

Is It a Sin to Be G a y?

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<http://www.christianpost.com/news/is-it-a-sin-to-be-gay-76746/>

There are few topics more emotionally charged in our society today than the hot potato of homo_sexuality. It is out of this intense emotion and pressure that some ministers have been persuaded to proclaim that homosexual behavior is no longer sinful. Most of the people who subscribe to this new doctrine have a close friend or relative who struggles with same-sex attraction. It is a highly personal matter for everyone in that situation.

The Bible itself is clear on issues such as lying, stealing, adultery, murder, homosexual behavior, gossip, and greed....just to name a few. For some reason, only one of these seven offenses is no longer a sin according to those ministers who claim fresh enlightenment on the subject.

So is it a sin to be gay, or not? That all depends on what you mean by "gay." There is a big difference between having sinful desires....and choosing to engage in sinful behavior. One makes you culpable....the other doesn't.

You have not sinned simply by having gay feelings. Those desires are the result of man's sinful condition. Gay desires do not make you a bigger sinner than anyone else. After all, you didn't wake up one day and choose to have gay feelings....and it is very likely that you resisted and fought against this unwanted desire when you first felt its awkward presence in your life.

Likewise, it is not a sin to feel drawn to engage in sex before marriage....or to be tempted to engage in sex with someone else's spouse....those inclinations are other examples of man's sinful condition. It is not a sin to be tempted. It is, of course, a sin to give into temptation.

In the midst of all the hoopla over homo_sexuality today, there remains one true and time-honored approach to sexuality which pleases our Creator. It is not a sin to have an innate opposite-sex attraction and a desire for marriage....that inclination is actually the natural desire which God created within us. God made marriage for one man and one woman. God is not the author of same-sex attraction, because God is not the author of desires which motivate and propel a person to sin.

Why then do some people experience gay desires....while 95% of the population does not? That is a tough question to answer....and it's not like people haven't tried to piece together this perplexing puzzle. There are various theories on the subject. One thing is sure....we don't really have a satisfactory answer for why some, but not others.

Many people have overwhelming desires compelling them to commit one particular sin more than other sins. Those desires are part of our corrupt nature....our "sinful DNA" if you will. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, man's entire being has been messed up and far from perfection. We see this in the way his physical body slowly deteriorates and is vulnerable to disease....and ultimately death. We also see it in the way man's heart and mind are often inclined to pursue sinful actions which go against God's standards.

Did God create your sinful desires? No. God created your body, soul, and spirit to live for Him. You inherited your corrupt nature from your parents. In other words, it's like you were born with a faulty hard drive inside of you. You were not born in a state of spiritual or moral perfection. Your sinful desires flow out of your corrupt nature. That doesn't mean that everyone experiences the same sinful desires and the same intensity of temptation.

Is it fair that some people seem to experience much stronger temptations than others? No....perhaps not. But God has not promised that your temptations would be equal to or less than someone else's temptations. There are many factors and experiences which have contributed to producing your particular set of temptations. For example, the sins of others inside and outside your family certainly play a role in which desires you find the hardest to resist.

Faulty hard drives do not always create exactly the same issues in every computer that gets messed up. Your spiritual and mental capabilities are more spectacular than any computer, and yet, you still have issues. We all do. That's life on this planet....with sinful DNA passed down from parents to children. It is what it is....but that doesn't mean it is fair.

If you stop and think about it, life isn't always fair on other levels either. Many children are born into poverty, while others are not. Is that fair? Some teenagers have alcoholic or drug-addicted parents, while others do not. That doesn't seem fair. Why does cancer touch the lives of certain children, not to mention so many adults? We simply don't have all the answers to these troubling developments.

Most difficult situations such as these are in some way the result of sin being in the world, and in man. If there was no sin, there would be no disease. If there was no sin, there would be no poverty. If there was no sin, there would be no sinful desires to hold a grudge, worship false gods, or engage in sexual immorality.

That doesn't mean that your temptations are necessarily the result of some sin you committed. That is not always the case. Sometimes those desires just seem to pop up out of nowhere. It is similar to cancer in the body. Why is one person's physical DNA seemingly so susceptible to cancer, while another person can live 90 years without ever being diagnosed with it? It isn't fair. Gay feelings are just as mysterious, unfair and elusive in their origin.

God promises to assist anyone who looks to Him for help and for the forgiveness of their sins. God also gives His children this promise: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Cor. 10:13)

Where we go wrong is to assume that just because we have a strong desire, it must have come from God. Look at all the wrong desires that don't come from God. Is it a godly desire to feel driven to take advantage of another person for your own benefit? Is it a godly desire to look down on people of another race? Is it a godly desire to want to make fun of someone who is different than you, such as someone who has gay feelings? And so on.

Same-sex attraction is a puzzling reality. Having never experienced it myself, I can only relate it to the strength of opposite-sex attraction which I and the other 95% of us experience. Our sexual desires are just about as powerful as any desire we experience as human beings. How are we to respond to these deep desires which often seem uncontrollable?

If the standard for our life is our feelings, then sexual attractions of almost any kind can be justified in our mind. If the standard for our life is the Word of God, then we will seek to live according to God's clear boundaries in the area of sexuality. Is homosexual behavior sinful? That is a biblical no-brainer, just like so many other offenses in Scripture. It is not even a close call....like the other six sins listed above, homosexual behavior is a slam dunk when evaluating its rightness or wrongness.

Imagine going into a courtroom to face a judge after being arrested for a particular offense. What if you told the judge, "But I didn't think my behavior was against the law your honor." Would your wrong assumption be enough for the judge to drop all charges against you? No....of course not.

If earthly judges are required to uphold the law and punish wrongdoers, how do you think God handles the cases of those who assumed they were right when in fact they were wrong? Well....His Word says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12) Some sincere ministers today are guilty of inviting people with gay feelings down a road that leads to death.

It's just as perilous as if those same ministers were telling thieves that God no longer condemns stealing. That sort of revisionist mumbo jumbo is nothing less than spiritual poison, even when the messenger seems loving and sincere. A common misstep these days is to naively confuse sincerity and empathy with truth. How warped our thinking has become....and it only digs a deeper hole for us than our corrupt nature has already produced within us.

Sin hasn't only effected our body and soul....it has corrupted our ability to reason spiritually. Sin produces spiritual insanity within us. That is actually one of the most damaging consequences of having a messed up hard drive inside of us.

To say that any one of the seven sins listed above is no longer sinful is to become conformed to the world rather than transformed by Christ. Those professing Christians who affirm the gay lifestyle are not acting in God's love when they promote this sinful behavior. They feel they are being loving and kind and tolerant, but true and eternal love never contradicts the Word of God. Christ's love places the Word of God above human feelings and emotions, even when it involves friends and relatives.

That is probably one of the toughest things about being a Christian....if only God's law didn't apply to our unsaved friends and loved ones....if only those close to us were exempt and could do it their own way with no eternal consequences....if only our gay friends or relatives were allowed by God to get away with sinning to their heart's content. Why does God's Word have to apply to everyone? Because it is from God....and that makes it the law of the universe.

We can go with emotion, which is unreliable....or with God's Word, which is perfect and unchanging. God's law does not bend just because we don't get it....or because we were misled by false information. We live in a world where millions of young people have been taught that everyone gets to define what is right and wrong in their own eyes. How many souls do you suppose have been deceived and damned by that pernicious doctrine? One of the many dangers of wrong doctrine is that it only increases sinful desires.

To assume that every desire I experience is something I deserve to have fulfilled is an extremely misguided assumption. The world does not revolve around me and my desires. It revolves around God and His inerrant Word, even when that Word tells me that some of my strongest desires come from my corrupt nature and not from Him. Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean." (Matthew 15:19,20)

If you struggle with same-sex attraction, I wish there was a switch you could flip and make it instantly go away. I suspect you wish the same thing. As with other temptations which people face, the only cure is to confess our sinful behavior to Christ and ask Him to forgive us....and then by His power seek to resist those desires which are evil as we cling to those desires which are holy. Meditating on Scripture, prayer, and Christian fellowship are key ingredients to helping believers get on the road to recovery....no matter what temptations we find the toughest to overcome.

Can gay feelings be greatly diminished in a person's life? Yes indeed. As with other strong temptations, there are plenty of Christians today who have come through that tornado and who now live with relatively minor temptations in that area of their life.

For some, their recovery is related to alcohol....for others, it is connected to a spending addiction....and still others have found their temptation to pornography and sexual sin become much less than back when they were giving into those desires. Recovery is never easy....but it is going on all the time in the lives of disciples....in the midst of various temptations from one person to the next.

The first step to recovery is to understand the true nature of our desires and behavior. Once we accept that our sinful desires are indeed contrary to God's will and purpose, we are closer to asking Jesus to forgive all our sins and to help us everyday for the rest of our life.

If your strongest temptation has to do with gay feelings....or drunkenness....or pornography....or drugs....or revenge....or thoughts about adultery....or overspending....or jealousy....there is only one cure. Jesus is the answer. He is bigger than any desire which threatens to defeat you. Our desires can only be brought under control by fixing our thoughts on Christ and His Word. Every other approach will result in defeat, after defeat, after defeat.

Is it a sin to have gay feelings....or to have the desire to hold a grudge....or the desire to get drunk? No. Those desires present themselves because of our sinful condition, and because of circumstances in our life. Sin happens when we in

essence say, "To hell with God's requirements of me....I am my own god....and I will do it my way." That attitude has been man's biggest problem since his Fall in the garden....and man has continued to experience hellish desires within his heart ever since.

Years ago Billy Joel sang, "We Didn't Start the Fire." The truth is....we did start it....and Christ is the only one who can put it out in your life and mine. You can choose to curse God because of your strongest temptations....or you can throw yourself upon His mercy as you confess your sins to Him and surrender your desires to the cross.

Whatever you do, just don't assume that one moment of surrender to God will automatically make the sinful desires all go away. For many Christians, their strongest temptations remain at least a part of their experience for their entire life....and that includes Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction. They learn over time that whenever they give into that temptation just a little bit in their mind, that particular fire quickly blazes into flame once again. It is the most dangerous and difficult challenge in their entire life of discipleship....but God never leaves them to fight the battle on their own.

If Christ is your Savior, you can know that God is greater than any sinful desire you experience. If you choose to believe that, you will be on the road to recovery....and that road will one day lead you to heaven. Only in heaven will the hellish desires completely go away.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life....and He came to this earth to give His life for sinners like us. Your sinful desires, and your setbacks, will only define you if you choose to allow them to do so. In Christ, you really are a new creation. So go ahead and start using holy words to define your existence and your sexuality.

Whatever your strongest temptation, there is no need for you as a believer to wear a label which describes sinful desires, be it: "drunkard," "bigot," "adulterer," "slanderer," "gay," "greedy," etc. The New Testament never uses such labels to define disciples of Jesus. The real you is who you want to be, and how you want to live....as a Christian.

Aim high, and invite Jesus into your struggle with you....or aim low, and end up living in self-deception and self-destruction. Jesus never said it would be easy to live as one of his disciples...but He did promise to never leave or forsake his followers.

Don't fool yourself....either road you take is going to be incredibly challenging....whether you struggle to resist sinful desires as a forgiven sinner....or struggle with the strongholds that deliberate sinning places upon a person's body and soul. And always remember....only one road leads to paradise where there will never be even one unfulfilled desire. Wow! Try to grasp the beauty and magnitude of that coming reality for all who place their faith in Jesus and seek to do His will.

That is the path God paved for you when Christ died for your sins on the cross. Whether you accept His forgiveness and then walk on His path, or not, is up to you. Your direction and decision going forward begins right now.

I encourage you to spend some time considering the Lord's great love for you, especially if you have never done so. God's love begins to heal us from the inside out as we soak in the power and the wellspring of His amazing grace. Just because you and I have a messed-up hard drive doesn't mean we can't live a Spirit-filled life of peace and joy....even in the midst of the ongoing struggle. "For nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37)