

Homosexuality

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 October 2019

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0:00] Let me start that. All right, we are in our fourth session of our class on gender and sexuality, and I have just put the overall shape of the class on the front again. I'm not going to go over it, but there's a flow to this class. We're sort of trying to work within the biblical story of how we're created by God, corrupted by sin, redeemed by Christ, and awaiting glory.

So, in the next few weeks, what we're going to do is take some challenging topics that we face sort of as we live in the midst of a broken world and as we look forward to the redemption that Christ has promised.

So, again, briefly where we've been. The first week we talked about how we're both beautiful and broken, made in God's image, but broken by sin. And then we looked at how Christ has come to redeem us, including our bodies, and that can look like marriage can bear witness to Christ's redemption, and a life of consecrated Christian singleness can bear witness to Christ's redemption.

We looked at the different ways that the church needs both single and married people living their lives devoted to Christ in order to sort of picture the fullness of the redemption that Christ has come to bring.

So, today we are going to jump into the topic of homosexuality. Specifically, we're going to focus on what the Bible says to Christians and how we should live within the Christian church.

[1:30] And next week, I've switched up the schedule a bit, but so next week we're going to look at transgender identity, and then the next week we're going to specifically think about how do we relate to our neighbors in the world, sort of people who aren't professing Christians, or people who aren't, or people outside of the church.

How should we as Christians relate to others in the world around these questions? So, today I want to focus on sort of within the church, but we will take some time to think about how do we bear witness to Christ in the world.

So, the two questions I want to address are, one, what does the Bible actually say about homosexuality? And second, what does redemption, what does a redemptive path look like if I'm a same-sex, for a same-sex attracted Christian?

So, first, what does the Bible actually say about homosexuality? And, you know, for nearly, for almost all of the history of the church, the Christian church has been pretty unanimous in its sort of verdict on this question.

The traditional view is that God designed sex for male and female marriage only, and therefore sexual activity between two men or two women is not in accordance with God's plan for his redeemed people, and is one example of the sin that afflicts all fallen humanity.

[2:57] So, that's often referred to as the traditional view. Now, in the past maybe 50 years or so, some Christians, initially within more mainline Protestant denominations, but more recently, people who would identify as evangelical Christians, have argued that the traditional view is wrong.

And, rather, the church should affirm same-sex unions, and adopt what's often called an affirming view. So, some denominations, particularly mainline Protestant denominations, have officially sort of adopted that view.

But more recently, there are people from evangelical traditions who are advocating this view as well, and I've listed a few. Now, other Christians are sort of somewhere in the middle on this.

And some people have come out explicitly and sort of said, you know what, we think that we should just sort of call a truce. This has been such a divisive issue within the church, you know, and we should just sort of agree to disagree, and let everybody be, you know.

And so, the church has found ways to sort of agree to disagree respectfully, but still recognize each other as members in good standing of the body of Christ, about a variety of issues, you know.

[4:18] How and when will Jesus come again? You know, some of the issues we talked about, about science and faith, and, you know, the creation story. Or, you know, infant versus believer's baptism, right?

Now, different churches hold different positions, but we can at least recognize that people who hold another position can still be believers in the same gospel, and we can still be sort of in good fellowship with each other, you know, in some way or other.

And so, some people say, well, can we just sort of treat homosexuality as one of these disputable matters, right? Romans 14, Paul says, some issues are disputable, and, you know, food sect, he gives some examples, observing special days, eating certain foods, different Christians will do, sort of, live according to their convictions, can we just live and let live?

So, those are sort of the three views. And another version of this third view is, let's just avoid talking about this issue. Okay? It's not sort of explicitly stating, let's agree to disagree.

It's just saying, let's avoid this issue as much as we can. And some churches are trying to do that. It doesn't, it doesn't last very long, but, but anyway.

[5:40] So, now, before we, so I want to consider what people are saying in regards to these views. Before we dive into, sort of, examining biblical passages and examining different views, I also just want to step back and say, almost nobody changes their views on this topic purely through an extensive study of scripture and reading scholarly books.

For most people today, this question also has significant personal and emotional and relational ramifications. questions like, what about my gay brother, sister, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, friend, neighbor?

You know, many people argue that the traditional view has been harmful to people who identify as LGBT, many of whom have lived under a cloud of fear and shame.

Or, for people who do experience same-sex attraction, a question may be, why hasn't God taken this away? I've begged and pleaded and prayed more than anything else that God would.

And yet, it's still here. And I don't feel a shred of attraction to the opposite sex. And practically, if I think about a life of celibacy, can that actually be a life of flourishing?

[7:08] Right? So, these are some of the questions that I think people are wrestling with and many of us are wrestling with. And so, I don't, you know, if you're talking with another Christian who maybe has doubt, say, if you hold the traditional view and you're talking with another Christian who has doubts about the traditional view or who holds one of these other views, I don't think that the best approach is just immediately to quote, you know, a few scripture passages that seem to settle the issue.

But I think it's important to sort of listen and understand, like, what are the concerns you're wrestling with and how does scripture speak to those concerns?

Right? I've prayed and asked God to take this away and God hasn't taken this away. Well, that's a question about unanswered prayer. Right? It's not really a question about what does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Right? Now, yes, it's connected to that, but there are often sort of broader issues that we need, that we can sort of work through together.

All right. Having said that, I want to look briefly at specific texts because, number one, we're committed as a church to following and obeying the Bible and letting our views be shaped by the scriptures and not only by our personal feelings and emotional struggles and relational contexts and ultimately, we believe God gave us the Bible for our good.

[8 : 36] So, now again, over the last three weeks, I've tried to sort of paint a big picture view of what sort of God's plan for gender and sexuality.

homosexuality. And I don't think that I've mentioned homosexuality directly at all, but, you know, if you sort of, if you, you know, I've done this deliberately. I didn't start with this lesson because I think it's important also to sort of have this bigger view first before we jump into some of these challenging topics.

So, again, I think those can be good conversations about sort of everything we've talked about the last three weeks as well.

Anyway, having said that, there are six Bible passages, six or seven, that address homosexuality in particular. Let me go briefly through them. First is Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah. Right?

That's where the word sodomy comes from. Briefly, this is an account of homosexual rape. It is not an account of consensual sex. Later Bible passages condemn Sodom for a wide range of sins, including pride, gluttony, neglecting to help the poor, hostility towards God's messengers, as well as sexual immorality.

[9 : 53] So, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah by itself, I think, is not decisive for the modern question of, should the church approve of and bless consensual same-sex relationships?

So, I don't think that's the best text to quote, one way or the other. Then, we go to Leviticus. Laws of the Old Testament, you shall not lie with a male as with a woman, it is an abomination.

And Leviticus 20.13 prescribes the death penalty for such acts, as well as other violations of the marriage covenant, including adultery, incest, and bestiality. Now, pretty much everyone agrees that Leviticus prohibited gay sex within ancient Israel.

The question is, do these laws still apply to Christians today? And some people will say, why are Christians saying that Leviticus even matters?

Leviticus says you shouldn't eat shrimp and pork, and most of us feel completely free to eat shrimp and pork. It says you shouldn't have clothes that are mixed of, you know, cotton and linen or two different fabrics, and probably everything I'm wearing has more than one fabric, right?

[10 : 59] Now, the big picture, though, is there's basically two kinds of laws in the Old Testament. There's ceremonial laws which are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and so Christians don't obey the ceremonial laws.

Clean and unclean foods, different kinds of clothing, you know, all the sacrifices, right? They're all fulfilled in the person of Jesus. They're sort of shadows of who Christ is. But the moral laws, love your neighbor as yourself, honor your father and mother, don't murder, don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't lie, don't covet, well, all of those we say, oh, yes, as Christians, oh, yeah, we still obey those.

And guess what? All of those are also reaffirmed in the New Testament. So that's the best way to tell, you know, does Leviticus matter, should we obey a law in Leviticus is, does the New Testament reaffirm it?

Well, then to answer that, we can go to 1 Corinthians 6, 9 to 11, in which it says, 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 God's kingdom.

Now, there's a similar verse in 1 Timothy, chapter 1, and both of these verses actually sort of follow the pattern of the Ten Commandments.

[12:30] So they're reaffirming don't commit adultery, right, nor thieves, right, don't steal, nor, so revilers, that would be in the category of bearing false witness, and greedy, could be interpreted as coveting.

So, so it's sort of reaffirming those, particularly the second half of the Ten Commandments, as well as idolaters, right, the first, that's the first four of the Ten Commandments, and the list in 1 Timothy sort of follows the shape of the Ten Commandments even more explicitly.

But included in both of those lists is, are two words, well, two words in 1 Corinthians and one in Arsin Koitai is in 1 Timothy that are translated men who practice homosexuality.

Now, some scholars who take an affirming view argue Paul was just talking about homosexual prostitution or exploitation, right, in the Greco-Roman world, sometimes it was an older man and a younger boy, often a sort of a tutor and a student who would be having homosexual relations together.

And so, some people are saying that's what Paul was prohibiting. But actually, there are Greek words that specifically refer to that, what we call pederasty. And Paul did not use those words.

[13:52] He used a word, Arsin Koitai, which is probably, probably was a word that Paul invented the first time that it appears. in Greek literature.

But it is connected to the Greek translation of Leviticus 20. So, arson is male and koitai is intercourse. And it comes right from that Leviticus 20, 13 Greek translation of that verse.

So, which says, whoever lies with a male is with a woman. They have both done what is not pleasing to God. Question. Are you saying that that was the Septuagint word?

Yes. So, Paul didn't invent it. No, sorry. In the Septuagint, so, whoever lies with a male, I think it's something like whoever, you know, koitai, arson, as with a woman.

And he says, arson, no koitai. So, he's taking two words that are right next to each other and just making them a compound word. Hard to tell in the manuscript where there were no spaces between the words.

[15:00] Oh, true. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, it seems very clear that Paul's specifically referring to that verse. That's the point. And so, so it seems that Paul is specifically reaffirming that Leviticus prohibition in the context of reaffirming the Ten Commandments more broadly.

The other passage, and this is sort of the passage that speaks in the biggest context about homosexuality is Romans 1. And you can turn there if you want to. But in the context of Romans 1, Paul's describing a variety of attitudes and behaviors typical of the Gentile world in his day.

And Paul says these particular sins are the result of humanity's ongoing alienation from and rebellion against God. And there's a very wide variety of things that Paul mentions.

At the end of the chapter he just goes into a long list. All manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossiping, slandering, hating God, insolence, haughtiness, boasting, disobedience to parents, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Right? So there's a whole long list that Paul's dealing with and Paul's saying all of these behaviors are manifestations of humanity's broader alienation from God and rejection of God.

[16 : 21] But specifically there's sort of a pattern of words that he uses. So verse 23 he says they exchanged, the pattern is human beings exchange God's good gifts for corrupt alternatives.

And so God therefore gives them over to their own sinful desires. So people exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images, idols, so God gave them up to impurity. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, so God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

That's then verse 26 to 27 he talks about their women exchanged natural relations for those contrary to nature. The men gave up natural relations with women, were consumed with passion for one another, so God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

So the picture here is more broadly people have, humanity has exchanged God's good gifts for corrupt alternatives and as a result God has sort of given us over to our own sinful desires and that's why we see sort of the various expressions of sinful attitude and behavior in the world.

So what's the big picture? Included a couple of quotes here. Richard Hayes talks about when human beings engage in homosexual activity, they are enacting a rejection of the creator's design.

[17 : 51] Rosaria Butterfield makes a good point. She says, homosexuality, like all particular sins, is a symptom and not the cause. That is, it tells us where our heart has been, not who we inherently are or what we're destined to become.

So she says, committing my life to Christ, she had been in a lesbian relationship when she came to faith in Christ and she said, committing my life to Christ meant not going back to my heterosexual past but going forward to something entirely new.

So in other words, Paul doesn't say the main problem in your life is that you're gay and you need to get straight. He says, the main problem in your life is that you are alienated from God and that's true of every one of us.

And homosexuality is just one symptom of that broader alienation from God and what you need, what we all need is to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and then to begin to sort of experience the redemption of our bodies and working for that.

let me stop and take any questions about these passages. Okay.

[19 : 07] A couple other sort of common objections that people present. One is, but Jesus didn't say anything about homosexuality. You know, I mean, maybe this was just Paul's hang-up.

Paul was influenced by rabbinic traditions and, you know, he's just sort of expressing a cultural view of his time. Well, a couple things.

First, within Jesus' Jewish cultural context, there was no debate about homosexual practice. It was universally regarded as contrary to God's will and typical of the Gentile pagan world outside.

And so, and when Jesus disagreed with the Pharisees, he did not tend to hide his disagreement. We have lots of examples where Jesus disagreed openly with the Pharisees about all kinds of things.

And so, if Jesus was silent about something, it probably means he agreed. And actually, specifically, Jesus explicitly affirmed male-female marriage in Matthew 19, referring back to Genesis 1, have you not read, he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

[20:18] So, Jesus' reasoning is as follows. God made us male and female, two complementary sexes, therefore marriage is intended to be monogamous between two people, not polygamous, and unbroken, not a cycle of repeated divorce and remarriage.

That's what he was talking about. People were sort of pursuing divorce for very light reasons and for not very serious reasons and Jesus says, no, that's not God's intention.

God's intention is that marriage is a picture of male and female united together and ultimately God and his people united together. Now, if you take that same reasoning to complementary sexes, well, marriage also has to be male and female.

right? And the only other option Jesus commended was celibacy for God's kingdom. So, I think Jesus does say things that have implications here.

Other question, well, couldn't we just agree to disagree even if maybe that's, you know, how we understand the Bible, maybe other people understand it differently. But, you know, Paul mentioned some kinds of things where Christians can agree to disagree, you know, what kinds of foods we eat, what days we observe, you know, whether or not you drink alcohol in moderation.

[21:45] But Paul warns strongly against greed, lying, pride, bitterness, rage, and sexual immorality.

And he doesn't consider those things disputable matters where Christians can agree to disagree. He warns strongly against them. And I think in the bigger picture, drawing boundaries is not inherently unloving.

Every church, even the most progressive church, will want to draw some boundaries on attitudes and behaviors, whether it's sexual or otherwise, that are seen as exploitative or harmful or wrong, right?

This is not what we want to characterize our community, right? Every community is going to draw some boundaries. And I think really the question is, how do we, in love and patience and clarity and humility, how do we sort of seek to live within, communicate and live together within the wise boundaries that God has set out for us?

Yes, many, it's true that many gay and lesbian people have felt very hurt and shamed by people who hold the traditional view.

[23:04] But I don't think it's automatically just because people hold the traditional view, but often we haven't communicated that or with sort of these kind of Christ-like qualities.

So, conclusion, I don't think there's any biblical warrant to depart from the traditional Christian view. But, having said that, I don't think it's enough to just say that.

I think we also have to ask the question, what does it look like for a follower of Christ who experiences same-sex attraction to live a life of flourishing and growth and redemption?

Well, let me just briefly look at broader context of these two passages, 1 Corinthians 6 and Romans 1, that speak particularly about homosexuality.

You know, that 1 Corinthians passage goes on to say, you know, don't be, it says, don't be deceived, people who sort of habitually and sort of persistently and unrepentantly sort of reflect these qualities won't inherit God's kingdom, but then Paul says, and such were some of you.

[24:21] 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. So Paul's saying our sexual attractions and even our past sexual sins are not what define us at the very deepest level.

And man, that is good news. That is good news for everyone who is engaged in any kind of sin listed in that list or in any of the other sin lists in the New Testament.

And you know what? We all find ourselves in one of those lists somewhere. that when God looks at us through Christ, that is not what defines us at the deepest level. And instead in Christ we have a new identity, we're washed, that means cleansed of guilt and shame, we're set apart for God's holy purposes, sanctified, and we're justified, declared righteous in God's sight because of Christ's atoning work.

And the chapter goes on to talk about how now our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. God has come to dwell in our bodies. And so even when our bodies have been used in ways that dishonor God and we feel that very deeply, God does not see us, God comes to dwell in us by his Holy Spirit and he honors us.

And so he doesn't leave us in a place of self hatred or shame or sort of despair, but he comes and brings healing and hope. There's a similar pattern in the book of Romans, again, about, you know, the beginning of Romans is about how all humanity has fallen into sin and, you know, Paul talks about the sins that were characteristic of the Gentile world in Romans 1 and then he turns to the religious world, the Jewish world, and he says, self-righteousness is just as damning as all of these other sins.

[26:10] And his conclusion is both Jew and Gentile are all under the power of sin. We are all in the same boat. And what's our hope? Our hope is Christ came to die for us while we were still sinners out of his love for us.

And through him we can be buried with him and raised with him and walk in newness of life. And Romans is very realistic. You know, read Romans 7. You're struggling with sin?

Read Romans 7. Yeah. It's real. I do what I don't want to do and I don't do what I don't want to do. You know, I mean, this weekend I was there with like getting really impatient at my kids and yelling at them like over and over and I had to repent over and over to them.

Like even though they needed to repent over and over as well. You know, like I do what I don't want to do. And, you know, but then Romans says, Romans 8 says there's no condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus.

And then it points us toward the future hope of our redemption of our bodies. So, to what are Christians who experience same sex attraction called to?

[27:24] I've included a quote from C.S. Lewis. This was back in the 50s, but a college professor who had recently become a Christian and wrote to Lewis and was basically like, hmm, like some college students are coming to us and, you know, saying that they, you know, only feel desire, you know, only feel same-sex attraction.

What should we do? So, I've included Lewis's quote. I think there's a lot of good stuff in there. But one of the things that he says is, you know, is every, well, let's see.

So, I'll read some of this. So, Jesus' disciples were not told why the man was born blind in John 9. Only, the final cause or God's purpose is that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

This suggests that in homosexuality, as in every other tribulation, God's works can be made manifest. In other words, that every disability conceals a vocation, if only we can find it, which will turn the necessity to glorious gain.

Right? What he's saying is that our weaknesses may actually be sort of a doorway to our calling, our particular calling as Christians.

[28:48] And he said, at the end, he says, like all other tribulations, it must be offered to God. His guidance, how to use it, must be sought. So, to what are Christians who experience same-sex attraction called to?

Well, I think the first thing scripture says is, for the present time, celibacy as an expression of devotion to Christ. Now, again, many people object to this, and they say, isn't that an unfair burden to put on every Christian who experiences same-sex attraction?

Celibacy should be voluntary, not forced. But, the reality is, there are many, many Christians, especially women, because generally speaking, women outnumber men in the church.

In some places, I hear in some parts of China, the church is 80% female, in some places. So, many Christians strongly desire to marry, but can't find a willing, believing Christian partner of the opposite sex.

And hardly anyone's, and a bigger picture, when Christ calls his disciples, he calls each of us to take up our cross and follow him. And, most of our crosses and burdens, maybe even all of them, I mean, how many of us choose our own cross?

[30:04] Jesus chose his own cross. He chose the hardest one of all, bearing the sins of the world, which nobody else could bear. Right? But, most of us don't have anywhere near that maturity.

to willingly enter into suffering for redemption purposes. Right? I mean, think of all the crosses and burdens we face. Physical disabilities, chronic pain, depression, childhood trauma, and all its complicated effects, being born into a dysfunctional family, being the victim of racism or persecution, parenting a rebellious child, most illnesses marriage to a difficult spouse.

Now, same-sex attraction has a particular challenge, but it is far from unique in that respect. A challenge for all of us is to believe that God can redeem even our most unwanted burdens as we entrust ourselves and all of them to Christ.

Second, I think Christians who experience same-sex attraction can receive their identity in Christ. I want to leave a little time for questions, so you know I'm not going to get into this because I think this is actually not the most important thing, but there are different ways that Christians describe themselves, so there are some people who are calling themselves celibate gay Christians, and there are some people who say, no, I don't think that's wise to sort of take on the label gay, I'm going to call myself a Christian with same-sex attraction, there are different reasons for that.

My favorite answer to this question, sort of speaking to a Christian who experiences same-sex attraction like, are you gay? was from a guy who I knew several years ago who was a Spanish major, and he said, *estoy pero no soy*, and if you know Spanish, you know what that means, because *estoy* means, this is how I'm experiencing life, *soy* means, this is my essential and unchangeable self at the deepest level, and so, yes, I am at one level, that's how I'm experiencing life right now, and it's a significant experience, but is that what defines me at the deepest level?

[32:06] No. Third, here's a challenging question, should we pray and hope or expect for someone's sexual attractions to change from gay to straight through the power of Christ?

Well, biblical principles, one, changing one's sexual attractions is not the primary goal for Christians, as Christopher Yuan says, the goal is not heterosexuality, but holiness. There are all kinds of heterosexual sin, that are not pleasing to God, and are not better than having same-sex attraction and living a life of faithful celibacy, in fact, they're much worse.

At the same time, nothing is impossible with God, and there are many who can testify to that. So, practical realities. One thing, so, concern that's often out there, reparative therapy is a psychological technique with the goal of changing from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation.

It is increasingly under attack by the gay community in particular. It is now illegal in 18 U.S. states to counsel minors in this way. Christians who affirm the traditional view should not necessarily defend or promote the practice of reparative therapy.

So, these are not the same thing, and some, so, let me just say that and put that out there.

[33 : 33] Sometimes it's sort of a, it can be a sort of knee-jerk reaction of parents when a child comes out to them, we need to get you some counseling and sort of get you fixed. Well, that's not a Christ-centered response.

Actually. So, practical realities. If you're content to pursue a life of consecrated Christian singleness, whether you experience same-sex attraction or not, but say you do experience same-sex attraction, there's no need or pressure to cultivate sexual desires for the opposite sex.

In some ways, those would only present a different kind of temptation. You can focus instead on living a flourishing life of consecrated Christian singleness. If you do want to get married to somebody of the opposite sex, but feel it's impossible because you've only ever felt same-sex attraction, I think that could be a matter worth talking through and praying about along with close friends and wise Christian leaders.

But often I will say the process, and this is true for a lot of things, the process is at least as important as the outcome. Right? Sometimes there's a presenting issue that comes up in our life and we think, I want God to change this and fix this.

And you know what? There's five or six other issues below that that God wants to deal with even more than that issue. Right? So sometimes that sort of will bring out maybe deeper wounds, if those are part of your story, not part of everyone's story, but part of some people's story.

[34 : 59] So again, resist the temptation to idolize marriage even if you desire it, but that can be a process worth engaging in. If you're constantly overwhelmed by lust or are regularly falling into addictive or habitual patterns of sin, again, whether homosexual or heterosexual, seek help.

Talk with a pastor, seek some accountability, join a sex addiction recovery group. There's all kinds of things you can do, but do something. Okay?

And don't just stay. That's not a good place to stay as a Christian. Christians who pursued a change of attraction report a wide range of results. A small number of people have experienced a change in their overall sexual attractions.

A larger number of people have entered into a marriage with someone of the opposite sex and found it possible to be sexually attracted to that one person while still experiencing frequent or occasional same-sex attractions.

So Rachel Gilson is somebody who's talked pretty openly about this. Rachel Gilson came to faith in Christ while she was dating a woman and as an undergraduate at Yale, and she came to faith partly through the ministry of this church.

[36 : 02] So she ended up getting baptized here. She became a member of the church. She was here for about 10 years. She ended up marrying a few years down the road. She ended up marrying a man named Andrew. They're both on set with crew in the Boston area.

And Rachel has some articles on her blog that you can read, which are great. And she had an article in Christianity Today called I Never Became Straight.

Maybe that wasn't God's goal. And you think, well, wait a minute, but you're in a marriage to a man. And she says, yes, but most of my sexual temptations are two women.

Right? And she says, well, I'm going to be a woman. Right? So God's given me a marriage and an attraction to my husband, but he hasn't changed my overall sexual attractions.

Other people have not found their sexual attractions to have changed significantly. And I've included a quote at the end from Wesley Hill, which I'll read some of.

[37 : 06] He says, so much of my life as a homosexual Christian, by that he means one with homosexual desires or attractions. He's someone who's committed to celibacy.

So, so much of my life has been simply learning how to wait, to be patient, to endure, to bear up under an unwelcome burden for the long haul. Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart.

Having patience with your own weaknesses is, I think, something of what Paul was commending when he described the tension of living on this side of wholeness. When God acts climatically to reclaim the world and raise our dead bodies from the grave, there will be no more homosexuality.

But until then, we hope for what we do not see. We are washed and waiting. That is my identity as one who's been forgiven and spiritually cleansed, and my struggle as one who perseveres with a frustrating thorn in the flesh, looking forward to what God has promised to do.

And isn't, isn't that something we can all affirm? All right. Five minutes for questions, comments.

[38 : 20] Amy. I've always struggled with the Old Testament polygamy, David, and people who God, he doesn't, God doesn't, I mean, God talks to them a lot, but he doesn't talk to them about their polygamous relationships, it seems like, most of the time.

So, I don't know, I don't know if someone could look at that and be like, well, David was following God, but he also, you know, has several lives, and God didn't really seem to say much to him about it.

So, I mean, I know, like, in my heart, the reason, but I just wanted your thoughts about that. Yeah, yeah. So, I think, broadly speaking, we see all kinds of bad results of polygamy in David's life and in Abraham's life, and there's rivalry and jealousy and in Jacob's life, and, you know, so I think the general sense we get of polygamy is it has negative effects.

Now, with polygamy, it's a little challenging because, you know, if you're married to two wives, do you put away the second wife? Well, in some cultures, that leaves her sort of all alone and defenseless.

So, that's a complicated issue. And the other thing I'd broadly say is, you know, there's, when Jesus was asked about marriage and divorce, Jesus said, well, Moses gave you this law because your hearts were hard.

[39 : 38] Like, there are a lot of things that God sort of tolerated in the Old Testament, which he was not happy with, which were not good, which did not have good effects. And, but Jesus says, now I've come, and now sort of my disciples are called to a higher standard.

And so, we're going to go towards what God actually wants for us. And that's what you could say to somebody who's saying, well, I'm going to follow God in every other area except for this, and David did it, so, you know, I can do it too.

But, but when Jesus came, it's a whole new productive world that we're living in, right? You know, if someone were to, if a homosexual person were to say, I think that I can love God, I mean, David loved God, clearly, but he was doing this.

I think I can engage in, you know, a monogamous homosexual relationship, but also really love God. David did it, you know, he was a polygamist, so he wasn't necessarily walking out what we're supposed to.

We can point to Jesus in those situations, maybe. Yeah, I think it's always dangerous when a Christian says, I'm willing to follow God except for this one thing that I know God says no to, but I'm going to embrace instead.

[40 : 44] Yeah, yeah. Like, that is always, no matter what that thing is, that is always a dangerous place to be. And we saw it in David's life, obviously, he had a lot of negative things happen to him.

Yeah. When he, as, as, like you said, okay. Yeah, yeah. Brita. I don't know if this is a this week question, or in two weeks, but sort of addressing the, you know, the church that professes faith in Christ and also affirms committed gay relationships and our posture towards other believers or maybe towards other churches?

Yes. Is that this week, or do we hold on to that? Yeah, no, that's a good question. We can take a stab at it now, and then we can maybe come back to it later. Um, so what should be our posture towards Christians or churches who affirm a lot of other biblical truths, but, uh, also want to affirm gay relationships?

Um, ah, that's complicated. Okay. Um, so I think there is a question.

So I, uh, I don't think it's something that we can just say, ah, well, it's not a big deal. Um, I do think there is a, I do think there's a question of trajectory. In other words, what direction are you heading in?

[42 : 04] Okay. So, um, uh, I think for, for, so for many, for, for many churches, uh, many churches have started with trying to argue that the Bible actually isn't clear about this or actually permits same-sex relationships or isn't talking about, you know, sort of what modern people experience.

Um, but that position doesn't tend to hold very long because I think scripture is pretty clear. And so eventually people sort of default to, well, Paul said no, but we don't like Paul.

And, um, you know, we just have to take the bigger message of the scripture, which is love. And, uh, you know, God loves us and that's all that's really important.

Now, if you say that, you've just sort of like gotten rid of a lot of things in scripture. Um, and, uh, and then sort of, it tends to go towards, you know, scripture is not functionally authoritative in anything at all.

Right. And you can trace that. I mean, you can, you can look at denominations that in the sixties were sort of debating this and in the, you know, over the last 40 years or somewhere have sort of switched on this and then sort of, it, it, it has broader ramifications.

[43 : 25] Um, now I, I think there are sometimes other people. Okay. So take, uh, you know, somebody who, let's say somebody walks into church today and has never been in here and they immediately, they are convicted by the Holy spirit, become a Christian.

And if you ask them, you know, what do you think about same sex relationships? Most people would probably say, sure, that's fine. Now the problem, that's a totally different thing because this is somebody who hasn't really is, is only beginning to understand the Christian story and is only beginning to understand all these broader things that we've discussed the last three weeks.

And then we'll have to think about how it applies to this. So that's a conversation and a process is to engage in. Um, and so I, I, I think that's maybe a beginning of an answer, but there's a lot more, we'll, we'll, we need to come back to that because that's a bigger question.

Um, and I realize I probably haven't answered all of it either. Yeah. Um, you said that in another Bible study, it doesn't matter how we got there, it's how we treat them now.

Now we have, uh, practicing homosexuals in the church. What is that reaction supposed to be? We know that they're practicing. Yeah.

[44 : 49] Um, so I think the first question is, is this person saying, I believe in Jesus Christ. I've surrendered my life to him. I want to live my life completely for him.

Okay. Um, there are some people who come to church every week, but they're not there yet. Right. So there's many people, you know, I mean, there's many people who come to church every week and when, you know, when the communion's passed out, they don't take communion because they, they know that they're not there yet.

They haven't surrendered everything to Christ. Right. Um, now if somebody says I've surrendered everything to Christ and I want to pursue this, um, uh, I don't think that's ultimately sort of compatible together.

So I think there is a, um, uh, you know, if somebody, somebody came to the elders and said, I want to be baptized and I'm in a, uh, a same sex, sexual relationship, you know, the elders would have, we'd have, we'd, we'd want to have a lot of conversations, but we would have to say not now.

Um, that, that is something, you know, just as if somebody comes to the elders and says, I'm cohabiting with my girlfriend, um, of the opposite sex and I want to become a member of the church.

[46 : 09] We'd say, well, let's have a lot of conversations together, but that's not God's, uh, plan for his redeemed people. Right. And so we need to sort of work towards, move towards, uh, a kind of change and repentance that would be pleasing to God.

Um, Julie. Um, I think when I'm looking at all these cis lists, a lot of them, I can see how greed or pride or rage or lying bitterness like cause a lot of brokenness or, or like death in relationships, but I guess like when I look at a, um, like a monogamous homosexual relationship in which they commit not to have sex before marriage, like all these things, like the only difference is like, um, it's like people, two people of the same gender.

Like I don't see as clearly how that, uh, breeds death or destruction or whatever. So I'm wondering if you can say any words to it. And also, um, like if you can point to any like resources, like I personally don't have experience and I don't have a lot of friends with that kind of experience, but like when people ask like, oh yeah, but like what's so bad?

I'm like, I really don't actually know on this side of heaven, like what is the consequences? Like believe me, it has all these negative consequences. I like don't really know where to look for that type of stuff. Um, yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Uh, that's a good question. That's another question that I probably have to wrap up in like a minute. So, um, so I won't be able to give an answer that does justice to that.

[47 : 29] I think, um, so I think one of the things, uh, that we sort of talked about over the last couple of weeks is for a Christian marriage is not supposed to be primarily about two individuals finding their happiness in each other, but, um, being a picture of God and his people being united together.

Right. And so male and female sort of two different, uh, uh, uh, the two different people in that respect with the differences sort of physically inscribed upon their bodies.

Right. Um, being united together is a picture of, uh, of God's salvation, right? Of God's redemption. Um, to men or to women is not a picture of that.

It's sort of, uh, a, um, sort of holding on to sameness, right? Rather than sort of unity across that difference. Um, now, uh, that doesn't, I understand that doesn't seem as obviously harmful as some of these other things.

Um, there, there are other, you know, I, there are other things that are worth talking about that I just don't have, I don't want to sort of broach and leave hanging.

[48 : 46] Um, so I, I will take note of that question and we will come back to that in the next week or two. All right. Let me pray for us and we'll have more time. We, you know, we've got a couple of weeks, uh, so we can come back to these things.

Uh, let's pray. Um, uh, the other thing I would say is you can read some of these books, read some of these books of, uh, read Jackie, Jackie Hill Perry's book is very good. Um, and she talks about both some of the things that initially drew her into a lesbian relationship and seeking to find fulfillment there, but also some ways that God sort of exposed some deeper ways that that was unhealthy for her.

Um, so her book maybe is a good example of, uh, addressing your question. Uh, it's a beautiful book. Uh, it's beautifully written. Uh, generally. All right. Lord, uh, we pray that you would give us your wisdom and love.

Uh, we pray, uh, that you would help us to set our hearts on Christ. Um, we pray that you would, uh, help us to continue, um, learning together and, and edifying each other, uh, for Jesus sake.

Amen.