

The Bible and Homosexuality (Part 6)

Introduction: Please open your Bible to Matthew 9:9-13.

I recently became aware of a man named **Christopher Yuan** who has a remarkable story. Christopher Yuan grew up in a non-Christian upper-middle class home in Chicago. His father was a dentist and the plan was for Christopher to also become a dentist and join his father's practice. But after completing his junior year in dental school in Louisville, KY, Christopher returned home to announce to his parents that he was gay (1993).

His parents were devastated by the news and they gave him an ultimatum, either choose their family or choose the gay lifestyle. Christopher expected this kind of reaction, so he packed his things and abruptly left his parent's house leaving his mother on the floor in a bed of tears.

Christopher's parents had a bad marriage and were already on the brink of divorce. But now his mother, overwhelmed with having a failed marriage and feeling like a failed parent, had nothing to live for and planned to commit suicide. But in the amazing providence of God, these events are what God used to bring her to faith in Christ. A few months later her husband also came to faith in Christ. And it became her prayer that God would do whatever it takes to save her son.

With no more secrets, as Christopher returned to Louisville, he felt free to fully embrace who he was. He immersed himself in the gay community but his new found freedom quickly led him down a path of self-destruction that included **sexual promiscuity** and **drug use**. In order to support his drug habit Christopher began to **sell drugs**. And just three months before graduating from dental school, he was **expelled**. He then moved to **Atlanta** and became a **supplier to drug dealers** in multiple states. He felt that he had it all: He had money, he had sex, and he had fame.

But all of that came to an abrupt end when a large group of law enforcement officers showed up at his door and arrested him. While in jail he learned that he was **HIV positive**. He felt as though his whole world had been destroyed. But one night as he laid in his prison cell bed, he noticed something scribbled on the bunk above him which read, "If you're bored, read Jeremiah 29:11." Out of curiosity he read that verse. This led him to read the Bible more and more and eventually he came to faith in Jesus Christ while in jail. And even while he was a prisoner he sensed God's call to ministry.

Long story short, after being released from prison he graduated from Bible college and then seminary. Now he is a Professor at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and he travels with his parents speaking about God's grace and truth regarding biblical sexuality. He went from a prisoner to a professor by the grace of God. As I read and listened to his story, more than once my eyes welled up with tears in amazement and gratitude for the grace of God in that family's life.

As a Professor at a Christian college, Dr. Yuan has students confide in him that they struggle with same-sex attraction. The question that I want to ask you and me is this: How should we respond in that kind of a situation? If someone, even one of your children, were to tell you that they are gay or same-sex attracted, how should you respond? That is the question we will address

this morning in our **final message** in this series on *The Bible and Homosexuality*. That brings us to our **fifth and final heading**...

I. The Culture of Homosexuality.

II. The Myths of Homosexuality.

III. The Revisionism of Homosexuality.

IV. The Apologetics of Homosexuality.

V. The Response to Homosexuality.

It is vital that we know what the Bible teaches on sexuality. And that is what we have endeavored to focus on in our previous five messages. But this morning we are shifting gears from knowing to applying. For various reasons, it is easier to know what the Bible teaches on these things than it is to apply what the Bible teaches on these things.

Proposition: There are many good and profitable things that could be said at this point but with our limited time I want us to consider **five essential practical applications** when it comes to our response to homosexual people.

We begin with what is perhaps the most obvious application, but one that needs to be said...

A. We Must Not Approve Homosexuality.

We have spent five messages going into detail on why homosexuality is sin. We have demonstrated beyond any doubt that homosexuality is not compatible with God's design for sexuality. The **revisionist interpretation** of the Bible has been tested and found wanting. The Bible does not merely condemn abusive and exploitive forms of homosexuality, it condemns homosexuality itself as an abomination. Same-sex behavior of any kind is sinful. Also, same-sex attraction/desire is disordered and sinful as something that comes from one's sinful nature.

But with that said, many of us, if not most of us, know someone who is homosexual. And what sometimes happens to people even in the church, especially with parents, is that when one of their children or someone they love comes out as homosexual, they eventually change their mind on the sinfulness of homosexuality. Out of pure emotion they move away from what the Bible teaches and they become accepting of homosexuality.

Some of the more high-profile advocates of "Gay Christianity" have changed their minds about homosexuality because their children have come out as "gay." Listen, this is the worst thing that a parent could do. They think they are being loving in changing their mind but I remind you that love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, it rejoices in the truth.

As Christians, we do not determine our theology or change our theology based upon the behavior of our children or other people that we know and love. We must avoid ever building our theology or changing our theology due to experiences in life. We must ever and always build our theology of sexuality and our theology of everything else upon the unchanging source of authoritative divine truth, the Bible. And when we do that, we will not approve homosexuality as individuals. And as a church we will not support LGBTQ inclusion into our membership.

And so we must not approve homosexuality. That brings us to a **second practical application**...

B. We Must Be Compassionate and Gracious With Homosexuals.

Those who claim to be tolerant say that the only way to show love to homosexuals is to recognize that homosexuality is **morally acceptable**. That's simply not true. But even though we do not approve of homosexuality, we must be compassionate and gracious with homosexuals. Several years ago **the Barna Group** did research on the perceptions of the church by younger people ranging in age from 16-29. The findings were published in a book called, *UnChristian* written by David Kinnamon. The subtitle is: *What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. Some of the **negative perceptions** of the church include being old-fashioned, hypocritical, and judgmental. But the number one negative perception according to that book is that Christians are "Anti-homosexual." **91%** of those surveyed who grew up outside of the church said that is their perception of Christians, that we are "Anti-homosexual."

I have three responses to this:

1. While the church is to be "anti-homosexuality" we are not to be "anti-homosexual." And there is an important difference. But one of the difficulties we face at this point is that **our culture does not allow for this kind of distinction**. In our culture being a homosexual is who a person is. It is their identity. A person's identity is determined by their sexuality.

The **American Psychological Association** defines sexual orientation in this way...

"Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions."

And so when we say that we do not approve of homosexuality, **what the culture hears is that we hate homosexuals**. The thinking goes like this: If you don't accept my homosexuality then you don't accept me because that is who I am. My homosexual orientation is not a choice, it's who I am. That is such a misguided view of identity and anthropology.

Any true anthropology must begin with God. A person's identity is not determined by their sexuality but by the fact that we are all creatures of God, made in His image, distorted by sin, and in need of redemption.

Homosexuality's root cause is not genetic. It is not because of an absent father, a dominant mother, or some past trauma such as sexual abuse. It, like all other sexual sins, flows out of a heart that is fallen. In that sense people are born gay. We are all polluted by sin and one of the many kinds of sins that flows out of our sinful nature is sexual sin including homosexuality. And so it is a monumental tragedy that our culture believes that human identity is found in one's sexuality rather than in God. And so, the perception is that because Christians do not approve of homosexuality that we hate homosexuals. This is a very difficult barrier to overcome.

2. While there are some people in the church who hate homosexuals, in my experience, these people are in the minority.

ILLUSTRATION: On one occasion when Christopher Yuan and his parents were speaking at a church, there was an older man who was upset that the church was spending time on this subject. But he ended up attending the meetings and when he heard the testimony of Christopher's

parents loving their gay son, he said it was like a punch in the gut. He told Christopher that when he was younger fighting in the Vietnam War, that if he'd known another soldier was gay, he would have shot him in the back during combat even though he claimed to be a Christian. But in telling his story the older man's voice wavered and his eyes filled with tears and he said, "Today I realize I'm wrong. Will you forgive me?" He hugged Christopher and wept on his shoulder.

3. While the church should not be affirming of LGBTQ inclusion into its membership, we should be welcoming to all people in terms of seeking to love and help them.

In this way, **the church ought to be the most welcoming place in the world.** If a person were to visit our church this morning that I knew was a homosexual, I would be glad that they were here and I would **express nothing but warmth and love to them.**

What is the church? There are many ways you can rightly answer that question. But one of the best descriptions of the church that I know is that it is **a hospital for sinners.** The church is not a place **for perfect people** because there aren't any. The church is not a place **for self-righteous, smug people.** The church is a place **for broken people.** It is **a place for sinners** of any and every kind including homosexual people. As one person has said, we resist the activism but we love the sinner (Michael Brown).

If you have any doubts about what I am saying, let me remind you of what the Bible says:

1. God loves good people, right? Wrong. There aren't any good people. God loves sinners! You are a sinner who is loved by God. Therefore you are to love fellow sinners. You are to extend the same compassion, mercy, and grace to others that God has shown to you.

2. Remember the example of Jesus. One of the many remarkable and even shocking aspects of Jesus' ministry was the kind of people He associated with and showed love to. He was the friend of tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees were scandalized by Jesus' association with sinners because they did not understand the compassionate heart of God. In John 4 He sought out the woman who had been married five times and who was living with a man who was not her husband. When you look at the life and example of Jesus you see the compassionate and loving heart of God for sinners.

3. Remember also the command of Jesus to **love your neighbor.** Some of your neighbors in this world are homosexuals. We are to love them. And if that is not compelling enough, Jesus taught us to even **love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-45).**

ILLUSTRATION: As I mentioned earlier, when Christopher Yuan announced to his parents that he was gay, they rejected him. But contrary to the stereotype, after they became Christians they wanted nothing more than to show love to their son. After not calling home for years, when Christopher was arrested and sent to jail, he reluctantly called his mom. His mother had been praying for him for years. She sent him cards every other day each of which said, "Love you forever, Mom." When Christopher called home from jail he was afraid she would reject him. But instead she showed him love. She said to him, "Are you okay?"

As Christians we do not approve of homosexuality. But we do not hate homosexuals. We are to extend compassion and grace to them as God has shown to us. Part of what it looks like to show

compassion and grace to homosexuals is to refrain from bullying, making fun, name calling, making jokes about them. Obviously, the church should never participate in gay bashing.

John Wesley, “The world is my parish.”

The whole world is our mission field including homosexual people.

And so we must be compassionate and gracious with homosexuals. That brings us to a **third practical application...**

C. We Must Maintain a Gospel Focus.

As American citizens we have great concern about the degradation of our culture including the mass acceptance of homosexuality. We have great concern about the Supreme Court’s redefinition of marriage. We have great concern about threats to our Constitution, the erosion of our religious freedom, and the loss of civil liberties in our increasingly secular and ungodly culture. But as Christians these concerns pale in comparison to the gospel which is ever and always our chief concern. And so in every generation, including and especially in this generation, we must maintain a gospel focus.

I say this for at least **two reasons**:

1. Because in recent years **the goal/aim of much of “Christian counseling”** in the relationship to homosexuals has been about **developing in the person their “heterosexual potential”** (i.e. reparative therapy, orientation-change counseling). In other words, the focus is to help a homosexual person change their sexual orientation by developing opposite sex attractions.

But when it comes to counseling someone who is a homosexual, the aim should not be to make them a heterosexual. Why? Because simply becoming a heterosexual does not make a person right with God. Simply being a heterosexual will not get anyone into heaven. This kind of counseling and therapy is misguided because it ignores a person’s most important problem which is their sinful heart before God and it fails to maintain a gospel focus.

Sometimes in reparative therapy a person is taught to trade homosexual lust for heterosexual lust. There is nothing Christian about that kind of therapy. The lust of the flesh is not from the Father but from the world whether it is homosexual lust or heterosexual lust.

2. We must maintain a gospel focus because our mandate from Jesus is to preach the gospel. Jesus did not say, “Go into all the world and make people heterosexuals.” He said, “Go into all the world and make disciples.”

This whole series developed out of **Romans 1:26-27**. And do you remember the context of these verses? The context of these verses is the gospel (**Rom. 1:15-17**). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, including the kind of people that are described in **vv. 18-32**.

When it comes to inclusion into Christ and into the church the standard is the same for people. Repentance from sin and faith in Christ.

Christopher Yuan, “My biggest sin wasn’t same-sex sexual behavior; my biggest sin was

unbelief.”

David Dickson (ca. 1583-1662) was asked on his deathbed by friends gathered around him what he was thinking. He replied, “I have taken all of my bad deeds and put them on a heap, and I have taken my good deeds as well, and I have put them on the same heap. And I have run away from that heap into the arms of Jesus. I die in peace.” This is the hope of the gospel.

And so we must maintain a gospel focus. That brings us to a **fourth practical application...**

D. We Must Pursue Holy Sexuality.

The most important need a person has in their life is salvation from sin through the gospel. But when it comes to living the Christian life, we must pursue holy sexuality. Whether you are single or married, the goal is the same, sexual purity in deed and in thought.

Christopher Yuan, “Holy sexuality consists of two paths: chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage. Chastity is more than simply abstention from extramarital sex; it conveys purity and holiness. Faithfulness is more than merely maintaining chastity and avoiding illicit sex; it conveys covenantal commitment.”

Christopher Yuan, “If you’re single, be sexually abstinent while fleeing lustful desires; if you’re married, be sexually and emotionally faithful to your spouse of the opposite sex while also fleeing lustful desires...God’s standard for *everyone* is holy sexuality.”

When a person comes to faith in Christ, there is a decisive change in their life, a divorce, if you will, from their sins. Thus the Bible never defines Christians by a sinful lifestyle that they continue to live out after their conversion (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**). There is no such thing as a “fornicating Christian.” There is no such thing as an “idolatrous Christian.” There is no such thing as an “adulterous Christian.” There is no such thing as a “homosexual Christian.” If a professing Christian’s life continues to be characterized by a lifestyle of sin, that person is not a Christian no matter what they say. Because when God saves a person, He saves them out of their sins, not in their sins. True repentance involves hating sin and turning away from sin.

But with that said, when God saves a person out of their sins, does that mean they are now completely free from sin and temptation? No. In the life of a true and genuine Christian, there is a great struggle with sin from the moment of conversion to the moment of death.

So when a person is saved out of fornication or adultery, will they struggle with temptation to sexual sin? Yes. When a drunkard is saved, do you think he/she will struggle with the temptation to drink? Yes. When we think about the conversion of a homosexual person, is it possible that they will struggle with same-sex attraction? Yes.

Raise your hand if you are a Christian who no longer struggles with sin. As a new believer I was caught off guard by how strong the flesh is. Sin no longer reigns but it still remains. And the spiritual warfare we face with remaining sin is difficult, it is lifelong, and sometimes we do the things we hate (Rom. 7). Often times our remaining sin prevails over us.

Rosaria Butterfield, “If I still struggle against same-sex sexual desires, am I a gay Christian?”

The answer is no.

Christopher Yuan, “While researching for my doctoral thesis, I investigated some of the reasons Christians with same-sex attractions didn’t disclose their struggles, which sometimes resulted in them seeking help from the secular world. We evangelicals feel free to open up about a multitude of difficulties-pornography addictions, eating disorders, alcoholism, sex abuse, and so on. But many feel that same-sex attraction is the one thing they cannot share with another Christian.”

Christopher Yuan, “I’ve been teaching at Moody for over ten years, and every semester I’ve had students confide in me regarding their sexuality. They’re often struggling alone, and because of their isolation, some battle depression and even thoughts of suicide. They’re afraid that if they go to their Christian family members, to their pastor or youth pastor, they won’t find mercy, grace, and understanding. Unfortunately, that’s often true...Shouldn’t the safest place in the world be the church?...Our goal is to be safe *and* redemptive. But are we?”

And so we must pursue holy sexuality which includes being willing to help those who struggle with same-sex desires. That brings us to a **fifth practical application...**

E. We Must Stand Firm Against Opposition.

We do not live in **peace time**. We live in **war time**. In fact there are **three theaters of our warfare**: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And part of what this means is that, as Christians, we will face opposition from the world. We are saved from the wrath of God but we are not saved from the wrath of man. The world loves darkness. It hates the light. And when we walk in the light we will be hated by the world to one degree or another. It is natural to want to be liked by others and to be approved by others. In one sense, there is nothing wrong with this. But at the same time, the fear of man is a snare. And the desire for man’s approval can easily become an idol of the heart.

Like never before, there is a storm of persecution that is forming in this country against Christians. And much of it is directed against the biblical design for marriage, family, gender, and sexuality. We are faced with **two options**: Fear man and compromise the truth of God. Or stand firm in God’s truth against the world’s opposition.

Beloved, we are called to suffer hardship as good soldiers of Christ (2 Tim. 2). And part of what that means is that we must refuse to compromise. We refuse to deny our Lord and His truth in the face of opposition. As a Christian and as a pastor, there is one thing that I really hate, and that is **cowardice and compromise**. But sadly, cowardice and compromise abound in the church today. For example, it is very popular these days for evangelical leaders to denounce things like racism and America’s past involvement in slavery. But there is nothing brave about taking such a stance because it’s the popular thing to do. Many of these same people are either **silent or compromised** when it comes to other issues such as CRT and homosexuality.

Hensworth Jonas, “John the Baptist lost his head; but he kept his voice. Many today are so determined to keep their head, that they have lost their voice.”

We need more John the Baptists! We must have a tender heart and a backbone of steel.

As Christians, we don't look for trouble. We are lovers of peace. We don't go out of our way to court controversy. But neither do we compromise when opposed by the world.

Martin Luther, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking I am not confessing Christ however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

Right now the battle is raging in matters of sexuality. And today the loyalty of the soldier is proven in this arena. Our culture will not allow you to be neutral when it comes to sexuality. You will either embrace the world's view of sexuality or you will embrace the God's view of sexuality. There is no third way. And there is no new world that we can flee to escape these things.

Dear people of God, may you be steady on the battlefield and not flinch at this point. May you not live in fear because you belong to the Lord of all.

Jesus is ever and always building His church and the gates of hades will not prevail. You belong to a King who cannot be defeated, whose purposes cannot fail, and whose kingdom cannot be shaken.

You must not ever be willing to compromise God's truth even in the face of suffering.

May we all be able to sing with Luther, "Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also. The body they may kill. But God's truth abideth still. His Kingdom is forever."