

## ***Response and Responsibility of The Church***

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### ***Dangerous and Often Poorly Handled Issue***

- Hot button, watershed issue in our culture
- Complicated by social/cultural norms, strong personal worldviews and popular interpretations of confusing scientific and psychological studies.
- Fear of *public opinion*; 📖 Gal 1:10
- Lack of knowledge tends to breed fear and rejection
- An erroneous convolution of sin nature, predisposition, temptation and sin; failure to distinguish between sin and sinner; 📖 Jam 1:13-15
- Failure to love people; 📖 Mk 10:21a

### ***How Churches Respond***

The formal response of various Christian denominations and congregations to SSA and homosexuality varies greatly.








Several large denominations, including the Episcopal Church (USA), the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Methodist Church are experiencing internal conflict over the issue of homosexuality as it relates to biblical teaching and morality.

Others have reaffirmed a strong stance that homosexual behavior is morally unacceptable and have remained silent about the issue of SSA, reducing it to mere choice.

### ***A Biblical Understanding and ‘Gay Theology’***

Despite the fact that some in the Christian church would argue that monogamous homosexual relationships can be viewed as morally neutral, we would hold that to do so requires either:

- i) a serious and obvious misinterpretation of Scripture, or
  - ii) a serious and obvious departure from a high view of Scripture and its authority over the church.
- A clear biblical pattern
    - ✓ 📖 Gen 1-2 with restatement by Jesus in 📖 Mat 19:4-6
    - ✓ Importance of heterosexual marriage in the story of redemption
    - ✓ The elevation of heterosexual marriage and relationship between husband and wife in Scripture: 📖 Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs

- ✓ The strong metaphors of God relating to His people
  - God as Husband and Israel as wife
  - Christ as bridegroom and Church as bride
  - Wedding supper of the Lamb,  Rev 19:6-9
- Miscellaneous Scriptures that address the act of homosexuality
  - ✓ Sodom and Gomorrah,  Gen 19:1-13 and Eze 16:48-50; Jud 19
    - Revisionist theology suggests that the primary sins are a lack of hospitality or the act of gang rape.
  - ✓ Purity laws in Leviticus,  Lev 18:22; 20:13
    - Revisionist theology suggests that these should be considered as outdated with the advent of the New Covenant, much the way we handle the dietary laws.
  - ✓ Apostle Paul's list of sins,  1 Cor 6:9-20; 1 Tim 1:8-11
    - Revisionist theology suggests that the term translated as *homosexuality* is historically and culturally tied to the context of 'forced prostitution' of young men.
- Explicit and straightforward assessment of homosexual behavior as an 'indecent act'
  - ✓ Fallen humanity  Rom 1:21-32
    - Sexual impurity (v. 24) / homosexuality (vv. 26,27) / depraved mind (vv. 28-32)
    - Not sequential stages
    - The act of homosexuality is just one of many sins mentioned
    - He 'gave them over' is not to imply abandonment, but rather to affirm that man's ways inevitably lead to his own downfall and degradation, where God's ultimate desire is for repentance and restoration. See  Lk 15:11-32
    - Revisionist theology suggests that such desires are inborn and natural to some, and therefore part of God's creation of an individual. Thus, God will not reject what he has created.
- Some critical conclusions
  - ✓ We are not what God created us to be. We are all fallen beings in need of redemption, and having been redeemed, we still have a sin nature.  
*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*  Jer 17:9
  - ✓ Predisposition does not trump morality
  - ✓ An honest, accurate (and humble) interpretation of God's Word is the only reliable indicator of Truth (right/wrong/morality)
  - ✓ The church must be conscientious and diligent not to stigmatize the sin of homosexuality as some kind of unforgivable act
  - ✓ The church must be conscientious and diligent to legitimize the struggle that some have with SSA.

✓ The church must be conscientious and diligent not to convolute temptation and sin.

***Engage People (Don't Just Talk Through, Walk Through)***

- The church must be a place of acceptance, awareness and love of people who struggle with SSA.
- To the extent that a local church is able, we should attempt to help those who are seeking help; those who 'struggle' with SSA.
- Where sin is, there should be confrontation in/with love **and** a commitment to be a part of God's redemptive work
- This is not just some theological debate in the midst of a culture war. These are real people, trapped and struggling, and in desperate need of the transforming grace and healing of God in Jesus Christ.
- To be the 'salt of the earth' is to be an agent of God's redemption in the midst of the need.

***Practical Ministry Examples (Genesis & Bonds of Iron)***

<b>Genesis Group</b>	<b>Bonds of Iron</b>
Affiliate of Exodus International	Specifically designed for men
Men and women	Christ-centered connection, community and affirmation
Safe, well defined group setting	Group devotions and activities with OSA men
Emphasis on interaction with others and leader	Goal is to socialize SSA men with OSA men to facilitate mentoring relationships.
Striving to become more Christlike and be an 'overcomer'	