

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR

It is clear from God's Word that when sin entered the world, the nature of man changed from a perfect image of God to that of a sin-filled creature worthy only of death and damnation. This sinful nature made humankind capable of and prone toward every conceivable kind of sin and evil.

Being prone toward homosexual sin is one of the results of sin entering the world. We know that homosexual lust and homosexual acts are sin. The Word tells us that homosexuality is a perversion of the way God our Father intended us to be.

The initial focus of this paper will concentrate on how original sin negatively influences relationships. Discussion will include the fact that original sin causes the young Christian to have a weak self-image based on misbeliefs. Original sin also leads to confused ideas on how to fulfill the two basic human needs: to feel loved and to feel worthwhile.

This paper will continue by focusing on developmental issues that may lead the young person into homosexual experimentation and/or development of a homosexual lifestyle. The "typical" homosexual will be discussed. And guidelines will be given on how to help the person struggling with homosexual temptation, or the person already trapped by homosexual sin.

ORIGINAL SIN - THE "ROOT" CAUSE

Original sin manifests itself in the life of every believer, but more intensely in the life of a young person. Original sin causes the young person to experience problems in developing healthy relationships. Young people's sinful nature causes them to be at odds with God and his perfect will. They find their relationship with him hindered every time they give in to temptation.

Their sinful nature also causes them to be at odds with others, so they are unable to effectively communicate, to share or to give and receive love. And their sinful nature also causes them to be at odds with themselves, as they discover they are unable to control their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

These broken relationships create a self-image based on misbeliefs and confused ideas on how to satisfy basic human needs of feeling loved and worthwhile. Young people, immature in Christian faith, lacking adequate relationships, and struggling with a confused self-image, may be tempted to fulfill their basic needs by temporary and artificial means. The young person longing to feel loved and worthwhile may be especially vulnerable to homosexual experimentation, drug or alcohol abuse, or any other sin that deceptively creates a temporary feeling of satisfaction.

PARENTAL INFLUENCE - ANOTHER CAUSATIVE FACTOR

A second important factor that may lead the young person into homosexual experimentation or into a life of homosexual sin is parental influence. God gave parents the responsibility to "train up a child in the way he should go." When parental roles are confused, and/or when parents do not exercise their responsibilities toward their children in the home, the results can be disastrous.

A passive, absent or overly strict and domineering father is not showing his children proper fatherly love or giving them a proper masculine role model to which they can relate positively. Likewise, an over-protective, possessive, "smother-mother", or an overly domineering mother who assumes the leadership role in the home, is not providing her children with a positive feminine role model.

Inadequate discipline and training, and confused sex role identification does not always lead the young person into homosexual temptation or sin. However, boys normally learn appropriate male behavior through the love, example and nurturing of the fathers in proper relationship to their mothers. Little girls normally learn appropriate female behavior through the love, example and nurturing of their mothers in proper relationship to their fathers.

The single parent faces special issues in this area. The single parent must make special effort to connect the young person with a same sex role model. extended family members including grandparents, aunts and uncles may be an option. Big Brother - Big Sister programs, church youth leaders or other special community programs may be other sources the single parent can look into so their children can meet this need.

MASTURBATION - A THIRD FACTOR

A third cause of homosexually-oriented behavior is "masturbation rehearsal fantasy." The previous causative factors may have led the young adolescent into experimental sex with a same sex peer or perhaps made them susceptible to the advances of an older same sex sibling or acquaintance. The pleasurable feelings of closeness, warmth, affection, and physical stimulation are remembered and rehearsed over and over in his or her own masturbation fantasies.

Indoctrination of the impressionable young persons' mind into thinking homosexual thoughts, experiencing homosexual desires, and planning homosexual encounters takes little time.

FAULTY BELIEF SYSTEM - A FOURTH FACTOR

A fourth causative factor in the development of repetitive homosexual sin is a "faulty belief system," simply defined, is believing notions which are just not true. A poorly developed self-image, poor sex role identification, sexual experimentation with members of the same sex, and masturbation rehearsal fantasy may all lead the young person to be convinced that the only way to feel loved and to feel worthwhile is through continued homosexual activity.

Homosexual advances become synonymous with feeling worthwhile to others, and sexual orgasm becomes synonymous with feeling cared for and loved. The spiral pathway descending into the pit of a homosexual lifestyle becomes a familiar road. The further on that path a person goes the more their genuine needs go unfulfilled. Temporary, artificial satisfaction lures them down that path leading to self-degradation, increasing eroticism, and may ultimately result in eternal separation from God. People can experience freedom from sin when they have replaced those faulty beliefs with truths - truths based on God's Word.

Sinful human nature, sinful responses and choices, sinful thoughts, and sinful belief patterns separate and alienate the homosexual from God, from others, and even from himself. Repetitive homosexual sin on the part of a Christian would certainly hinder, if not prevent, the work of the Holy Spirit and endanger the survival of saving faith. By labeling this behavior sin we are extending hope to the person involved, - hope for forgiveness in Christ, for change through Christ, and for strength from Christ.

THE "TYPICAL" HOMOSEXUAL

A percentage of the homosexual population exhibit mannerisms indicative of the opposite sex. Some homosexual men may be "limp wristed" and effeminate in many ways. Some homosexual women may dress "butch" and appear to have male characteristics. Another percentage of homosexuals may be aggressive, domineering, or even prone to violence in the pursuit of sexual gratification. However, most homosexual men and women are pretty much like you and me - they are people - but, they are people with a problem. They are people caught up in a pattern of homosexual sin. They are people whose sin drives them from within. They are people who need the Word of God to work change in their lives. They are people who need to realize their behavior is against God's Word and God's design for humanity. They are people who need the unconditional love of God as a reality in their lives as they receive forgiveness of their sin through faith in Jesus.

Homosexuals are people who, like the rest of us, have feelings. They experience joy and happiness; they experience sadness and pain. They feel the need for belonging and companionship, and when these needs are inappropriately met, they feel rejection, loneliness and guilt.

Homosexuals are not people who need more of the grace of God than anyone else. They do not need more forgiveness than anyone else. They do not need pity. They need to hear that their sin, like everyone else's sin, needs to be repented of and forgiven by God. They, like everyone else, need to hear that new life is available in Christ.

the primary difference between the typical homosexual and the typical heterosexual is their relationships. Because the homosexual relationship is contrary to God's design it is a dependent, self-satisfying relationship.

Homosexuals are dependent upon their partners for the fulfillment of all their emotional needs. The dependent nature of the homosexual causes them to cling to the very thing that leads them into further dependency - homosexual sin. Sadly, this dependency spills into all relationships the homosexual has, often driving away heterosexual friends, family, fellow church members, and others, who could be of help. The homosexual, faced with being alone, turns to other dependent homosexuals, always trying to satisfy the craving for love and belonging.

HOW TO HELP THOSE EXPERIENCING TEMPTATION OR ALREADY INVOLVED IN SIN

Begin by listening. Listen to the facts and listen to the feelings. Learn as much as you can about the persons' experiences with homosexual thoughts or practices. How long has the activity been going on? What is the current level of homosexual involvement? What has the person done about it - kept it a secret? justified it? tried to stop it? Find out where the person is in their relationship to God. Does he/she embrace his Word as truth and desire to lead a God-pleasing life? Has the person wrestled with continuing temptation and weakness, followed by feelings of guilt and remorse? Gaining this information will help the pastor-counselor determine how to proceed. The contrite Christian needs to hear of God's forgiveness and the counselor's compassion and suggestions for change. Trust and confidence must be nurtured in order for the homosexual to be honest and open in sharing their deep, dark sins. This can best be accomplished over time, in a non-judgmental atmosphere while setting reasonable goals that lead to repentance and resolution of the past and commitment to change for the future.

Some Christians may view their homosexual "preference" as normal and may view their homosexual behavior as "right" when practiced in an atmosphere of "love." These Christians must be shown that homosexuality is contrary to God's Word and does not coincide with God's design for men or women. They must also come to realize that purposefully committed sin is spiritually damaging and will lead to loss of faith and eternal damnation in hell.

The pastor-counselor must teach such persons that they are to live their lives in loving response to what God did for us all in sending his Son. They must teach them that Christians respond to the love of God through obedience to his guiding Word.

through this teaching the Christian realizes his or her need to repent and put-off those thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors that lead into homosexual sin. Thoughts must no longer dwell on selfish gratification or on planning sexual encounters. Rather the Christian should think of ways to lead a God-pleasing life, to serve their Lord, minister to the needs of others and meditate on the Word.

What we believe about ourselves to be true should center on our redeemed position in Christ, realizing that we are crucified with Christ, bought with a price, and justified freely by grace. This realization also shows Christians that the new man is dead to the power

of sin and in Christ a new creation. Sin can no longer make the Christian fall. Through God's grace the Christian can choose to no longer impulsively follow fleshly desires.

Repentance also involves changed behavior. Along with maintaining pure thoughts, and regarding oneself as redeemed, justified and sanctified, the Christian is led to behave in a manner that reflects his/her faith. The Holy Spirit will empower the Christian who continues to experience homosexual temptation to break off all homosexual relationships, stop frequenting homosexual haunts, and stop other activities that lead to homosexual contact (e.g. trips to metro areas where anonymity may be insured.)

Maintaining pure thoughts, reordering basic beliefs regarding oneself, daily exercise and a regular prayer life can also help curb the habit of masturbation. Developing a variety of intimate non-sexual relationships with people of the same or opposite sex, and improving relationships within the person's immediate and extended family helps to satisfy basic emotional needs, further reducing the need for self-gratification in masturbation.

Tremendous gaps in the persons' life will develop as the homosexual relationships and activities come to an end. The pastor-counselor should encourage the person to develop new friendships, enhance relationships with family members, join new groups, develop new routines and new interests. Putting off old behaviors must be followed by putting on new behaviors. If the person has been involved in the homosexual lifestyle for many years, the pastor-counselor may need to help teach new social skills so the person can develop "straight" friends and heterosexual relationships.

Through this struggle to change the Christian must be encouraged to abide in God's Word through daily study, develop a regular prayer life, and to become immersed in the love, support, and protection of the fellowship of believers. Temptation will continue. The reformed homosexual is likely to fall. Leading the counselee to appropriate the power of God's grace and forgiveness through the encouragement of the Word is the ongoing responsibility of the Christian pastor and counselor.

POINTS TO PONDER

- 1) Many are repulsed by the very mention of the word homosexual. Many cringe at the thought of counseling a person with this problem. These feelings affect one's ability to minister to homosexuals. Don't be afraid to refer to another Christian counselor who has had more experience or is more comfortable working with homosexuals.
- 2) Not all homosexuals fit the developmental pattern of poor self-image, poor sex role identification, masturbation rehearsal fantasy, and faulty belief system. However, any person experiencing problems with sexual deviation of any kind is not having their basic needs of feeling loved and

feeling worthwhile satisfied through normal God-pleasing relationships.

- 3) Some authors refer to homosexuality as a "life-dominating" sin. It is possible for such a sin to negatively effect every area of one's life, including social contacts, finances, time management, physical health, and, of course, spiritual well-being. Many issues may need to be explored in the counseling process.
- 4) Someone practicing a sin for many years develops a weak conscience in that area. The repentant homosexual must be shown that his/her conscience is too weak and confused to guide them in this area. Their total dependency must rest on God's Word to define right and wrong.
- 5) Many books on this topic are available in local Christian book stores. Among the best is one by Dr. Tim LaHaye, What Everyone Should Know About Homosexuality, Tyndale House.

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