

Question 35—A friend of mine says he’s gay. How do I know if I am or not?

I’ve had the opportunity to have a number of young male patients, who during their teen years, have felt attracted to other guys and have begun to wonder if they might be homosexual.

I think it’s very important to point out that it’s completely normal and extremely common to be attracted to other guys when you are a teen. In fact, most young men feel closer to other guys than they do girls.

This is *not* to be viewed as homosexuality—and throughout history it *never* has been. I meet young men who mistakenly think (or are told) they are homosexual just because they are not yet interested in the opposite sex!—or because their closest friends are other guys. As a result, I believe that many young men are very confused early on because the world quickly tells them that such feelings indicate that they are homosexual.

When I was your age, I didn’t have any girl friends. All of my good friends were guys. I enjoyed being around guys and was uncomfortable with girls. Feeling closer to my best friends did *not* mean that I was a homosexual. Feeling closer to your best guy friends does *not* mean that you are homosexual. Actually, it just means we are normal.

There are a number of examples of young men in the Bible who were very, very close friends to other young men. None were homosexual. Perhaps the best example is that of Jonathan and David. First Samuel 18:1 tells us that Jonathan loved David, while 2 Samuel 1:26 records David’s grief after Jonathan’s death, where David said, “Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.” Does that mean these two young men were homosexuals? Not at all!

First of all, the Hebrew word for *love* that David used is *not* the word used for romantic love or sexual love. It is a word for *love* that reflects deep friendship and has clear political and diplomatic meanings (see 1 Samuel 16:21 and 1 Kings 5:1).

Second, when David compares Jonathan's love to that of a woman, he is probably referring to one of King Saul's daughters that he was promised after he killed Goliath. However, Saul added condition after condition upon the marriage with the motive of having David killed in battle (see 1 Samuel 18:17, 25). Therefore, the love and friendship David had with Jonathan exceeded what was possible from Saul's daughter.

Thirdly, the friendship between David and Jonathan was described as a covenant relationship (see 1 Samuel 18:1-5). So, David and Jonathan demonstrated what it means for two young men to be the very best of friends:

- They sacrificed for one another. First Samuel 18:4 tells us that although Jonathan was the heir apparent to the throne of Israel, he took off his own royal regalia and placed it on David in recognition of David's divine election to be king. Rather than being envious, Jonathan submitted to God's will and sacrificed his own right to the throne to his best friend.
- They were loyal to each other. In 1 Samuel 19:1-3 we learn that King Saul told his followers to kill David. Jonathan disagreed with his father and reminded him of David's faithfulness to him in killing Goliath. In other words, he stood up for his friend and his friend's reputation.
- They protected one another. In 1 Samuel 20, Jonathan devised a strategy to let David know of King Saul's wicked plan. While Jonathan practiced his archery, he told his servant that if he shot arrows to the side of the target, then

David was safe. However, if he shot the arrows beyond the target, David was to leave immediately and not return.

- Finally, they were able to express their emotions toward each another. After Jonathan shot the arrows beyond the target, he sent his servant back to town, greeted David, and the two men wept together.

In another Biblical example, we are told that the relationship between Jesus and his young disciple John was very, very close. John is described several times in the Bible as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (see John 13:23,19:26,21:7,21:20). At one point, John is even pictured as reclining next to Jesus at dinner (John 13:23). And, when Jesus was being crucified on the cross, he “saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple (John), ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home” (John 19:25-26).

The stories of David and Jonathan and Jesus and John are examples of true Biblical friendships between young men—friendships involving loyalty, sacrifice, protection, and yes, even deep affection.

The idea that the only person in the Bible described as *a man after God’s own heart* (Acts 13:22) was a homosexual (or bisexual) is silly. The idea that Jesus and John had a homosexual relationship is both ridiculous and sacrilegious.

There are some people who will try to tell you that homosexuals are *born that way*. Let me be very clear—there is *no* legitimate scientific evidence anywhere to support this delusion.

However, I've talked to some young men who in their heart of hearts have wondered if, no matter what the science says, they were 'born' homosexual.

I'm grateful that they've been willing to share this very personal information with me. My approach, rather than launching into the science, has been to say something like this:

Just as someone may be born with a tendency bent towards alcoholism or anger or lust or lying or pride—or pedophilia or sexual activity with a person other than your wife—it does not change the fact that the Bible tells us all of these things are sins. They are wrong. They run counter to God's best for you.

Being born with a bent to do something that is wrong doesn't make it okay. And, it doesn't mean that the power of the Holy Spirit can't help you have victory over temptation and your (and my) sinful nature.

So, I don't see an inclination toward same-sex attraction as being any different than a bent towards lying or gossiping. But, the Bible gives us the hope and the way that we can be set free from the penalty and power of our sinful nature when we turn our lives over to God.

According to the Bible we are all born with a sin nature. We may be tempted to lie or steal or be sexual with a man or woman outside of marriage. But, the Bible tells us clearly:

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee from sexual immorality.

1 Corinthians 6:18

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:11

The Bible doesn't find fault with us for the temptation, but rather for either lusting about the sinful desire or acting out on the sinful desire. If you are tempted to deviate from God's instructions to you about sexual activity, then you are expected to resist that the temptation.

For whatever reason, some people are attracted sexually to others of the same sex. But God has called it a sin to act on it and tells us to not hurt our selves or others by doing it. If we act on it and feed the flesh, it only continues to become an even stronger problem. But, if we resist the temptation, it will gradually diminish over time, especially if replaced with appropriate sexual behaviors with a spouse.

David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'"

1 Samuel 20:40-41

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

John 19:25-27

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8

Question 36—What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Homosexuality is one of the most controversial issues being debated in America today. Some denominations and churches have become advocates of homosexuality—while others teach that homosexual acts are morally wrong and stand steadfastly opposed to homosexuality.

When I want to know what God thinks about something, I look into the Bible—the Word of God in written form, inerrant and infallible, inspired by the Holy Spirit and *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

The truth about homosexuality, as outlined in the Bible, is that homosexual acts are expressly and unconditionally forbidden. The Holman Bible Dictionary defines homosexuality as *sexual preference for and sexual behavior between members of the same sex*, and says that homosexuality is:

... considered to be an immoral life-style and behavior pattern throughout the biblical revelation. Only heterosexual preference and behavior patterns are approved in Scripture as conforming to God's plan in the creation of man and woman. Moreover, all sexual behavior is to take place in the context of marriage. Sex is considered good so long as it takes place within these parameters.

The *Holman Bible Dictionary* also explains:

(The Bible) makes no distinction between what some today refer to as homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior. Homosexual desires or feelings are never mentioned as such in Scripture, but homosexual behavior is strongly condemned as a deviation from God's will for human beings. Therefore, it stands to reason that any homosexual inclination, feeling, or desire must be seriously dealt with as

a potentially dangerous temptation much like those temptations of a heterosexual nature such as the desire to commit fornication or adultery.

One counselor wrote this to me:

I used to lump homosexual temptation and homosexual acts together. I am adamant against all forms of homosexual acts. However, with the ton of counseling I have done with homosexuals, I have heard enough testimonies from guys who say from their earliest days they were fascinated with other boys and no matter what they did, how they prayed for deliverance, dated girls, etc, they are still attracted to males instead of females.

Therefore, I think it is important to distinguish between homosexual thinking/fantasies and homosexual sexual acts. To be tempted is not a sin. To give into the temptation is. All forms of sexual acts are forbidden outside of marriage—abstinence is the same for heterosexuals and homosexuals. Sexual acts outside of marriage for anyone is, “No!”

There are some people who say, *the Bible does not condemn homosexual acts—that only intolerant religious people do.* Are they correct? I don't think so, for Scripture is clear that homosexual acts are sin.

In the Old Testament, homosexuality was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:13), and was included in the list of sexual practices that were to be avoided (Leviticus 18:22). In fact, Leviticus 18:22 speaks of male homosexuality as an *abomination*—the strongest word used of God's judgment against an act. This verse is sufficient to indicate the severity of the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality.

In the New Testament, Paul spoke about how displeased God is toward those who practice homosexual acts:

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Romans 1:22-27

Paul also writes that those who practice homosexual acts—along with those who persist in certain other sins—will not inherit the Kingdom of God. This is incredibly strong language.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters, nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9

The Greek word *arsenokoitai* that is translated *homosexual offenders, homosexuals, or practicing homosexuals* means *a man (person) who lies with (has sexual acts with) another man (person of the same sex)*. So, according to the Bible, homosexual acts are clearly wrong.

Now this verse also teaches that those who steal or are selfish or repeatedly get drunk or slander others or swindle others are just as guilty of sin. However, sexual sins, either homosexual acts or fornication or adultery, have the unique aspect of defiling the sexuality of yourself *and* also someone else. To me, this means that sexual sins, which impact us *and* another person, have far worse consequences and are often more far-reaching.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 6:10, Paul says, *And some of you were like that, but now you are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by God's Spirit.* So the Bible teaches that there is forgiveness, cleansing, and salvation for *anyone* from any of the categories mentioned—including homosexual acts—who choose to trust Christ, to become followers of Jesus, and both admit and turn from their sin.

Some say that Jesus was silent on the issue of homosexual acts—probably because the problem never arose during his ministry among Jewish people. Yet, there are many other sexual acts that Jesus did not mention (including incest [having sex with a family member] or rape). Obviously, as the Bible teaches, these are wrong.

However, Jesus always upheld the Old Testament moral law (Matthew 5:17-19), which strictly condemned homosexual acts. And he affirmed celibacy as the only legitimate alternative to heterosexual marriage (Matthew 19:12). He very clearly taught that sexual acts are to be reserved for marriage between one man and one woman.

The Bible has a lot to say about marriage—the one flesh union of one man to one woman for life. The Bible is clearly in favor of heterosexual marriage. However, the Bible *never* says anything in favor of homosexuality. Therefore, even if, in the future, homosexual acts are shown to have a biologic cause, the Bible is still clear that it is wrong.

Theologian and seminary president Albert Mohler writes:

The biblical witness is clear: Homosexuality is a grievous sin against God and is a direct rejection of God's intention and command in creation. All sin is a matter of eternal consequence, and the only hope for any sinner is the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, who on the cross paid the price for our sin, serving as the substitute for the redeemed.

There are homosexuals who believe that anyone who speaks against homosexuality is wrong—even hateful. They give those who speak against homosexual acts or write about homosexuality’s negative effects a wide variety of labels, including *homophobic*; *gay-bashers*; *self-righteous*, *narrow-minded*, *bigots*; *intolerant*; and even *spewers of hate speech*. Are they correct?

Here’s what the Bible says about people who sincerely, and motivated by love, try to help someone deal with this temptation and overcome this sin:

*He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death
and cover a multitude of sins.*

James 5:19-20

The response of the Bible-believing follower of Jesus to persons involved in homosexual acts must be marked by genuine compassion. As a follower of Jesus, you should never aim slurs or unkind words at any other person. You can’t love someone and then ridicule or mock him or her by calling them *fag* or *gay*. The central characteristic of genuine compassion is love. And this involves lovingly telling the truth to those practicing sinful acts.

Some may try to convince you that the homosexual cannot change his or her sexual orientation because it is part of his or her very nature and that God would not expect him or her to change. The Bible begs to differ. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul says, *Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral ... nor homosexual offenders ... will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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.*

The Bible makes it clear that God expects us, as Christians, to cease committing *any* sin. God promised that there would always be a limit to the strength of our temptation and he *always*

provides us a way of escape from temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Our choice—every time we are tempted—is whether to give in to the temptation or flee it.

How should we feel about homosexual acts? First and foremost, our opinion should be guided by the best science and the best Biblical interpretation. To that end, Appendix B contains the view of the experts at the Christian Medical and Dental Associations that. I hope think you'll find it useful.

Second, I think it's important to understand that there are people who call themselves Christian and who hate and slander people involved in a homosexual acts. But hate is both un-Biblical and un-Christian. It has no place for in the thoughts or speech of followers of Jesus. I believe we are to, like Jesus, be friends of *all* sinners (see Matthew 11:19). We do not have to condone sin or agree with any person's *sin*. But we are to love *them*.

Dr. Albert Mohler wisely encourages us when he writes:

The church is not a place where sinners are welcomed to remain in their sin. To the contrary, it is the Body of Christ, made up of sinners transformed by grace. Not one of us deserves to be accepted within the beloved. It is all of grace, and each one of us has come out of sin. We sin if we call homosexuality something other than sin. We also sin if we act as if this sin CANNOT be forgiven.

As a young man who claims to be a follower of Jesus, you cannot settle for truth without love nor love without truth. The Bible could not be clearer. As a genuine Christian you must both recklessly flee sin and revolutionarily love those trapped in it. Ask God to help you develop both courageous compassion and compassionate courage.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:28-32

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And that is what some of you were.

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 Corinthians 6:9-11

Appendix B – CMDA Statement on Homosexuality^{1,2,3}



All people are loved by God. All struggle with moral failure and fall short of God's standards; and therefore need the forgiveness that God provides through Christ alone. Homosexuality is but one of these struggles. While recognizing the need to reach out in love to those struggling with same sex attraction, CMDA opposes the practice of homosexual acts on biblical, medical, and social grounds.

Biblical

- The Scriptures prescribe and promise God's blessing on life-long heterosexual union in marriage, and chastity in all other circumstances. They are uniform throughout in forbidding the practice of homosexuality.
- Same-sex attraction cannot be consummated within God's design for human sexuality. It is possible by God's grace for those with same sex attraction to live a chaste life. Choosing to indulge in homosexual acts in thought or deed is sinful. The Scriptures, however, affirm the value of non-erotic same-sex friendships.
- Any lifestyle obsessed with and/or dominated by personal sexual fulfillment, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is contrary to God's law.

¹ *Homosexuality* refers to male-male and female-female relationships.

² Unanimously approved by the Christian Medical and Dental Association's (CMDA) House of Representatives. June 11, 2003. This statement appears here with the permission of CMDA.

³ References can be found at

http://www.cmda.org/WCM/CMDA/Issues2/Other1/Sexuality1/Ethics_Statements13/Homosexuality_Statem.aspx.

⁴ JACQUE: CDMA WOULD PREFER WE USE THEIR LOGO AT THE TOP OF THEIR STATEMENT, IF POSSIBLE.

- Homosexual acts deny the God-designed complementary nature of the sexes and do not have the potential to be procreative.

Medical

- The causes of same-sex attraction appear to be multi-factorial and may include developmental, psychosocial, environmental and biological factors. There is no credible evidence at this time that same-sex attraction is genetically determined.
- Acting on homosexual attraction is voluntary. Claims of genetic or environmental determinism do not relieve individuals of moral responsibility for their sexual behavior.
- Homosexual behavior can be changed. There is valid evidence that many individuals who desired to abstain from homosexual acts have been able to do so.
- Some homosexual acts are physically harmful because they disregard normal human anatomy and function. These acts are associated with increased risks of tissue injury, organ malfunction, and infectious diseases. These and other factors result in a significantly shortened life expectancy.
- Among those involved in homosexual acts, there is an increased incidence of drug and/or alcohol dependence, compulsive sexual behavior, anxiety, depression, and suicide.

Social

- Homosexual relationships are typically brief in duration. Homosexual behavior is destructive to the structures necessary for healthy marriages, families and society. Men who commit homosexual acts have a high incidence of promiscuity, child molestation, and sexually transmitted infections. Homosexual behaviors burden society with increased medical costs, increased disability, and loss of productivity.

- Homosexual behavior can be self-propagating. Some homosexual groups and individuals engage in active recruitment. A child who is sexually molested has an increased likelihood of later engaging in homosexual acts. There is also an increased incidence of homosexual activity among children raised by same sex couples. Adoption into such environments puts children at risk.
- Legalizing or blessing same sex marriage or civil unions is harmful to the stability of society, the raising of children and the institution of marriage. If the only criterion for marriage were mutual consent or commitment, there are no grounds to prohibit polygamy, polyandry or incestuous unions.

Conclusion

- The Christian community must respond to the complex issues surrounding homosexuality with grace, civility, and love.
- Christian doctors in particular must care for their patients involved in homosexual behavior in a non-discriminating and compassionate manner, consistent with biblical principles.
- Anyone struggling with homosexual temptation should evoke neither scorn nor enmity, but evoke our concern, compassion, help, and understanding.
- The Christian community must condemn hatred and violence directed against those involved in the homosexual behavior.
- The Christian community must help society understand that homosexuality has grave spiritual, emotional, physical and cultural consequences. Christians should oppose legislative attempts to grant special rights based on sexual behavior or to equate homosexual relationships with heterosexual marriages.

- The Christian community and especially the family must resist stereotyping and rejecting individuals who do not fit the popular norms of masculinity and femininity. Also, it is important for parents to guide their children in appropriate gender identity development. For children who are experiencing gender identity confusion, we must provide appropriate role models, and therapy if needed.
- The Christian community must encourage and strongly support all those who wish to abandon homosexual behavior.
- The Christian community should oppose the legalization of same sex marriage and/or blessing and adoption into homosexual environments.
- God provides the remedy for all moral failure through faith in Jesus Christ and the life changing power of the Holy Spirit.