

Sexual Identity, Hope & the Gospel

March 1, 2018

Introduction

Mark Yarhouse: Teaching alone is not a _____ for personal, relational ministry to people. Teaching can provide an important framework for a discussion, but it is not sufficient to address the struggles of individual young people today.¹

Adam Barr and Ron Citlau: For the last three decades, evangelicals have tried to stand against the tide. We have tried to turn it back and “take back” our country. It is time to realize something: the ship has sailed. The question is no longer *can we win the culture wars?* Rather, it is *how can we be a compassionate, uncompromising witness in a culture that celebrates what the Bible censors.*²

Understanding the landscape

Terminology

- What does the “LGBTQQIA” acronym stand for?
 - L- lesbian
 - G- gay
 - B- bisexual
 - T- transgender
 - Q (QQ)- queer or questioning
 - I- intersex
 - A- ally

¹ Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 31.

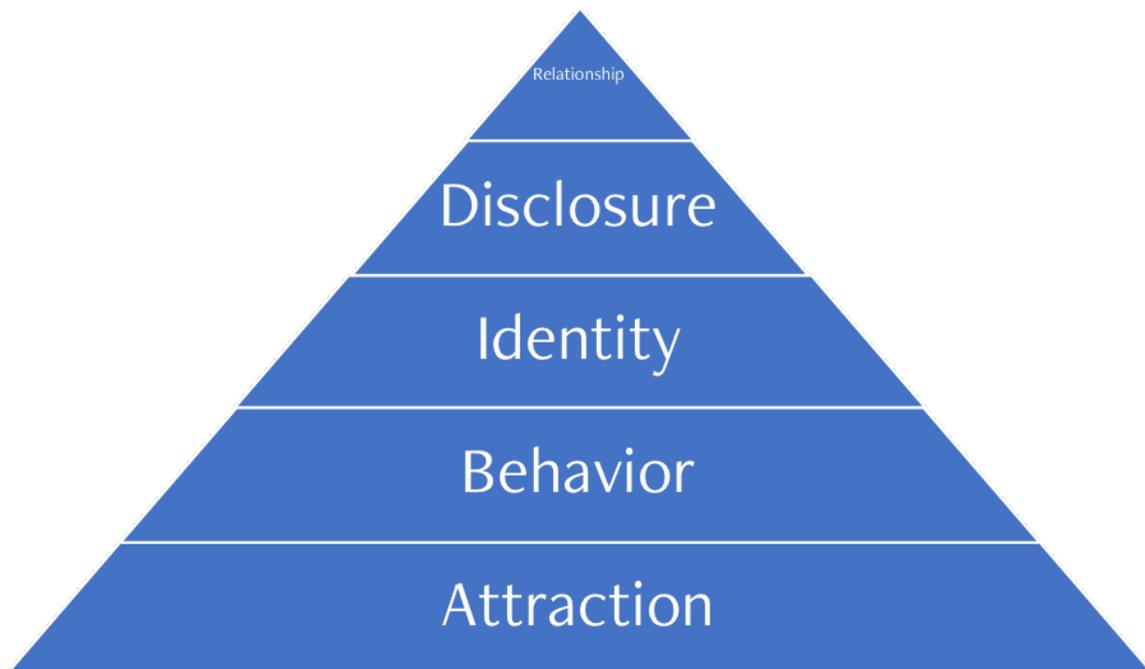
² Adam Barr and Ron Citlau, *Compassion Without Compromise*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014), 18.

- Asexual

It's important to note that people self-identifying as LGBT is fairly recent:

- **David Halperin**, *Before Sexuality: Construction of the Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*: "It was developed to describe something altogether new in history: a very spirited and energetic social/political movement of identity based on same-sex sexual relations and identity."

How does one develop sexual identity?³



- *Attraction*
- *Behavior*
- *Identity*
 - **Brad Hambrick**: Identity is a choice, one that should be made based on more factors than the persistence of a particular attraction.⁴
- *Disclosure*

³ Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 62.

⁴ Brad Hambrick, *Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should have Gay Friends*, (Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2016), 20.

- Relationship

American Psychological Association (APA): There is no _____ among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation."⁵

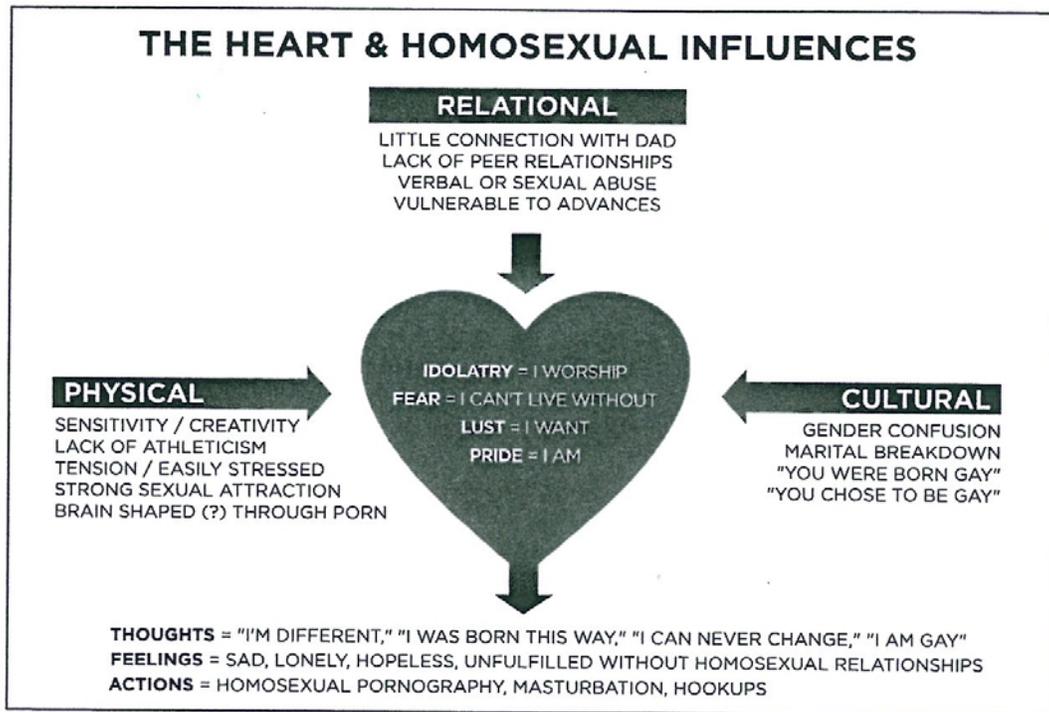


Fig. 1: The Heart and Homosexual Influences⁶

- "I was born this way"
- "I've always felt this way. I never chose to be gay"
- **Sam Allberry:** The kind of sexual attractions I experience are not fundamental to my _____. They are part of what I feel but are not who I am in a fundamental

⁵ <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.pdf>

⁶ Peter Hubbard, *Love Into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual and the Church*, (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Books, 2013), 37.

sense. I am far more than my sexuality...Desires for things God has forbidden are a reflection of how sin has distorted me, not how God has made me.⁷

What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Jen Hatmaker: Thousands of churches and millions of Christ-followers faithfully read the Scriptures and with thoughtful and academic work come to different conclusions on homosexuality (and countless others). Godly, respectable leaders have exegeted the Bible and there is absolutely not unanimity on its interpretation. There never has been.⁸

Alistair Begg: The church marries the spirit of the age and finds itself a widow in the next.

C.S. Lewis: When the whole world is running towards a cliff, he who is running in the opposite direction appears to have lost his mind.

Relevant texts regarding homosexuality

- Genesis 19:1-11
 - **Sam Allberry:** The account describes the men of the city attempting to forcibly have sex with two angelic visitors to the city, who have appeared in the form of men. Later parts of the Old Testament accuse Sodom of a range of sins: oppression, adultery, lying, abetting criminals, arrogance, complacency and indifference to the poor. None of these even mentions homosexual conduct. This has led some people to wonder if we have read homosexuality into the Genesis narrative, when in fact the real issue was social oppression and injustice. But a close look at the text makes it clear that homosexuality was in fact involved.⁹
 - *Jude 7:* Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.
- Leviticus 18:22: You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
- Leviticus 20:13: If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

⁷ Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* (United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2013), 8-9, 30.

⁸ Jen Hatmaker, "World Vision, Gay Marriage, and a Different Way Through," March 25, 2014. <http://jenhatmaker.com/blog/2014/03/25/world-vision-gay-marriage-and-a-different-way-through>. Accessed 26 January 2018.

⁹ Allberry, 24-25.

- **Kevin DeYoung:** The prohibitions against homosexual behavior cannot be reduced to victimization categories. After all, *both* parties were to receive the death penalty.¹⁰
- **Tim Keller:** “Old Testament Law and The Charge of Inconsistency”¹¹
- Romans 1:26-27: For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.
 - **Preston Sprinkle:** If I have rightly interpreted Paul, then this would logically mean that it would be more _____, not less, to encourage people to fulfill their desire for sexual intimacy with a person of the same sex. It may seem to satisfy a person’s felt needs and desires. It may appear to be the most loving thing to do. It may feel like you’re looking out for the person’s best interest and wanting them to flourish as human beings. But what if the opposite is true? If God is love, and if God wants humans to flourish, and if Romans 1 accurately reflects the will of God, then it is not loving nor would it cause a person to flourish as a human to encourage them to pursue same-sex sexual intimacy.¹²
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, *nor men who practice homosexuality*, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- 1 Timothy 1:8-11: Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, *men who practice homosexuality*, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.
 - *Homosexual sin is _____.*

¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 41-42.

¹¹ Timothy Keller, “Old Testament Law and the Charge of Inconsistency” June 2012, *The Redeemer Report*. <https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/old-testament-law-and-the-charge-of-inconsistency>. Accessed 27 February 2018.

¹² Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 102.

- *Homosexual sin is not* _____.
- *Homosexual sin is not* _____.¹³

- **Adam Barr & Ron Citlau:** As we look through the Bible to see what it has to say about homosexuality, we will need to keep something in mind: for the biblical authors, questions of sexual ethics were not framed in terms of “Does some behavior cross an arbitrary line?” The real question was “Does this behavior _____ the Creator’s plan for human sexuality?” If the answer was no, then the behavior was censored, precisely because it would lead people out of the garden of God’s blessing and into the desert.¹⁴

The Storyline of the Bible

- Creation
 - **Todd Wilson:** Put positively, all sexual activity ought to _____ and embody the one-flesh union we call marriage, for this is the God-given purpose of sex. Put negatively, any form of sexual activity that fails to express or embody a one-flesh union is out of step with the teaching of Scripture and outside the will of God.¹⁵
- Fall
 - **Wesley Hill:** Homosexuality was not God’s original creative intention for humanity, that it is, on the contrary, a tragic sign of human nature and relationships being fractured by sin, and therefore that homosexual practice goes against God’s express will for all human beings, especially those who trust in Christ.¹⁶
- Jesus and his perceived silence on the topic

¹³ <http://www.livingout.org/the-bible-and-ssa>

¹⁴ Barr and Citlau, 31.

¹⁵ Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 110.

¹⁶ Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 15.

- **Preston Sprinkle:** [But] when it comes to same-sex relations, there is nothing explicit nor implicit suggesting that Jesus _____, improved upon, or did away with the sexual commands in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. Nothing. There is no evidence.¹⁷
- **Gregory Coles:** Not only does Jesus speak against sexual immorality as Jews would have understood it, but he also _____ the sanctity of the marriage bond between male and female.¹⁸

*Kevin DeYoung on knowing your audience:*¹⁹

- If we are speaking to cultural elites who despise us and our beliefs, we want to be _____ and courageous.
- If we are speaking to strugglers who fight against same sex attraction, we want to be patient and sympathetic.
- If we are speaking to sufferers who have been mistreated by the church, we want to be apologetic and _____.
- If we are speaking to shaky Christians who seem ready to compromise the faith for society's approval, we want to be persuasive and persistent.
- If we are speaking to liberal Christians who have deviated from the truth once delivered for the saints, we want to be _____ and hortatory.
- If we are speaking to gays and lesbians who live as the Scriptures would not have them live, we want to be winsome and straightforward.
- If we are speaking to belligerent Christians who hate or fear homosexuals, we want to be upset and _____.

Glenn Stanton: If we are speaking to homosexuals who are seeking to live obediently and faithfully to orthodox Christian discipleship and its sexual ethics, we must be _____ and helpful.²⁰

¹⁷ Sprinkle, 73.

¹⁸ Gregory Cole, *Single, Gay Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 41.

¹⁹ Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 148-149.

²⁰ Glenn Stanton, *Loving My LGBT Neighbor: Being Friends in Grace & Truth*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 128.

The nature of change and the hope of the gospel

- *2 Corinthians 5:17*: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- *1 Corinthians 6:11*: And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- **Sam Allberry**: I believe that change is possible, but a complete change of sexual orientation is never _____ in the Bible.²¹
- Options:

- **Wesley Hill**: The message of what God has done through Christ reminds me that all Christians, whatever their sexual orientation, to one degree or another experience the same frustration that I do as God challenges, threatens, endangers, and transforms *all* our natural desires and affections.²²

Building Relationships & Speaking Truth in Love

Part of the difficulty evangelicals have in ministering effectively to homosexuals is that we may want to find quick and easy solutions to complex issues.²³

Recognize your own tendency with this issue

- **Caleb Kaltenbach**: Knowing and embracing biblical truth about same-sex issues should make us more loving toward the LGBT community than ever.²⁴
- Questions to ask yourself:
 - Does this person know that I care for them?
 - Do they also know why I disagree with the and they with me?
 - Can we maintain an honest, caring, self-giving relationship based on these realities?²⁵

²¹ Allberry, 46.

²² Hill, 64-65.

²³ Paul Brown, ed. *Homosexuality: Christian Truth and Love*, (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2007), 124.

²⁴ Caleb Kaltenbach, *Messy Grace*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2015), 98.

²⁵ Stanton, 84.

Being careful with our language

- **Rosaria Butterfield:** Here is one of the deepest ways Christians scared me: the lesbian community was home and home felt safe and secure; the people that I knew the best and cared about were in that community; and finally, the lesbian community was accepting and welcoming while the Christian community appeared (and too often is) exclusive, judgmental, scornful and afraid of _____.²⁶

Friendships are best for these sorts of conversations

- **Brad Hambrick:** In the absence of relationship, our theology becomes _____. Relationships always have influence, but when influence becomes the primary objective it deteriorates the friendship.²⁷
- **Rosaria Butterfield:** Even though obviously these Christians and I were very different, they seemed to know that I wasn't just a blank slate, that I had values and opinions too, and they talked with me in a way that didn't make me feel erased.²⁸
- **Caleb Kaltenbach:** We can accept others as family and friends without _____ of their life choices.²⁹

Don't be reductionistic in your approach

- **Caleb Kaltenbach:** When most Christians tell someone in the gay community "Stop being gay," what they really mean is "Stop having sex with someone of the same gender." Yet here's what the person who is gay might think: *You want me to give up my feelings, partner, friends, cause, movement, community and more.* Being gay is so much

²⁶ Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 2012), 5.

²⁷ Brad Hambrick, *Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should have Gay Friends*, (Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2016), 8, 13.

²⁸ Butterfield, 10.

²⁹ Kaltenbach, 106.

more than just who they have sex with—it's about friends, community, a cause, and deep feelings. It's about identity.³⁰

- **Rosaria Butterfield:** Sexuality isn't about what we do in bed. Sexuality encompasses a whole range of needs, demands, and desires. Sexuality is more a symptom of our life's condition than a cause, more a consequence than an origin.³¹

- **Gregory Coles:** When you say 'gay' in the church context, many Christians assume you mean the active pursuit of gay sex, probably indiscriminately and with a variety of partners. They envision the most promiscuous edge of the LGBTQ community, the archetype by which the rest of us are measured. At the very least, being 'gay' means that you've adopted a way of life, a set of behaviors, that you are having sex or intend to have sex at some point in the future.³²

Don't be timid to be honest about your convictions and beliefs

- **Josef Pieper:** Love is not synonymous with undifferentiated _____ of everything the beloved person thinks and does in real life...[nor is it] the wish for the beloved to feel good always and in every situation and for him to be spared experiencing pain or grief in all circumstances. Mere 'kindness' which tolerates anything except [the beloved's] suffering has nothing to do with real love...No lover can look on easily when he sees the one he loves preferring convenience to the good.³³

- **Tim Keller:** Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God's saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about

³⁰ Ibid, 191.

³¹ Butterfield, 31.

³² Coles, 61.

³³ https://www.amazon.com/Faith-Hope-Love-Josef-Pieper/dp/0898706238/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1417554362&sr=8-1&keywords=faith+hope+love+pieper

ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God's mercy and grace.³⁴

Listen to people's stories

- **Caleb Kaltenbach:** We need to learn to think deeper about people, because nobody is _____. Everybody is complex.³⁵
- Matthew Trexler's story:
http://www.covenant.edu/view/2014autumn/I_Belong_to_Jesus

*Deal with biblical descriptions and models of masculinity and femininity, not cultural stereotypes*³⁶

- **Sam Allberry:** For example, to imply that men are supposed to be into sports or fixing their own car, or that women are supposed to enjoy craft or to suggest that they will want to 'talk about everything', is to deal in cultural rather than biblical ideas of how God has made us. It can actually end up overlooking many ways in which people are reflecting some of the biblical aspects of manhood and womanhood that _____ overlooks.

*Give people more than just prohibitions; give them something attractive to say "yes" to*³⁷

- *Galatians 5:1:* For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

³⁴ Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, (New York, NY: Dutton, 2011), 48.

³⁵ Caleb Kaltenbach, "Christians Need to think Deeper about LGBT,"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFRc6D_F3hY.

³⁶ Sam Allberry, "Same-Sex Attraction and the Church," *GCDiscipleship*, May 5, 2014.
<http://gcdiscipleship.com/2014/05/09/same-sex-attraction-church/>. Accessed 13 February 2018.

³⁷ Nick Roen, "An Alternative Script for Same-Sex Attraction," *Desiring God*, November 20, 2013.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/an-alternative-script-for-same-sex-attraction>. Accessed 13 February 2018.

Cultivate and develop a healthy theology of singleness

- **Peter Hubbard:** Single Christians living in purity and community are billboards for the _____ of Jesus.
- **Sam Allberry:** If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, singleness shows us its sufficiency. It's a way of declaring to a world obsessed with sexual and romantic intimacy that these things are not ultimate, and that in Christ we possess what is.³⁸

Cultivate biblical friendships

- **Eve Tushnet:** If we took friendship seriously as a potential site of devotion and _____, far fewer people would feel neglected and unwanted. If we considered lay community life ("intentional communities") more seriously, and if we expanded our concept of family and welcomed single people into familial homes (for a season or for life), many more people could have the experience of living in a realistic familial love in which we all come first at times, and nobody is just there as support personnel.³⁹

Strive for relational credibility

³⁸ Sam Allberry, "How Celibacy Can Fulfill Your Sexuality," *The Gospel Coalition*, August 26, 2016. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-celibacy-can-fulfill-your-sexuality/>. Accessed 13 February 2018.

³⁹ Nick Roen, "An Alternative Script for Same-Sex Attraction," *Desiring God*, November 20, 2013. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/an-alternative-script-for-same-sex-attraction>. Accessed 13 February 2018.

*Resources

Personal account and memoir:

Messy Grace, Caleb Kaltenbach

Single, Gay Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity, Gregory Coles

The Secrets Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

Openness Unhindered, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

Washed and Waiting, Wesley Hill

Homosexuality: Christian Truth and Love, Paul E. Brown

What Some of You Were, Christopher Keane

Out of a Far Country, Christopher Yuan and Angela Yuan

Matthew Trexler, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/same-sex-attraction-life-giving-freedom-gospel/>

Jackie Hill Perry, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKZNstmc9Qg>

Jackie Hill Perry on understanding SSA, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTjxe_sWUGA

How Can Churches Engage Believers and Unbelievers Who Experience Same-Sex Attraction?

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/how-can-churches-engage-believers-and-unbelievers-who-experience-same-sex-attraction/>

Personal ministry to the gay community:

Loving my LGBT Neighbor, Glenn T. Stanton

Compassion Without Compromise, Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau

Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted, Ron Citlau

Do Ask, Do Tell, Brad Hambrick

Love Into Light, Peter Hubbard

Desires in Conflict, Joe Dallas

When Homosexuality Hits Home, Joe Dallas

Out of Egypt, Jeanette Howard

Restoring Sexual Identity, Anne Paulk

Biblical discussion of homosexuality:

The Bible and Homosexual Practice, Robert Gagnon (technical)

Transforming Homosexuality, Denny Burk and Heath Lambert

Is God Anti-Gay? Sam Allberry

Same-Sex Partnerships, John Stott

Spiritual Friendship, Wesley Hill

Ex-Gays? Stanton L. Jones and Mark Yarhouse

Understanding Sexual Identity, Mark A. Yarhouse

The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality, Joe Dallas

The End of Sexual Identity, Jennell Williams Paris

God and the Gay Christian: A Response to Matthew Vines, R. Albert Mohler, et. al.

Online Resources & Sites:

- Biblical Counseling Coalition: <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/books/lists/17-recommended-resources-on-same-sex-attraction>
- Association of Certified Biblical Counselors 2015 Conference audio: <http://store.biblicalcounseling.com/collections/2015-complete-conference-cards/products/homosexuality-compassion-care-and-counsel-100-00>
- Living Out: www.livingout.org
- Desert Stream/Living Waters Ministries: <http://desertstream.org/>
- Harvest USA: <https://www.harvestusa.org/>
- Spiritual Friendship: www.spiritualfriendship.org
- Compassion Without Compromise: <http://compassionwithoutcompromise.com/>
- Longing for Intimacy: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/longing-for-intimacy>

**Inclusion on this list does not equal unqualified endorsement or embrace of individual/organization's writing, belief, or editorial content.*

Appendix A

Questions to ask to understand sexual identity:

- Attraction
 - When did you begin to experience SSA? What was your initial response to this sense of attraction?
 - What messages had you heard about homosexuality? How did this impact your response to your sense of attraction?
 - Did you have anyone you felt like you could talk to?
 - If you felt it was wrong or awkward, what did you try to do to change it?
 - If you had a relationship with God at the time, what were your prayers like?
 - How did this sense of attraction change your relationship with peers, parents, church, etc...?
 - What would have been most beneficial or comforting for you at that time?
 - What things were most hurtful or confusing for you at that time?
 - As your friend, what is most important for me to know about this season in your life?

- Behavior
 - What did you do to try to change, offset, or satisfy your sense of attraction?
 - How difficult was it for you to differentiate between same gendered friends and romantic interests?
 - Were there veiled ways you tried to communicate what you were experiencing? What was your response when people didn't understand?
 - Did you change friends, dress style, music, heroes, or hobbies to try to live more authentically?
 - Did you do any research or find on-line forums to understand your experience?
 - Did you use same-sex porn as a way to verify if you experienced SSA more than OSA?
 - Is pornography still a snare for you that fuels a growing sexual appetite and makes real relationships more difficult?
 - What emotions were dominant when you acted on SSA and how did/do you handle them?
 - How did your relationship with God change with each of the things you attempted?

- Identity
 - How many features of your personality do you attribute to the experience of SSA?
 - How many of your personal interests do you attribute to the experience of SSA?
 - How many of your personal struggles do you attribute to the experience of SSA?
 - What groups of people or activities do you avoid because of your experience of SSA?

- When was the first time you thought “Am I gay?” and “What would it mean if I am?”
 - What forms of relief or opportunity would embracing a gay identity provide to you?
 - What costs or limitations would embracing a gay identity cause you?
 - Do you think it’s wise to make an identity decision based on a cost-benefit analysis?
 - What are the core values that you most want to weigh in the identity you choose?
 - How many times has your sense of identity changed since you began to experience SSA?
 - What are the sources of pressure you feel to identify a certain way?
 - Who do you trust to be most “for you,” more than “for their position,” in this process?
- Disclosure
 - To who else have you confided about your experience of SSA?
 - If you’ve trusted someone else with this information, how did they respond?
 - What would be the most important things I could do to help these conversations feel safe for you?
 - What are you afraid I will think or do as you share this information with me?
 - What form of relief do you want to gain by letting others know what you’re experiencing?
 - At this point, do you think of SSA as more of a struggle you face or who you are?
- Relationship
 - How did the two of you meet?
 - How long have you been together?
 - How have people responded to your relationship? Family? Friends? Christians?
 - What are the dumb things people say when they learn about your relationship? I would prefer to learn from their mistakes than risk making them myself.
 - Would you guys like to come over for dinner?
 - What do the two of you do for fun? Could I/we join you?