted that homosexuality is not a mental illness or disease.

Even the controversial proponent of homosexuality Sigmund Freud, in 1935 claimed that, quote, "*Homosexuality.. cannot be classified as an illness*".

In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the list of psychiatric disorders.

In 1975 the American Psychological Association urged all mental health professionals to remove the stigma of mental illness long associated with homosexual orientation.

In 1983 the American Academy of Paediatrics encouraged physicians to become involved in the care of homosexuals and other people struggling with the problems of sexual expression.

Just as the Bible makes a distinction between the sinner and the sin, it also makes a distinction between the person with a homosexual orientation and homosexual behaviour.

When we choose to behave in a certain way, God does not force His will upon us. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to

dishonour their own bodies between themselves: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator..

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use unto that which is against nature: / And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. / And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate (debased) mind, to do those things which are not convenient.... / Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” (Romans 1:24-28,32)

Although, as I emphasised earlier, the Bible makes a distinction between the person with a homosexual orientation and homosexual behaviour, nevertheless the seriousness of the behaviour is not diminished: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? / Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, / Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9,10*

But the person with a homosexual orientation need not be eternally lost as the next verse explains: *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:11*

Because the Bible repeatedly condemns homosexual behaviour, I must take the stand that, despite the strength of their desires (some would call it “needs”), and the emotional confusion, homosexual behaviour is still a matter of choice.

The persons with homosexual orientation who have sought my help as a counsellor have been successful in redirecting their orientation only by an acknowledgment of this truth.

Many have, years later, admitted they are still tempted occasionally, but they handle that temptation just the same as any other:

“Now all these things ... are written for our admonition ... / Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall / There hath no temptation taken you, but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

Although a homosexual inclination has lead some people to dishonour God by inappropriate sexual behaviours, yet forgiveness is freely available for the repentant:

“If we confess our sins, He [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Through many years of counselling, I have also repeatedly observed that freedom from a homosexual orientation is indeed possible. This fact alone reassures me that homosexual orientation cannot be hereditary.

Recent research has argued in the direction of hereditary because certain aspects of the chemical make-up of a group of people calling themselves homosexuals has been recorded as being different from subjects making no such profession. But then so too have certain aspects of the chemical make-up of people confessing themselves as being very religious been recorded as being different from those making no profession of religion.

The same types of differences occur in subject groups from artistic and non-artistic backgrounds, and one study drew similar differences when it compared lawyers and doctors with street vendors.

Our chemical make-up is determined, not only by our genes and our environment, but also our choices, such as our diet, career, religion, political persuasion, locality and also our social and sexual choices.

Having said that, however, let us acknowledge that a dwelt-upon homosexual orientation can cause chemical changes in the brain which take some of the freedom of that choice away from the individual. In this context the enacting of homosexual behaviours becomes an addiction.

It is this same compulsive snare that entraps any addict.

Dr Archibald Hart, in his excellent book, "*Healing Life's Addictions*" notes six essential characteristics of addiction:

1. Addictions provide escape from our true feelings,
2. Addictions totally control the addict, transcending logic and reason,
3. Addictions always involve pleasure,
4. Addictions are destructive and unhealthy,
5. Addictive behaviour takes priority over all other life issues, and
6. Addicts deny their addiction. (pp123,4)

When we read his list of addiction triggers (p69) it begins to sound like the lifestyle of many who claim homosexual orientation:

- ✓ *anxiety,*
- ✓ *isolation,*
- ✓ *boredom,*
- ✓ *depression,*
- ✓ *crises,*
- ✓ *sense of failure,*
- ✓ *unmet sexual needs,*
- ✓ *criticism and*
- ✓ *selfish needs.*

Once we are able to recognise that despite the strength of the temptation and the inherently addictive nature of

homosexual behaviour, such behaviour is a matter of choice, persons with homosexual orientation will be regarded the same as you and I who also have different temptations daily to challenge us. If we can claim to have mastered all temptation and become sinless we can cast the first stone.

Once we recognise that the person with homosexual orientation is not beyond redemption, then God can use us to help them to choose a better path and overcome addictive compulsions.

In research on homosexuality by Rosenberg in 1988 it was suggested that confiding in a friend becomes the primary coping mechanism in times of stress.

The support of a pastor or Christian counsellor who understands the nature of homosexual orientation and the difference between the misbehaver and the misbehaviour, can with God's help do much in redirecting these precious souls for whom Christ died. (Romans 5:8)

Dr Gibson, in the US Department of Health Report on Youth Suicide (1989) suggests that without support and understanding, homosexually inclined individuals become *"more vulnerable than others to psychosocial problems, including substance abuse, chronic depression, school failure, early relationship conflicts, being forced to leave their families, 'prematurely' survive on their own"* and more likely to attempt suicide.

On page 11 of his report, Gibson says, *"Suicide is the leading cause of death among gay male, (and) lesbian ... youth."*

Now what about the person with homosexual orientation who enjoys being regarded as a homosexual and chooses not to change, or *“not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* (Romans 1:32)?

Let us remember the many ways God strove with the Children of Israel. Let us remember that God is *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9) Jesus said of himself that *“God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”* (John 3:17).

Let us remember what turned the captivity of Job - It was when he prayed for his friends (Job 42:10). We should continue not only to pray for them but that God will somehow use us to help draw them to Him.

Who knows, but that one day, through our faithfulness and understanding, we shall apply to them the words of God as recorded by the prophet Hosea in the fourth verse of the fourteenth chapter of the book bearing his name: *“[And God said] I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from [them]”*?