

HOMOSEXUALITY



FAQ



A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

“...‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Many Christians are able to quote these verses, even reciting them by heart. But do we truly understand what these entail? Also, what did Jesus mean when He said ‘be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves’ (Matthew 10:16)? Christians today are being put to the test as God continues to refine us to be more like Him; more capable of truly loving the world as He loves while being a faithful witness to the Gospel.

This set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is written to aid the Church in understanding and responding to one of the most contentious matter since the late 20th Century: Homosexuality. However, unlike other similar writings, this set aims first and foremost to remind the Church of the true focus of the matter – ‘The Church as the representative of God’. It begins with a section on sexuality, followed by a section on the Biblical view and discussion of homosexuality, and ends with a section on common questions raised by non-Christians or fellow Christians with a different view. Although you can navigate and read specific questions that interest you first, you are highly encouraged to read the entire FAQ in a chronological order for a better understanding as the questions relate to each other largely in that order.

You will find within this FAQ references to sources with various positions on the topic (i.e. pro-LGBTQ, neutral and pro-family/conservative) as this FAQ seeks to provide readers a more holistic sense of the topic while holding onto a Biblical perspective.

Love Personified

To love God simply means to pursue Him and keep His commands (John 14:21). This also means that loving people around us is as important to God as God loves people, and it is a part of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40). There seems to always be a struggle between loving God and people, or have we been understanding love wrongly?

Love is not harsh, love is not blind acceptance, love is definitely not proud.

Love is clothed in humility and wants the best for the loved one.

We need to redeem the understanding of what 'love' means and what it is through both words and action. Today's discussion about homosexuality and the Church is a clarion call for the Church to both unite and focus on what matters - being a faithful and loving representative of God to the world.

Come Out, Come Home To Holiness

If we truly believe that God is omniscient, omnipotent and all loving, we should also believe that **God's commands are there to protect us such that every person can live to the fullest without the expense of another.** God's commands are the standards of good living and of holiness.

Holiness is living in accordance to God's will for us; being like Jesus.

The Bible's stand on the matter is very clear: Homosexual sexual activity and romantic relationships are not in-line with mankind's design by God and are sinful. These are not the only sexual sins in the Bible. Along with it are adultery, incest, necrophilia, bestiality, etc. The message from the Church to all who are tempted sexually ought to be the same message as the one which is sent to people tempted in any other area: **come out from your seclusion, come home to holiness – to the design and intention of God.**

Preparing The Home Of Holiness

As we call the world to come back to God and to become His disciples through the Church, the Church needs to be well-prepared to welcome and nurture. **Ill treatment of anyone (regardless of struggles and shortcomings) should not be acceptable in Church.** For a long period of time, the Church has failed to appropriately love and protect people tempted with or engaging in homosexual activity. It is important that the Church humbles itself and begins the work of reconciliation, becoming a true refuge for all humanity's brokenness and imperfection.

Recognising Our Flaws

The Church has in a few ways hurt people of many communities, in particular the LGBTQ community (not necessarily just the advocates).

- a) We have pushed people away when they needed us most by saying things like “you are not loving God, and that’s why you struggle”, “why are you like that? can’t you just stop being gay?” We may also have failed to extend grace and withhold judgement while listening to people who trust us enough to open up about their sexual struggles to us. (If we want to know more examples, we can ask anyone who experiences same-sex attraction (SSA) and is open enough to tell us more about this). The sad thing is, when they open up to leaders/fellow Christians, a very difficult decision, we often take their courage and trust for granted.
- b1) “When we try to “pray the gay away” or “pray the gay out of them” without first hearing what they feel, or why they feel that way, we have failed to love them the way we would love anybody.” **A person who is loved is known by the one who loves them.** We cannot claim to love when all we want to do is to change someone without first knowing or even seeking to understand what they are going through.
- b2) We have failed to give our best for them. Quoting Howard Stark from Avengers End Game: “*the kid’s not even here yet, and **there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for him***”. **When a parent loves a child, the parent will not withhold anything good from the child.** Sexual struggles have often been a taboo topic and many of us avoid it because of its complexity. We can and should take time to build our own understanding on the Biblical view of sexuality so that we can journey with one another in our sexual struggles and temptations.

**Our goal is not to prove someone wrong,
we simply want the best (outcome) for our beloved friends and family
who experience same-sex attraction or are struggling with other sexual temptations.**

- c) We are too quick to jump into “ministry”, thinking that we have to and can cure this problem of theirs. Sure, sin is bad for anyone, but sin is also a product of the fallen and rebellious nature in all of us. This fallen nature goes on to further create multiple types/layers of brokenness in us and through us when we hurt one another out of self-centeredness. What’s broken needs to be restored. God heals both supernaturally and naturally through His sons and daughters on earth. God cares about them more than we do or can understand. **We are not their saviour;** God alone can heal the deepest brokenness in their lives (just as He heals ours). Our role in all these is to **help one another**

carry burdens, to be family to one another, to love and support one another to follow Christ.

- d) We have played into the 'us vs them' game unintentionally. It makes Christians look militant in our views. We have to **re-demonstrate the wisdom and love of God** and we can do so without bashing those who hold opposing views from us.

For the above, we can apologise for the hurt which we or other Christians may have caused. We **apologise because we love the individuals and recognise mistakes for what they are, not because we have come to think that our stand is wrong.**

There Is Hope

We love; we carry hope and not fear. We are and ought to be the furthest from being homophobes. There will be people who baselessly accuse us of being homophobic or homo-focused (overly focused on homosexuality as a sin) and as long as we live according to His Word, we have nothing to fear.

We can avoid playing into our accuser's hands through genuine display of humility and commitment to love.

The Church is imperfect because it's made of imperfect people (you and me) saved by the grace of God. We don't profess to be perfect and we acknowledge that we can all definitely do more to make the world a better place. This is why we ought to be equipped and continuously grow as individuals. The Bible is God's gift to us; some may even call it the ultimate guidebook to life. Let us grow, learn and press in more into its wisdom, adding professional knowledge to solid Biblical principles and be ready in season and out of season to give a defence for the faith and goodness.

*¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But **even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.** "Do not fear their threats; **do not be frightened.**" ¹⁵ But in your hearts **revere Christ as Lord.** Always **be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with **gentleness and respect,** ¹⁶ keeping **a clear conscience,** so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

I Peter 3:13-16 (NIV)

Sexuality 101



Q1: What is 'gay'?

Quick response:

'Gay' is a term used to describe a person who experiences attraction to another of the same sex, acts upon that attraction and identifies as gay. It is also a term used for labelling and self-identification.

It is important to note that there are different ways of interpreting it and some people may choose to use the term simply to describe themselves for their same-sex attraction, while others avoid using the term 'gay', opting for the term 'same-sex attracted'.

Brief History On Homosexuality

Although homosexuality has existed across various cultures for a long time, it was a term first coined by Hungarian journalist Karl Mania Kertbeny in the 19th century and subsequently mentioned as a sexual disorder along with 'heterosexuality', 'monosexuality (masturbation)' and 'bestiality' ^[1, 2]. With the coining of such terms, sex became differentiated and associated also to the erotic rather than merely for the purpose of procreation or an activity traditionally recognised to be confined within marriage. Homosexuality remained classified as a mental disorder until the 1970s ^[3] (more in Q7).

Many things have happened over the last two centuries that led to the global movement we see today which seeks to decriminalise homosexual acts, to legalise and celebrate same-sex marriage etc. Sometimes the arguments and reasons for change are much less scientific but more political ^{[3] [4]}. It has become rather inconvenient to talk about sexuality in the public square today. People often find themselves cornered to either be for or against such laws, for affirmation or be labelled as homophobic. Much of this unhealthy dichotomy is hinged on emotions, fear and herd-thinking. The conflict and tension has reached an unprecedented level with no resolution within the horizon.

Before we can have meaningful discussions about this topic, isn't it wiser to first know what we are talking about instead of shouting over one another's heads without even understanding the topic? This leads us to the need to define the terms 'gay' and 'homosexuality'.

So... What Is 'Gay' / 'Homosexuality'?

Homosexuality is a psychosexual attraction towards members of the same sex

which finds fulfilment of its desires through intimacy (often sexual) with a person of the same sex. A person is a homosexual, or gay, when he or she **experiences attraction to a person of the same sex, acts upon that attraction/fulfils its desires and self-identifies as gay.**

It is important to recognise that there is **no universally accepted definition of homosexuality/homosexuals.** This could be due a number of reasons such as a conflation of attraction with behaviour and identity, personal reservations OR the intentional use of the term because of its (often) negative associations in the past and present, and the fear of backlash for using a narrower definition.

Understanding The Nuances Of ‘Gay’

While some may choose to use the term ‘gay’ as a blanket term, Dr. Yarhouse offered a good breakdown of what the term actually could mean [5]. Other authors also give noted behavioural dimensions that come with the term ‘homosexuality’ [8].

It is a term that covers attraction, orientation, behaviour and (self-) identity. While he did not explicitly discuss behaviour as something apart from identity, it is good to make a distinction between these two and thus understand how one might lead to or reinforce the other.

Term	Definition
Sexual Attraction	Describes feeling, sense of sexual excitement or being sexually drawn to. It cannot be controlled, but it can be fleeting/momentary.
Sexual Orientation/inclination	Describes sexual attraction which is strong, durable and persistent enough to be a ‘default’ state of an individual. It cannot be controlled.
Sexual Behaviour	Describes sexual activity as a result of sexual attraction or orientation. This is well within a person’s control.
Sexual Identity	A label according to one’s sexual preference. It is imbued with meaning in our culture. With it comes expectations of sexual attraction, orientation and behaviour.

There is **no scientific way to measure or predict a person's sexual attraction/orientation**; studies have shown (see Q5) that there is no single cause of sexual attraction or orientation [5] [7]. People develop sexual attraction or orientation (be it heterosexual or non-heterosexual) through **a complex sum of factors including biology, upbringing and sexual experiences** just to name a few [5] [6] [9].

To help us better understand sexual attraction and orientation, pause and think about your own. Can you pinpoint a moment when you decide to be heterosexual/homosexual? For most people, the answer would probably be a 'no'. We cannot explain attraction any more than we can explain the various interests or inclination to certain fields that each individual has. We could go on a long discussion about the influence of biology (read more in Q5) and other factors but that would **not be most beneficial to someone who is experiencing same-sex attraction (SSA) and is genuinely seeking to understand how to reconcile it with other aspects of their self-identity**, such as being a Christian.

2 Scripts For The Same-Sex Attracted (Yarhouse, 2010)

In Western societies, LGBTQ advocacy have been pushing their narrative and an unspoken 'script' for those who experience SSA to live by. This script basically helps people with SSA process and make sense of their emotions/inclinations with their everyday lived experience towards affirmation.

The **'gay script'** is as follows:

- SSA is naturally occurring (even intended by God)
- SSA tells you who you really are (emphasis on discovery)
- SSA is the core of who you are
- Same-sex behaviour is a natural extension of that core
- Behaviours that match your identity/core are crucial for your self-fulfilment (self-actualisation)

You are therefore a part of the LGBTQ community and should have your behaviour and sense of identity affirmed.

This can be contrasted with **another script** - one that is offered by Christianity:

- Some people experience SSA (does not signal a categorical distinction among types of persons, but is one of many human experiences that are 'not the way it's supposed to be')

- Sexual feelings don't determine or define our identity; it is **not the core of who we are**
- We are able to choose to integrate our experiences of attraction to the same sex into a gay identity
- Alternatively, we can choose to ground our identity around other aspects of our experience (e.g. our identity in Christ, a son/daughter, occupation etc)
- **Most compelling aspect of personhood for the Christian is one's identity in Christ - the defining aspect of what it means to be a follower of Jesus**

The implications of following either script are profound, and these two scripts are set on a collision course. **One supposes SSA to be naturally occurring and therefore it's inhumane to exercise restraint on sexual desires as it is central to self-fulfilment.** The other tells us that **it isn't naturally occurring, not central to self-fulfilment and our identity is rooted in Christ**, not sexuality, and thus **self-control for the sake of pursuing Christ is actually good.**

We will further explore themes of both scripts throughout this booklet, beginning with the relationship between attraction, behaviour and identity.

Attraction, Behaviour And Identity

The formation of an identity takes time and leads to a behaviour of some kind. In this context, the self-labelling of one as a gay person would often mean **experiencing SSA which then develops and manifests as same-sex behaviour (sexual or romantic).** As personal experiences play an important role in identity formation, **same-sex behaviour or sexual experiences can lead a person to embrace the gay identity**, i.e. believing that this is 'who I am' and often believing it's unchangeable' (will be discussed again later in Q2 and Q7), which then leads to a personal acceptance that same-sex behaviour is the only right path.

Unlike attraction or orientation, **behaviour and self-identification are definitely in the realm of our control.** Inability to control our behaviour would mean a lack of self-control and being dictated by impulses. **Self-identification is how a person chooses to make sense of themselves and their place in the world.** This therefore leaves us with the obvious conclusion: **to partake in same-sex/non-heterosexual behaviour or to embrace a gay/LGBTQ identity is one's own choice.**

Can Sexual Attraction Be Unwanted?

Although efforts to change the experience of same-sex attraction may not always work (see Q8 for more), **it is not immutable and should not become the core of anyone's identity**. Speaking within the Christian context, we are all called to become more Christ-like each day, and Christ should be the centre, the core of our identity. When we say yes to following and pursuing Jesus, it means saying no to our own worldly and carnal desires. Concerning sexuality, it means saying no to unholy sexual desires (lust and non-heterosexuality).

This is where we need to explore **the idea of “unwanted sexual attraction”**. LGBTQ activists will sell the idea that since sexual attraction is not intentionally controllable, it is not enough that we accept it as a part of a person's identity but also that it is of utmost importance that it's affirmed/celebrated. We need to pause and think: “is it true that all sexual attraction is wanted/desired?” A clear ‘no’ would be our answer.

Consider the **case of a married man as an example**:

Marriage is not a quick fix to sexual temptations and struggles. Marriage is a covenant made by a man and a woman, to stay committed to one another in a monogamous relationship, and the only place where sexual activity is holy (see Q17). A heterosexual married man can still very well feel sexually attracted to a young and attractive (physically, emotionally etc.) woman. This married man, if he takes his marriage vows seriously, will then have to resist his sexual attractions towards the young woman who is not his spouse. He is then, therefore, **experiencing unwanted sexual attraction**.

Therefore, **unwanted sexual attraction is not a myth. It is a sexual attraction that's cognitively unwanted for sound reasons although the flesh may still desire it.**

Given that sexual attraction can be unwanted, it follows that sexual orientation (which is really just a much more durable sexual attraction and thus a default state, see above) can be unwanted as well. **For a Christian, Jesus is our ultimate prize. The call to follow Him is a great privilege.** Many of us lay down our own personal will, ambitions and desires to follow Him. We place Jesus at the core of our identity, and His Words are our delight. We seek to pursue Him, laying down things that are clearly against His expressed Will in the Bible. **Saying yes to Jesus - saying yes to follow Him - is a powerful reason to recognise and see non-heterosexual/unchecked heterosexual attractions and orientation as unwanted.**

Following this, we will then have to explore: “Is homosexuality really a sin according to the Bible?” (see Q11-16) and whether or not “changing sexual attraction/orientation is possible” (see Q8). We will elaborate more on both in later parts of this booklet to provide a non-revisionist, Bible-believing Christian perspective.

Ministry tips:

- Look beyond the person’s sexuality and at who the person is (Your family? Your member? Your friend?). The person before us is made in the Image of God, someone that we should love no matter what
 - » Let this be the anchor in your ministry to people with any form of struggle
- Listen without judgement
 - » Be slow to speak, listen and understand where the person who’s sharing is coming from
 - » Arrange to engage them in deeper conversations about sexuality/struggles if they are open to it, and prepare for it

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<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/context/katzhistory.html>, accessed 20 Aug 2020
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- [4] We Cannot Be Silent, 2015
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- [8] Standards 4 life - Homosexuality, 2014
<https://cmda.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Homosexuality-01-29-2014.pdf>, accessed 20 Aug 2020
- [9] Born Gay? Examining the Scientific Evidence for Homosexuality, 2010
<https://g.co/kgs/BEy53j>, accessed 15 Nov 2020

Q2: What is the difference between being gay/homosexual and same-sex attracted?

Quick response:

The difference is in action or decisions made. A person who experiences same-sex attraction (SSA) is not a homosexual by default.

A SSA individual rightly (by definition) labels him/herself a gay/homosexual when he/she acts upon the attraction and desires. Some might still choose to label themselves as gay/homosexual as it is just a convenient way of letting others know that they are attracted to the same sex.

A Clear Distinction

As mentioned earlier in Q1, the term 'gay' has multiple aspects to it. It can be used to refer to sexual attraction/orientation towards the same sex, same-sex sexual/romantic behaviour, or a self-identifying label. We have also briefly touched on how attraction and inclinations are not deterministic; we all have a certain ability to control our behaviour and how we want to identify ourselves.

Not all desires or attractions are healthy (see Q7 and Q20). For a married man, sexual desire for other women apart from his own wife is extremely unhealthy. He cannot blame his attraction to women for any of his own adulterous behaviour. Clearly, **self-control can be a virtue when a desire is unhealthy**. It is therefore important that we be able to **identify and arrest unhealthy desires or train of thought before it is allowed to grow into damaging fruition**.

A Clear Need

This is where the term 'SSA' is critically important. It serves to **highlight the distinction between inclination and behaviour/choices/self-identification in a social context where the term 'gay' has been so widely used as a blanket term** (see Q1).

Generally speaking, SSA is a helpful term distinct from the blanket use of the word 'gay' as it **reminds a person that he/she is more than immediate feelings and desires which are not beneficial**. It **empowers people (particularly those that have unwanted SSA) to make better choices** in life by identifying unwanted desires and exercising control over them.

In the context of homosexuality and the Christian perspective, **SSA is incompatible with the design of God for humanity** (see Q11) and **seeking to it fulfil is both sinful and harmful** (see Q9 and Q10). Therefore, by identifying the attraction or thought with a term such as SSA, Christians can have the ability to **differentiate it from their core identity (a Christian), and thus better exercise self-control in their pursuit of Christ**.

Some faithful Christians (or even non-believers) who experience SSA may have been struggling secretly precisely because of the lack of terminology to accurately describe their experience. On the one hand, they may fear misunderstandings from their own church community/loved ones, and on the other hand, they know that to describe themselves as 'gay' would not do themselves justice for they do not want to pursue their same-sex sexual inclinations.

A Reminder Of Identity

If the only term to describe this complex human experience is a vague and conflated word spelled 'gay', what hope then does a Christian have since the Bible is very clear that homosexuality is not compatible with one who seeks to love and pursue Christ? **SSA reminds Christians of their ultimate identity beyond what the term 'gay' may impose on them** - that they are made in the Image of God and, while they may have unshakable struggles, **those struggles do not disqualify them from knowing God**. This term therefore brings a great hope as it puts things into perspective:

**Our final and ultimate identity is not in what we do or
how we feel, but it is in Christ Jesus.**

Ministry tips:

- Be familiar with the difference. Not all who experience SSA are homosexuals
 - » Some people may choose to say that they are 'gay' or 'homosexual', you may want to clarify if they mean that they experience same-sex attraction or are acting on their same-sex attraction
 - » If a person insists on using 'gay' or 'homosexual' to describe their SSA, don't force them to use 'SSA' if they are uncomfortable with it. Having clarified it between you and that person will be good enough
- Focus on the pursuit of God and holiness, not on which sexual orientation a person must ultimately settle with
- Don't make a big fuss out of SSA. While it may not be something which is in-line with God's original design of sexuality, the person has not yet sinned if he/she chooses to pursue a life set apart for God
 - » For instance, a person who is inclined to get angry easily can also live a life holy and glorifies God through faithful self-control
 - » SSA is like any other sinful predispositions that we may experience
 - » We will hardly call anyone an active/unrepentant sinner if they experience struggles and temptations yet not give in, so why be inconsistent with those experiencing SSA?
 - » These inclinations may or may not vanish in this lifetime, but in the age to come we will be like Him when we see Him
- People with SSA have different positions and attitudes towards their experience of SSA as well.
 - » There's no blanket way to talk about SSA, we need the Holy Spirit's guidance and exercise of wisdom when speaking to activists, seekers etc.
 - » When speaking with **people who have yet to even begin agreeing with the Bible's perspective on sin as a whole**, avoid describing 'SSA' or 'homosexuality' as just another broken condition or sin (See Dr. Chris Yuan's book, Holy Sexuality and the Gospel, Chapter 19).
 - This is because for such a person, it may be difficult for them to grapple with the distinction between attraction and identity
 - By describing 'SSA' or 'homosexuality' as 'just another sin/condition' may be perceived as trivialising their experiences

Q3: What is 'LGBTQ'?

Quick response:

'LGBTQ' is the short-form for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. It is a term used to describe the community of people who self identify with any of the mentioned sexuality or sexual identity.

Today, the community has extended itself to include a much wider variety of sexual identities, thus the term could span way beyond the 5 alphabets 'LGBTQ'.

Brief history on the LGBTQ community

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer...^[1] These are terms that describe a person's self-identified sexual identity/identities. As mentioned in the answer to the previous questions (see Q1 and Q2), the concept of sexual identity is often understood as one that makes no distinction between sexual attraction, orientation, behaviour and self-identification.

The LGBTQ community has existed for a long time across various cultures and societies. In most societies, they have unfortunately been ostracised, treated as weirdos and even harshly treated for their outward expressions of their sexuality or attractions^[2]. These have sowed the seeds of pain, fear and for some, anger, within the community that now seeks equal treatment and dignity for themselves.

The early recorded push-back by the community against societal prejudice began in the early 20th century, but went full-throttle following the Stonewall riot in 1969^[3,4]. In early pride marches^[5], they sought to use the once shameful Pink Triangle - a badge once used by the Nazis to identify and dehumanise them, as their symbol of pride and highlighting the injustice their people have suffered. An 8-colour rainbow flag was then introduced in 1978, went through revisions and eventually became the modern 6-colour rainbow flag to symbolise diversity and hope^[6,7].

Today, we have a much larger movement (especially in the month of June) consisting of not only LGBTQ individuals but also their allies - friends, families, corporations; supporters in general, who advocate for what they believe to be equal rights to employment, marriage and child-bearing/custody just to name a few^[8,9].

Tension With The Church

The Church hasn't been the wisest in their response and treatment of LGBTQ

individuals or even their family. Movies have been made to showcase an extreme and horrible side of Christianity that promises or seeks to make a homosexual heterosexual through **unbiblical means** ^[10, 11]. These are terrible and wrong actions done in the name of Christ Jesus and His Church which **we as the church community need to stand up against.**

The LGBTQ community have a just cause to feel betrayed, hurt and ostracised given the Church's less-than-good history with them. For this, we ought to take a step back, even apologise for the misgivings (often well-meaning but ignorant) Christians may have showered upon them. **Our apology is merely about the misgivings, not for our stand that homosexuality is not consistent with the Christian faith and teachings** (see section 2 for more details). Understanding this is fundamental to us being confident of standing for the truth empathetically.

Micro-Minorities - A Sandwiched People

Contrary to the painted homogenous views and desires of the LGBTQ community, there is a rich diversity of views, aspirations, personality and religious positions/worldviews within the community. We have to recognise this diversity within the community and accept individuals for where they are in their journey of knowing Jesus.

Some members of the LGBTQ community may feel extremely drawn to the message of the Gospel and the person of Jesus **but fear the backlash from their loved ones and supporters within the community for even entertaining the thought about Jesus and holiness.** Too often they find additional pressure when they **are sandwiched between overzealous Christians** who want them to commit immediately to God's holiness and the overly protective (often well-meaning) LGBTQ community, both camps (probably sincerely) wanting the best for their beloved truth-seeking friend.

At this point it is important for us to consider the Words of Jesus in Matthew 7:5 (NIV): **“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”** Instead of us or either camp jumping into finger-pointing at the other, attempting to call out each other's mistakes and hence prove their own camp's superiority or claims of 'truth', can we take a step back and consider our own positions and approach first?

Inclusion and Hope from Jesus and His Church

Jesus loves the people in the LGBTQ community much more than we ourselves

do. He is much more concerned about them than we are. So why shouldn't we, as Christians, return to the focus on Jesus to learn how to truly love one another, including those of the said community?

Let us not stand in the way of a sincere truth-seeker finding Jesus. Put aside our anxieties, our fears and our zealousness to 'convert' a person into holiness and let Jesus do what only He can do. Let us as members of the body of Christ be a faithful brother or sister to one another - bearing one another's burdens, praying fervently for one another and patiently encourage one another to pursue Christ Jesus alone instead of any of our own carnal desires and worldly pleasures.

Ministry tips:

- Be sensitive when talking about the topic of LGBTQ
 - » Don't jump to it or let it be the focal point of your encounter or relationship with someone from that community
 - » LGBTQ individuals are much more than just their sexuality, just as all of us are - we find our fullness in the Son of God alone
- Not all LGBTQ individuals are activists, some (possibly many even) actually don't support the movement at all, citing that it is not representative of their views
 - » Treat each individual as an individual. Take time to truly know them just as we hope to also be known by our friends and loved ones
- Don't quarrel with someone who has a different view of the Bible
 - » Patiently ask for their reasons for having a different view
 - » Address misconceptions about the Bible and God if any
 - » Always leave it to the person to decide for him/herself. We are not called to immediately convince everyone we meet. We are called to share the good news, it is still an individual's choice to decide whether or not to follow the call of God
- Remember that God calls us to holiness, not heterosexuality (more will be elaborated in Q11 and Q16)
 - » Heterosexuals are in need of holiness too. The struggle may not be the same but the nature is similar. We are all in need of God
 - » Homosexuality/LGBTQ behaviour is a sin, but not a sin greater than other sins
 - » Every LGBTQ person is also made in the Image of God with intrinsic worth

- Don't be afraid to apologise if you perceive that the individual has been hurt by another Christian's wrongdoings
 - » A meaningful relationship cannot develop properly with baggage of hurt from the past. We can help individuals unload them through a simple apology for ill-treatment by other Christians, making it easier for them to understand the heart of Jesus for them

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Q4: Can people be born into wrong bodies?

Quick response:

In the Christian worldview, God makes no mistakes and each individual is wonderfully made as a whole - the body for the mind, the mind for the body. Therefore, it's not possible for one to be 'born into the wrong body'.

While some may experience gender dysphoria (the feeling of discomfort in identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex), it is not evidence that 'God made a mistake', but rather that sin has also distorted our sense of self/self-identity. We need to conform the mind to the body, not the body to the mind - and we do so by renewing our minds through the Word of God and in doing so, discover our identity in Christ.

Brief Introduction to Gender Dysphoria and Recent Developments

Sex is defined as the classification of male/female according to the being's reproductive functions/body parts. In very rare cases, people could be born 'intersex' where there is a variation in their sexual organ(s). Some have suggested that the prevalence of intersex might be as high as >1.7% ^[1] by taking a very broad definition of 'intersex' that is not clinically useful. Other researchers have stressed that **if the term 'intersex' is to retain any meaning, it should be restricted to conditions in which chromosomal sex is inconsistent with phenotypic sex**¹ - leaving us with a **figure of 0.018% for the prevalence of intersex** ^[2].

The definition for gender is even less settled. In recent decades, some have defined it as a self-identity while some see it purely as a social construct (society gives it its meaning and categories), moving away from the older understandings of gender as built around biological sex. **Gender dysphoria is the feeling of discomfort in identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex. Same-sex attraction is not a criterion for someone to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria.**

Prior to the revision made in DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, 2013) ^[3], 'Gender Dysphoria' was known as 'Gender Identity Disorder'. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) explains that the aim of this change is to 'to avoid stigma and ensure clinical care for individuals

¹ refers to a mismatch between physical external and/or internal genitalia and the chromosome which determines a person's sex (X/Y chromosome)

who see and feel themselves to be a different gender than their assigned gender'. It also clarified that **gender nonconformity (not behaving according to stereotypes/expected behaviour of the 'assigned' gender) is not gender dysphoria** [4].

In 2019, WHO announced that it is removing 'gender identity disorder', aka gender dysphoria, from its list of mental disorders [5]. This move was then praised by UN experts as a 'major breakthrough' and they called on states to "review their medical classifications and adopt strong proactive measures" to eliminate the social stigma associated with gender diversity. They also stressed that denying the existence of diversity or lifestyle choices "leads to violence, including so-called 'corrective rape' and 'conversion therapy', and to forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary treatments and procedures to 'normalise' sexual attraction or human bodies" [6].

Gender Identity - Innate and Immutable?

The idea that all people have an innate "gender identity" has recently been endorsed by many health-care professionals and mainstream medical organizations [7]. This term commonly is defined to mean the "internal, deeply held" sense of whether one is a man or a woman (or, in the case of children, a boy or a girl), both, or neither [8]. It also has become rather common to claim that this sense of identity may be reliably articulated by children as young as three years old [9].

While these claims about gender identity did not attract systematic scrutiny at first, they now have become the subject of criticism from a growing number of scientists [10], philosophers [11] and health workers. Some feminists and academics have also argued gender as a performance (behaviour) [12], introduced the concept of 'gender fluidity' and thus, you may have heard that there's more than 2 genders. Under this thinking, it is completely up to an individual's own perception to self-claim or declare their own gender identity according to how they feel, and this is not immutable as feelings do change.

The 'Trans Narrative'

The 'trans narrative' proposes the following:

- If people are **not comfortable with their biological sex and experience gender dysphoria** (the feeling of discomfort in identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex), **the way to express it is to blame their body and the solution must, and only can be, to 'correct' the body**

This narrative creates a 'victimhood' for those who experience gender dysphoria,

leaving us with the politically correct and the **overly simplistic solution that is to affirm them of what they feel and support the outward expression of their 'true' gender, possibly even undergoing sex-change surgery to correct the body to fit the self-identification.**

God and Humanity

God created humans in His likeness and Image. In Genesis 1 and 2, we Christians know that He has made them 'male' and 'female'. While the Bible does not specifically mention 'gender dysphoria', it has repeatedly affirmed the two sexes and how men and women are complementary to each other (implying that there is **something different about being a man or a woman**).

God does not make mistakes, and He carefully forms each one of us - a whole being, the body for the mind and the mind for the body. Therefore, it's not possible for one to be 'born into the wrong body'.

The fall of humanity (see Q11 for more details) allowed sin to creep into creation, distorting every area of life. **Sin affects not just our body (possibly explaining why there's the intersex) but also our mind and perceptions.** While some may experience gender dysphoria, it is not evidence that 'God made a mistake', but rather **that sin has also distorted our sense of self and self-identity.** We need to conform the mind to the body, not the body to the mind - and we do so by renewing our mind through the Word of God and in doing so, discover our identity in Christ.

Jesus - The Answer For Our Identity Confusion

We can suffer from a wide range of misperceptions; **our feelings and thoughts can often be wrong.** As mentioned above, our sense of self has been distorted by sin. This misguided sense can manifest in many ways - for some it's gender dysphoria (transgender), for an even smaller group, it's trans-specie or trans-age ^{[13] [14]}.

The solution of the world is to undertake radical action to conform the body (and society) to our feelings and self-perception. But **the entire gender transitioning process which involves hormonal treatments and corrective surgery are irreversible and carries yet known effects, many of them harmful.** Many transgenders have also come out expressing regret for having undergone sex change, urging others not to follow in their footsteps ^{[15] [16]}.

What does Christianity have to offer then? Well, we have Jesus (see Q32).

All of us have an identity crisis. We don't know that we actually belong

to God and are made in His likeness and image. We are governed by our sinful desires that daily draw us away from God. We end up burdening ourselves with the wages of sin and have to endure the consequences. Jesus came to redeem us and to restore our identity as beloved children of God. **Our identity crisis can come to an end when we put our trust in Jesus.** Though we may struggle at times, we have the Holy Spirit and the Bible as our guide and comforter, to help us stay on the path of truth which leads to peace and life.

We need to and can trust God. We renew our minds through the Word of God and cast our anxieties unto Him. We can do this with great confidence because He cares for us.

Ministry tips:

- Avoid clamping down immediately on people who are expressing their confusion of their gender
- Not all cases of gender dysphoria cause a person to want to ‘change sex’
 - » Dysphoria can also be in the form where some parts of the body does not conform to the sex of a cis-gender (person whose gender identity matches his/her sex) man.
 - For example, a man having extra-large breasts, thus feeling there is a mismatch between his gender identity as a man and his physical body which resembles that of a female
- Listen, converse with them patiently to understand what makes them think so and why they are feeling this way.
 - » You may need to refer them to a clinical psychiatrist or counsellor to help them find peace with their identity
 - » Encourage them, remind them that in Christ, there’s always hope that never disappoints, that life is more abundant and greater than their gender identity crisis/struggles

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Q5: Did God make people gay?

Quick response:

For decades, society and academia have been seeking answers concerning the cause of SSA. Numerous studies have been conducted, some with the goal of supporting the biological hypothesis, but none of it could conclusively pinpoint a cause.

Instead, science has shown us that SSA could be the result of four broad categories of factors: biology, environment, childhood experiences and adult experiences. Each factor weighs differently for each individual.

Neither science nor the Bible tells us that God makes people gay. But this shouldn't stop us from loving people for everyone is made in God's image and has inherent worth.

Who Are We?

In the Christian worldview, we humans are God's creation. Not only did He breathe life into us, He created us in His image. **God's image upon us is what gives our lives value and our beings dignity.** This is a profound understanding that undergirds Christian ethics and the way we understand ourselves and the world around us.

Did God therefore make gay people? Yes, in the sense that **God created every human to be in His own image and is of infinite worth** regardless of race, language, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

But did God make people gay? **No as God doesn't contradict Himself.** God created male and female humans, one for the other, and all references to marriage in the Bible are heterosexual. Same-sex relationships are also not permitted - if God makes people gay and at the same time prohibits same-sex relationships (non-platonic, see also Q20), that will make Him contradict Himself and thus cease to be God.

Why Are Some People Gay or Same-Sex Attracted?

God created us and things were great. However, humanity rebelled against God and had to bear the consequences of sin. Sin ultimately destroys us. It is at odds with the goodness of God. Unfortunately, the **consequences of sin are not restricted merely to the physical world around us.** It has also affected us physically and

mentally. **Humanity became burdened with the various effects of sin not just in our relationship with God and one another, it has also raided our minds and bodies;** causing us to **desire things contrary to the will of God, causing our bodies to be less than the original intent of God.** Therefore, **even if biology influences sexual orientation, it's not a valid argument to classify it as moral,** especially for Christians who understand morality in light of God's design and perfect will.

But how does one respond to the person who does not hold any belief in God, and who may instead be asking "Aren't gays/lesbians born that way"? Scientific research has been attempting to answer this question for several decades, but interpreting its results dispassionately has been challenging. As with any controversial subject, results have been represented (or misrepresented) by the media, LGBT activists, and even Christians. When discussing such topics, it is good to maintain intellectual humility, but not without thoroughly investigating what the research actually says and does not say.

'Born this way' - determined to be gay?

The idea of being "born this way" needs to be unpacked properly first. The **statement asserts that being gay is a product of nature, more so than nurture. Nature could refer to 'biological hardwiring' which is almost totally out of control from the individual,** like physical traits such as eye colour, blood type, height, and others. On the other hand, **nurture could refer to psycho-social forces** such as family upbringing, trauma and abuse, and others.

In this section, let's look at some of the most common studies cited for the biological hypothesis on homosexuality. For more details, useful books include 'Homosexuality Questions and Answers' by the National Council of Churches of Singapore (2014) ^[1], 'Homosexuality and the Christian' by Dr. Mark A. Yarhouse (2010) ^[2], 'Born Gay? Examining the Scientific Evidence for Homosexuality' by Dr. John SH Tay ^[3] and 'My Genes Made Me Do It!' by Dr. NE Whitehead and BK Whitehead ^[4].

a) Brain Structure differences

In 1991, Simon LeVay and his colleagues conducted a study on brain structure and suggested that 'sexual orientation has a biological substrate' ^[5]. He came to this after discovering that the anterior hypothalamus 3 (INAH-3) in heterosexual men was twice as large compared to homosexual men, and closer to the size of that in heterosexual women. Previous research had shown differences between the male and female brain.

However, there are some issues with this study and its conclusion. The study had a **very small sample size of just 41 samples**. There were **inconsistent results**: 3 gay men had larger INAH-3 regions; 3 straight men had smaller INAH-3 regions. The **results were also not replicable** in subsequent similar studies. **Causality is unclear** given neuroplasticity of the brain, the fact that all samples come from people who have died of AIDS, and the lack of knowing full sexual histories of these people – they were assigned as homosexual or heterosexual after death.

Furthermore, in 1994, **LeVay himself admitted that he ‘did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay’** [6]. He also said: “I didn’t show that gay men are born that way – the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay centre in the brain... Since I look at adult brains, we don’t know if the differences I found were there at birth or if they appeared later.” Sadly, this clarification did not receive as wide a coverage as the initial enthusiastic reception of the hypothesis.

b) Twin studies

In the 1990s, researchers who studied twins in which one of the twins was homosexual reported higher concordance rates (likelihood of one thing occurring when another happens) among identical twins than among fraternal twins or other siblings [7]. While this may seem to suggest that something ‘biological’ is going on, it’s not a strong evidence for genetic determination of homosexuality.

Identical twins are formed from the same egg and sperm - they will therefore share almost identical set of genes, resulting in shared attributes like having the same sex and physical attributes like eye colour. If only genetic factors are affecting a trait, concordance rates for identical twins should be close to 100%, i.e. out of 10 sets of twins, all 10 sets will have the same trait. By contrast, this study by Bailey and Pillard (1991) showed **a low concordance rate of 52% for identical twins**, thus demonstrating that a high level of influence comes from non-biological factors.

Other severe issues also plagued this study. It had a **biased applicant pool** - researchers recruited participants through gay magazines. **Results could not be replicated** when done on a much larger sample size in 2000 by Bailey, Dunne and Martin - concordance rates for identical twins were only 20% for men and 24% for women [8]. Bearman and Brueckner (2002) found only 6.7% of identical twins being both gay [9].

Furthermore, the researcher Bailey also said: “Sexual orientation has nothing to do with choice. Our findings suggest there may be genes at play – we found evidence for two sets that affect whether a man is gay or straight. But it is **not completely**

determinative; there are certainly environmental factors involved. The study shows that there are genes involved in male sexual orientation. Although this could one day lead to a prenatal test for male sexual orientation, it would not be very accurate, as there are other factors that can influence the outcome” [10]. Basically, it is an admission that genes are not deterministic of a person’s sexual orientation as other non-biological factors could greatly influence it.

c) Chromosomal studies

In 1993, Hamer and colleagues proposed a link between DNA markers on the X chromosome and male sexual orientation [11]. They studied 40 families with two gay-identified brothers in each family. The study found that 33 pairs of brothers shared 5 markers on their X chromosome (from mother), at a position known as Xq28.

However, the presence of shared markers is not a strong argument for determined sexual orientation. We have 46 chromosomes (23 pairs) and genes don’t work independently. **When it comes to homosexuality, it is at best observed to be a polygenic (multiple gene with small amounts of influence, see part d) trait. So we can’t say a single gene, Xq28, directly causes a specific behaviour.**

Other issues with this study include the **inability to replicate the results** - no other study has been able to replicate Hamer’s findings. There was also **no control group** - Hamer did not look at heterosexual brothers as comparison. It is possible that other men who did not identify as gay also had the same genetic markers on their X chromosome. Hamer also **excluded results** from pairs of brothers whose genetic make-up contradicted his findings.

Lastly, Hamer himself said that “We have not found the gene—which we don’t think exists—for sexual orientation” [12]. **Other scholars working on the same type of research recognised that environmental factors play a role in a person’s eventual sexual orientation** [13, 14]. In 2017, Alan Sanders at North Shore University in response to the question “Are all men who have the “gay” variants of these genes gay?” said: “no... because many other factors play a role, including the environment... There will be men who have the form of gene that increases the chance of being gay, but they won’t be gay.” [15]

d) Largest study to date - Genome-wide association study (GWAS)

In 2019, the largest scale study to date on human sexual orientation and biology was published [16, 17]. The team of researchers conducted genome-wide association analyses of 477,522 individuals from the UK and US, replication analysis of 15,142

individuals from the US and Sweden, and follow-up analyses using different aspects of sexual preference.

This study is significant as the sample size is huge, and it is **a comprehensive attempt to understand biological influence/correlation with same-sex attraction/behaviour**. However, the results showed **only five autosomal loci significantly associated with same-sex behaviour**. In aggregate, **all tested genetic variants accounted for 8% to 25% of variation in male and female same-sex sexual behaviour**. The broad sense heritability is at **32.4% (i.e. 67.6% of the influence is non-biological)**, similar to previous smaller scale twin studies. The **lead study author Andrea Ganna also said “there is no gay gene”**, and the paper mentioned “All measured common variants together explain only part of the genetic heritability at the population level and do **not allow meaningful prediction of an individual’s sexual preference.**”

Two of the five SNPs are linked to either male balding or with the sense of smell. Other genetic correlations with same-sex behaviour found in the study include personality traits (loneliness and openness to experience), risky behaviour (smoking and cannabis use) and mental health disorders. Genetic correlations with bipolar disorder, cannabis use, and the number of sexual partners were significantly higher in females than in males. With regards to these negative behavioural and mental health disorders, the **research team was careful to emphasise that “the causal processes underlying these genetic correlations are unclear and could be generated by environmental factors** relating to prejudice against individuals engaging in same-sex sexual behaviour”.

At this point, it’s important to also note that the research team had ‘engaged LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups’ for this study and gave a box of disclaimer stating that “results do not point toward a role for discrimination on the basis of sexual identity or attraction, nor do our results make any conclusive statements about the degree to which ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ influence sexual preference.”

Role of Biology in Homosexuality

All these point to the same conclusion after decades of study that **no one knows the exact reasons or cause of homosexuality**; not even pro-LGBTQ scientific communities can claim biological determination nor know the cause ^[18]. Just as same-sex behaviour is genetically correlated with mental health disorders and risky behaviour cannot allow us to conclude causation, **we must not confuse correlation of findings with causation.**

It is however important to note the possibility that biology contributes in some

way to homosexuality. Four main contributing factors to homosexuality are being discussed today, and the factors are: **biology, childhood experiences, environmental influences, and adult experiences** (not ordered according to significance of influence/contribution). Each factor weighs differently for different people (see [\[2\]](#) for more details).

So What's The Big Deal If Sexual Orientation Is Not Determined By Biology?

The biological hypothesis suggests that because sexual orientation is determined by biology, any form of sexual attraction or orientation needs to be accepted as an ordinary biological diversity, and it will be immutable.

However, as mentioned above, it is clear that homosexuality is not genetically determined, but rather the **result of a complex mix of various factors**. Physical traits which are biologically determined such as eye colour, skin colour or sex cannot be drawn as a comparison to place sexual orientation as a biologically determined part of humanity.

Knowing that homosexuality is not biologically determined also **dispels the myth that it's impossible for a person to experience a shift in their sexual preference or orientation** (see Q8 for more details). Since it is not determined/locked-in by biology, real change is possible although categorical change (exclusively homosexual to heterosexual vice versa and etc.) is rare and it is more common for people to experience change in degrees of attraction or the way they perceive their own attraction and hence their own management of it.

For the Christian experiencing SSA, **remember that your goal is not unique. It is not about becoming heterosexual, it's all about holiness.**

As Christians who believe that homosexuality is not in line with the design and will of God for us, we must also be careful and remember that a person's attractions or orientation is not something they choose. **People with SSA find themselves being attracted to the same sex, not by making a conscious choice to do so. This said, people experiencing SSA do have choices to make.** It is untrue that they 'can't help it' and must indulge in homo-erotic behaviour. They do have to make choices about their own behaviour and identity.

Ministry tips:

- No one chooses their sexual attraction and preference
 - » At the same time, we are more than our sexual desires

- » Focus on our identity in Christ - all our struggles are common and indeed God gives us a way of escape
- » Escape does not necessarily mean freedom from struggles with SSA (although it could be), it means ability to deny the carnal desires and pursue godly ones in the direction of holiness
- Focus on how humans are all flawed and will search out love in all places, people and things – these are all futile without truly encountering God.
- Stand firm on the fact that there is no such thing as being born gay
 - » Remember, there are at least 4 broad categories of factors that contribute in an unknown manner to a person's sexual preference
 - » Acknowledging that biology may be a part of the influencing factors does not validate the 'born this way' narrative. Humanity is fallen, our biology too is.
 - » Change of sexual preference/orientation is possible but not the goal. Holiness is, and it is achievable with the help of the Holy Spirit
- Not every human condition is the work of demons. Don't jump to the conclusion that a person is in need of deliverance!
- Walk through life with the person: get to know the person better and minister to their needs
 - » Ministering to a friend/member experiencing SSA is not just a matter of imparting knowledge about God and the Bible
 - » People want to be heard and understood. Sometimes they need help clarifying things they have heard from other communities that suggest they embrace SSA as their core identity
 - » Learning about SSA scientifically can take time and effort. But if we truly love our friends and members who are experiencing SSA, we should take some time to understand their experience and struggles before attempting to journey with them towards the common goal of holiness

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Q6: What about homosexuality in the animal kingdom?

Quick response:

'Natural' can be understood in 2 different senses: as occurring within nature, or as nature intended it to be; purpose-oriented. Homosexuality fails the second sense of the word as the practice will ultimately drive the species to extinction - something contrary to the primary function of sex which is to procreate.

Furthermore, animals are not the best model to help us understand humanity and sexuality. Human's sexuality is much more complex - it is not singularly determined by one factor but influenced by multiple factors. Therefore, even though homosexuality exists in the animal kingdom, it cannot be taken as a good model for humans.

Homosexuality In The Animal Kingdom

In recent years, penguins have captured the imagination of many people because several penguins have modelled homosexual mating and parenting behaviour ^[1] - Books like "And Tango Makes Three" that tells a story of 'gay penguin parents' adopting a chick (based on a true story!) had also hit the shelves in the children's section. A quick search on the internet will easily yield countless other animals that display homosexual behaviour as well. Some are therefore asking: "If homosexuality is so common in nature, then why is it considered so wrong for us humans?"

In line with that, scientists are attempting to put forth more sophisticated evolutionary explanations as to why homosexuality exists as more evidence on animal models emerge ^[2]. A study of a so-called 'gay sheep' seeks to show that if an aspect of the animal's biology can be manipulated to increase same-sex behaviour, then that 'biological switch' is the likely cause of homosexuality ^[3]. In 2005, a study on fruit flies has suggested that the fru gene affects sexual behaviour and may cause females to manifest same-sex behaviour ^[4]. However, the researchers also cautioned that controls on a fruit fly's sexual behaviour are undoubtedly different from our own. Barry Dickson, one of the authors, said: "In the **case of humans, we know that our sexual behaviours are not irreversibly set by our genes...** But that doesn't mean the genes have no influence," Another researcher who has studied fly mating patterns, Hans Van Gossum of Antwerp,

Belgium, also said: “It’s **too early to draw strong conclusions on simple mechanisms like this**” ^[5].

In the past, it may have been assumed that homosexuality could not be normal in nature since it is incapable of reproduction, but now it has been observed to actually occur (although still not a norm), and explanations have been given as to why. This would seem to invalidate what people of the past used to think. (After all, laws which outlawed homosexuality were written typically as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”).

What Does ‘Natural’ Mean?

While ‘natural’ may mean something observable in the natural realm, (including physical, biological and ecological phenomena), ‘natural’ also refers to **an innate characteristic of a person or thing, which includes its proper function**. The idea of homosexual sex being unnatural in this sense, that is, it does not fulfil the function of sex, which is for procreation, is as old as Plato and has theories on Natural law ^[6]. The complications which arise from penile-anal sex is also another way that is ‘unnatural’ in that the disjointed functions easily lead to health complications and risks (see Q9).

In short, the important thing to remember is that the meaning of ‘nature’ extends beyond observations of sexual behaviour in the animal kingdom, and hence homosexual acts can be unnatural in the other sense of the word.

Inappropriate Model

Ultimately, justifying homosexuality as being acceptable because it happens in the animal world critically misses the point by forgetting a more fundamental question - is it right to model morality after animal behaviour? Penguins of various species have also displayed necrophilia, sexual coercion and abuse: in other words, sexual behaviours that most people would object to ^[7]. There are many other analogous immoral actions that occur in the animal world, such as predation, rape, incest, and others. **We cannot cherry-pick behaviours which occur among animals and suit our liking to argue for normalisation of a behaviour**. Human’s sexual behaviour is much more complex than mating rituals and numerous studies have pointed to a mix of factors rather than a single determinant.

In other words, arguing that homosexuality is acceptable since it occurs in nature is a fundamentally bad argument because it commits the **‘is-ought fallacy’**: **just because something exists in nature (is), it is not obvious that it is morally acceptable and that we ought to follow so**.

Ministry tips:

- If someone asks this question in hopes of justifying homosexuality as something 'normal', ask a clarifying question: "What do you mean by natural?"
 - » Homosexual sexual behaviour, especially male homosexual acts like sodomy, among humans is harmful as it goes against the design of the human anatomy (see *question 9 and 10 for more details*)
 - » Sex is safest and best enjoyed within a monogamous relationship - a marriage
- Holiness in our approach to sexuality allows us to live our lives to the fullest, without being bound to carnal drives which may end up hurting ourselves or subject us to ongoing fear and anxiety (e.g. fear of diseases, fear of having an unwanted pregnancy in cases of pre-marital heterosexual sex)

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Q7: Is homosexuality a disorder?

Quick response:

Today, scientific communities don't consider homosexuality to be a mental disorder, but this was not without dispute. Activism was the most important factor which led to the declassification of homosexuality as a disorder beginning in 1970s. The declassification is due to a vote which decided that homosexuality did not belong to the classification of 'a disorder' as it does not meet the new criteria of mental disorder which looked for 'caused subjective distress or were associated with generalized impairment in social effectiveness of functioning'.

There's no need for us to fixate on whether or not homosexuality is a disorder since Christianity does not aim to change sexual orientation even though change is possible.

Removal Of Homosexuality From DSM-II Revisited

1973 marked an important year for LGBTQ activists as homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II) [\[1,2\]](#). This is **significant as the DSM is the handbook used by healthcare professionals in the United States and much of the world as the authoritative guide to the diagnosis of mental disorders**. Since then, the American Psychological Association and American Psychiatric Association have expressed that homosexuality is largely considered to be 'normal form of human sexuality', and would not hinder healthy human development [\[2\]](#). Later in 1990, the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) [\[3\]\[4\]](#). Today, major scientific and professional bodies no longer consider homosexuality to be a disorder.

What led to the removal? It is well documented and not really disputed that gay activists played a major role, if not most important role, in removing homosexuality from the DSM-II in 1973 [\[5\]\[6\]](#). Simon LeVay, a researcher who published on the 'gay brain' (see Q5 for more details), said that "Gay activism was clearly the force that propelled the APA to declassify homosexuality" [\[7\]](#). The politics of this was even documented by a gay activist (Professor Ronald Bayer) himself [\[8\]](#). Since 1970, gay activists disrupted meetings of the American Psychiatric Association. Due to intense pressure, a special panel called 'Gay is good' sponsored by homosexuals was even allowed in 1971 to explain to psychiatrists concerning the stigma caused by the 'homosexuality' diagnosis.

Eventually, the proposal to remove homosexuality from APA nomenclature in 1973 was made. The committee in charge of this review included Dr. Robert Spitzer, and various researchers presented views on the proposal to remove homosexuality from nomenclature. Objectors of the proposal were only given 15 minutes to rebut the entire proposal [7]. **Reasons for removal include ‘homosexual diagnosis causes stigma and distress’ and ‘homosexuality did not fit the definition of mental disorder’.** **Reasons for objecting the removal include ‘psychoanalytic studies that pointed to developmental arrest’ and ‘ambiguity of redefining homosexuality as a deviant sexuality/sexual dysfunction’** [9].

An appeal to the APA members was done in the form of a letter signed by several candidates for president of the association and other prominent psychiatrists pleading to make the change. These letters were drafted by the Gay and Lesbian Task Force who also paid for the postage.

Homosexuality was eventually removed from the DSM, done after a vote (only 34% of APA’s membership responded) with 5854 in favour of depathologization to 3810 who disagreed [4][6]. This **resulted in the removal of homosexuality from being classified as a ‘disorder’ to a new classification called ‘sexual orientation disturbance’** which regarded homosexuality as an illness only if an individual with same-sex attraction found the attraction distressing/unwanted and wants to change [5].

Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction

Could a person’s same-sex or sexual attraction be unwanted? What can a person do if he/she decides that their SSA is unwanted? What about people who experience SSA but are simply uninterested in a romantic relationship? Do they exist? Yes, these people do exist [see Truelove.is/weexist].

An attraction or a desire could be decided by an individual to be unwanted when a person is convinced that another path exists and is preferred.

Take for example a heterosexual married man who doesn’t cease to be heterosexual after getting married. The man may at some point in life be attracted to another attractive lady who’s not his wife. This (sexual) attraction could be unwanted by the man because he also loves his wife. In fact, he loves his wife more than the opportunity to fulfil/pursue his own sexual attraction to that other woman.

In the same manner, some people may have **similar convictions or preferences which lead them to not wanting their experienced SSA.** People should be given a choice to decide what to do with their life experiences and attractions, but

recently there have been increased calls to take this choice away through banning a poorly defined blanket term called ‘conversion therapy’ (see Q8 for more).

This has happened in the past as well. Dr. Robert Spitzer, the same person who chaired the subcommittee looking into the matter of removing homosexuality from APA nomenclature, later became concerned with proposals by the APA to make it unethical for a psychiatrist to attempt to provide therapy for any homosexual who genuinely wants to change [7]. He felt that there wasn’t sufficient discussion concerning the ethics of therapy for those who want to change. He then proposed a debate between two sides of this matter to take place in 2000, but the debate did not happen as both doctors on the side of discontinuing therapy even for those who wanted change withdrew from the event, and they even impugned Dr. Spitzer’s impartiality.

Realities Today

Today, the standard for psychotherapy in the U.S. and Europe is gay affirmative psychotherapy, which encourages gay people to accept their sexual orientation [4]. Calls to completely ban all forms of therapy (including counselling) for unwanted SSA have been raised [10].

Although homosexuality is not categorized as a disorder, it is recognized that many homosexuals **continue to suffer from a range of other mental illnesses such as depression or have suicidal tendencies, even in highly ‘tolerant’ or ‘affirming’ societies.** Suicide rates continue to be two times higher among those who have entered same-sex marriages in Denmark and Sweden (both very affirming societies) as compared to those who entered opposite-sex marriages. [11][12]. Risky behaviours such as drug taking continue to be more common among the LGBTQ community despite increased affirmation as well [13]. Activists continue to suggest that the reason for this is purported to be bigotry, ‘homophobia’, and other forms of ostracisation. In the sexually liberal societies today, HIV continue to plague the gay community (men who have sex with men - MSM) disproportionately more than the heterosexuals despite public acceptance and increased public sex education promoting ‘safe practices’ in homosexual sex [14][15]. In Europe, the proportion of all HIV diagnoses attributed to sex between men increased over the period from 35% of cases in 2007 to 40% in 2016 [16]. This is noteworthy as these are the realities in Western and Central Europe where there is a high level of public affirmation and acceptance.

The promises of affirmation have not seem to materialise as believed, while the associated issues and predicted consequences (health and social) of ambiguous classification/normalising homosexuality have come to pass.

What Do All These Mean For The Christian?

The above paragraphs are not meant to paint the LGBTQ individuals as lesser than heterosexuals. Neither are they more 'dirty' than heterosexuals, and it is important for us to acknowledge the struggles they face - this includes being bullied and ostracised by some parts of society, and the pain they feel when rejected by loved ones. These are also significant (but not the only) factors/negative experiences of LGBTQ individuals who turn to drug-taking or risky behaviour to numb themselves.

Acknowledging these does not amount to affirmation, and neither does it mean we have to follow the activists' sole recommendation to affirm. Acknowledging these help us better understand their point of view and be a better friend/confidant to them, as we would to anyone else who's struggling with something. Bullying is never right, regardless of sexuality, religion, race etc.

On this note, activists often blame religious groups for the hate and ostracisation that have prevented the achievement of expected positive results of gay-affirmation in society. **Although there is some truth to this (a small minority of religious people continue to be hateful in speech), it is important to resist such accusations when they are used as a way to silence legitimate, non-judgemental criticism of homosexual behaviour and analysis of its consequences.**

For Christians who experience SSA, we don't know what the causes of it are, but we do know that a person's **sexual orientation is not as immutable as claimed**. While categorical changes are rare (exclusively homosexual to exclusively heterosexual) and **not the goal, we should be striving to live a life holy unto God - regardless of sexual attraction (opposite or same)**. Also, please **do not think that you are dirtier than others, or that you are unredeemable** just because the struggle could be daily and very personal. We are all prodigal children who have been away from God, and **God offers the same welcome and love to all who are willing to heed His call to repentance**. The Church is trying to become a safer space for all of us to come out with our deepest, darkest and most personal struggles. Sometimes we do well, sometimes not so well. Let us have patience, kindness and gentleness towards one another, always forgiving and willing to help each other grow in both truth and love.

Concerning Christians who don't experience SSA, we **should not treat a person who experiences SSA as if they are diseased or need to be cured. While homosexuality is not acceptable in Christianity, heterosexuality is not**

the goal for the Christian, holiness is - and this is the goal for everyone regardless of sexuality. We certainly should not ostracise anyone from our circles on the basis of SSA. Like a person experiencing any other temptation (see Q11), Christians experiencing SSA need our support and a safe space to understand their feelings and make sense of their identity in Christ. We could minister to such people by praying for the hurt, tension, depression and other struggles that they experience alongside their SSA, just as we would for anyone else. We should also **encourage one another to focus on our identity in Christ instead of taking sexuality as the core of one's identity**, and by doing so help one another pursue a more wholesome life which comes with a genuine pursuit of God. God has a good hope and a future for anyone who believes in Him and trusts Him to be above their struggles.

Ministry tips:

- There's no need to be too bothered with whether homosexuality is a disease, illness or disorder
 - » Exact cause of SSA is unknown (see Q5)
 - » Goal is not to change sexual orientation but to help one another focus on Jesus
- Don't assume that LGBTQ individuals are all promiscuous, drug-addicts/prone or have other accompanying mental disorders
 - » There are many factors that contribute to high risk behaviour (including high risk sexual behaviour), drug consumption and development of mental disorders
 - » We may not agree with LGBTQ's narrative on sexuality, but we can and should love the individual and care for them
 - » **Forming negative stereotypes hardly helps anyone.** We can instead acknowledge that they are at higher risk for these and look to help them in other ways apart from affirming their sexuality
- **Don't demonise activists** just because we disagree with their perspectives
 - » Activists could themselves be people who were hurt by bad practices, sometimes even by Christians/Christian communities
 - » Understand their hurt and struggles, hear them out, engage them in a civil discussion if possible
 - » Agree to disagree, there's no need to immediately convince someone
 - » We can disagree but still be friends and love one another

- » If they have gone overboard, call out what was wrong boldly without having to suggest that they are inherently evil people
- Encourage the pursuit of truth and goodness together

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Q8: What is ‘Conversion Therapy’?

Quick response:

‘Conversion Therapy’ is a loaded term coined by LGBTQ activists to refer to therapies which help individuals manage unwanted SSA. The term has taken on political dimensions and is used to give the impression that a particular type of modern therapy is harmful to the individual.

The goal of such therapies targeted with the label “Conversion Therapy” is ironically far from what the name suggests. It does not seek to convert a person out of SSA but instead takes a client-honouring approach, working with the person towards the self-determined goals concerning emotional wellness.

Success is not determined by whether a person’s sexual orientation changes, but is subjective and in accordance to the person’s own preference and goals.

Understanding ‘Conversion Therapy’ and the heat generated around this topic requires us to first look backwards to see what Conversion Therapy was, and second, to look at the present to see what “Conversion Therapy” is today. Third, one would also have to understand the political dimension of how “Conversion Therapy” is used in public discourse and what it is trying to achieve.

What Is “Conversion Therapy” (CT)?

There is **no authoritative definition of Conversion Therapy (CT)**, but the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has proposed a description which has been used by the US Supreme Court. In 2018, the APA reiterated that it **opposes “any psychiatric treatment, such as “reparative” or “conversion” therapy, that is based on the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or is based on the a priori assumption that the patient should change his or her SSA [\[1\]](#).”**

Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) have also been labelled as CT and have been run-down by ex-practitioners, some of whom have come out as gay themselves, as an ineffective therapeutic method for changing sexual orientation. In 2012, Exodus International, one of the world’s largest therapy providers for people seeking relief from unwanted SSA, was shut down by its own directors who subsequently apologised for Exodus’ false promises of sexual orientation change, and for the shame and hurt incurred by the recipients of their therapy. At the same time, there are many therapists and therapy recipients who have reported constructive outcomes from ministries like Exodus [\[2\]](#).

Conversion Therapy's Past

When discussing “Conversion Therapy”, it is important to acknowledge that **unscientific, and even harmful methods have been used in the past by some** in hopes of helping someone transition from homosexuality to heterosexuality. These include,

- Violent exorcisms
- Being given porn/nude pictures of the opposite gender to masturbate to
- Forced sex with the opposite gender to coerce heterosexuality
- Aversion Techniques
- Electroconvulsive Therapy¹ (An established medical practice in treating and schizophrenia but rarely used ^[3])
- Forceful counselling techniques
- Demanding psycho-emotional repression
- Forced physicality modification - e.g. don't cross your legs etc.
- Strenuous physical exercise to toughen one up
- Shame-based public confessionals
- Social isolation and silencing
- Artificial blaming of parental figures

The **desired outcome of “conversion therapy” is as its name suggests, to convert the individual from homosexuality to heterosexuality.**

An example of harmful conversion therapy can be seen in the landmark case which banned conversion therapy in New Jersey. Here, four people sued an organisation which they paid to rid them of homosexual desires. The methods and practices included nudity, anti-gay slurs, and one was even made to beat an effigy of his mother ^[4].

It is understandable that anyone of sound mind should condemn these methods. We Christians, too, condemn these methods.

At times, even though only ‘talk therapy’ was used (as in the case of Exodus International), **when promises of a transition to heterosexuality are made, this can lead to disappointment and frustration when the results**

¹ This is an extreme imagery sometimes invoked to scare listeners concerning therapy options for people with unwanted SSA. In reality, before patients are permitted to undergo ECT, they will be assessed extensively and only able to go for it if consent is provided either by themselves or a relative - governed by laws and strict medical practice guidelines.

don't materialise. Some might classify these quasi-therapeutic efforts, which are more like spiritual (mis)direction as conversion therapy as well.

The Politics of “Conversion Therapy”

Today, politics more than science dominates the discourse around conversion therapy. “Harmful Conversion Therapy” and “Conversion Therapy Survivor” are phrases bandied about by those who would seek to **discredit any form of therapeutic treatment that does not have as its objective the affirmation of a person's gay identity.**

However, these **convenient accusations are merely attempts at shutting down conversation around the therapy options for people with unwanted SSA or people who are trying to make sense of their sexuality. Instead of encouraging understanding, this labelling creates an unhelpful stigma around therapies for people with SSA,** since labelling something as “conversion therapy” evokes images of the extreme, ineffective, and degrading practices as mentioned above. In doing so, people who would resort to such sloganeering are in fact **depriving individuals from making choices for themselves** concerning their sexuality.

In addition to shutting down conversation around therapies, **the “conversion therapy” label is also employed as a bully tactic against those who want to offer help to SSA individuals for a variety of professional, ethical and moral reasons.** These individuals too are lambasted for their views and unfairly bullied by gay activists and their allies who often do not understand the context of the help being offered to SSA individuals.

It is also increasingly an issue for people with SSA who want to hold onto the traditional Christian belief about sexuality. Such people want to **reconcile their sexuality or attractions with traditional Christian understandings of marriage and sexuality.** They don't agree nor want the affirming approach, and they should be given their unalienable rights to choose the support they desire and the space to work things out with their local church/pastor/community. **A blanket ban that wrongly labels pastoral care/counselling as “conversion therapy” will do more harm than good for these individuals.** Pastors and individuals need to have this safe space to explore and reconcile sexuality with their Christian beliefs.

SOCEs are politically charged because they strike a nerve in the homosexual community as **SSA individuals who choose not to embrace the LGBTQ identity and life choices undermine two core premises of the LGBTQ philosophical position: a) one is born this way and b) one can never**

change (sexuality is immutable). LGBTQ advocates therefore say that any attempt to change is going to be harmful as the very existence of any SSA individuals/ex-gays who do not buy their narrative is evidence against their flawed fundamental beliefs (see Q5). There are also studies that have questioned the call for a broad ban on SOCE and other legitimate therapies ^[5].

Furthermore, this position is at odds with research that even LGBTQ activists themselves subscribe to which indicates that sexual orientation and sexual attraction are fluid, i.e. **not immutable**.

Sexual Attraction And Orientation: Is Change Possible?

Concerning sexual attraction, research, writings and testimonies abound on the fluid and sometimes fleeting nature of certain sexual attractions. **SSA seems to**

Following the definition of a homosexual in this booklet, the answer is a definite yes - change is possible, as an individual is responsible for their own life choices and pursuing of desires.

There have also been testimonies of people no longer living with SSA, and even activists believe in the fluidity of sexual attraction. Since there's no evidence of genetic determinism and immutability of sexual orientation, it is thus very possible to experience changes in sexual attraction (by degrees or categorical however rare they may be) or even orientation.

be fleeting among youths/teenagers as >90% boys reported to have stopped experiencing SSA after puberty ^[6]. Sexual fluidity especially among women has been brought up by authors like Lisa Diamond and other academics on this topic. They suggest that **sexuality exists on a spectrum, challenging both traditional and radical views on sexuality which holds that sexuality is immutable within specific categories**. Other studies show that **even among adults, sexual orientation change is possible concerning shifts in the degree of attraction**, although categorical changes are less common ^[7]. Certain people get 'awakened' to their SSA after sexual experimentation or certain sexual encounters with someone of the same sex - showing that they were not always gay or even same-sex attracted.

Following the definition of 'gay/homosexual' as outlined in this booklet - i.e. someone who experiences SSA and chooses to act upon that SSA, **it is possible for an individual to be responsible for their own life choices and pursuit of desires**. Just as one can abide by the moral obligation to abstain from sex before and outside of marriage, and just as others choose to remain chaste while single in pursuit of a higher goal, **an SSA person is equally able to (and should be**

allowed to) make the choice to refrain from sexual expression with a person of the same sex should their moral code prescribe it.

In sum, it is very possible for a person to choose to refrain from practicing homosexuality. Flowing from the growing heap of evidence and testimonies, we cannot ignore the lived-experience of many ex-gay people. The evidence clearly shows that shifting from same-sex attraction to heterosexuality is very possible and hence it is inaccurate to claim that a person's same-sex sexual orientation is immutable.

However, we emphasise that **this is not to say that heterosexuality should be the goal for a Christian.** Indeed, heterosexuality is not even a standard by which we determine if a person is a Christian or otherwise. **Heterosexuality is not something to be sought, and SSA is not something to be cured. An individual with SSA can and should be able to decide if their attractions are wanted or unwanted based on their own personal values and worldview.**

Therapeutic Solutions Available To People With Unwanted SSA

For the Christian, self-guided prayer is always an option. Prayer is not coercive in nature, and neither is it manipulative, especially when the individual him/herself requests for it. The Bible exhorts believers to bring our requests before the Lord (Phil 4:6), and that we are to cast our cares upon Him for he cares for us (1 Pet 5:7). **Just as any individual prays in times of anxiety, the SSA person must be free to bring their prayer to God in the pursuit of wholeness;** possibly seeking psychological and emotional healing of hidden trauma or bad past experiences (if any). They should also be free to pursue a righteous and holy life of self-control as guided by the Biblical worldview.

Each individual should be given the opportunity to decide what their own goals are and what they want to do with their personal experiences like their experience of SSA. **Professional counselling and therapy aim to do that through a client-honouring approach where the client decides what's best and desired for him/herself.** Taking a client-honouring approach **does not mean promising a change in sexual orientation,** but rather embarking on very personalised conversations for the client specifically **to help them make meaning of their own subjective experience of sexuality and empower them for a life according to their own desired goals.** This could also include investigating the client's own beliefs and past experiences which may have contributed to their sexual attractions and the fluidity of their attraction over time.

Some professional therapies include:

- **Cognitive Therapy** which focuses on specific problems as the therapist helps the patient develop skills which would test and challenge some core beliefs. This helps one identify one-sided thinking and encourages the patient to try out relating to themselves and others in different ways, and not to be afraid of changing some of their learned behaviours.
- **Behavioural therapy** helps change problematic actions (e.g. high risk behaviour) that have been trained through years of reinforcement.
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** therapy, assists with processing distressing memories, reducing their lingering effects and permitting one to develop more adaptive coping mechanisms.
- **Group Therapy in Men's Groups** where healthy attention, affirmation and affection within boundaries were experienced. In this non-sexualised environment, matters of the heart are faced head on and men often come to experience a deep self-acceptance through engagement with other men.
- **Psychoanalytic therapy**, where one is helped to face the effects of subconscious patterns and beliefs by gradually bringing this material into the conscious.

When these therapeutic approaches are accompanied with a supportive community which refrains from putting labels like Gay, Straight, Homosexual etc. upon the individual, and when the individual is supported without any agenda except to love the individual, these therapeutic methods are given the necessary space to work appropriately.

Therapeutic methods, counselling and prayer do not constitute “conversion therapy”. Modern therapies available to SSA individuals **do not use coercive techniques or aversion tactics. Neither is there an emphasis on the need to change sexual orientation but rather a professionally guided exploration according to the clients' own preferences and goals.**

In a culture apt to label almost any therapeutic method which is not gay-affirming as “conversion therapy”, we have to be vigilant to **differentiate helpful client-honouring professional counselling from conversion therapies which promise or require change in sexual orientation.** Many times, accusations of “conversion therapy” are deliberate falsehoods intended to generate heat and direct abuse towards a group of people trying to help a marginalised minority - people with unwanted SSA or people trying to make sense of their own sexuality and life experiences.

The fact that a person can be same-sex attracted but live out a life consistently with the Christian faith is not conversion therapy. And the fact that same-sex attracted Christians walking with God **experience a change in their desires and preferences (like a by-product) is not conversion therapy.** When a person voluntarily changes his/her mind on a topic due to new priorities and discovered reasons, his/her choice should be respected. **Tolerance works both ways - not only when it conveniently fits a certain desired/preferred narrative.**

Individuals need to have the space to work out their own thoughts, their experiences, and safety in coming out with their eventual conclusions/decisions. **Misuse of the “conversion therapy” label ironically takes away the safe space and choices from people exploring their sexuality/SSA instead of helping them.** We should therefore not use this term loosely and baselessly but instead, engage in reasonable dialogue and protect the safe space for people to work out their sexuality.

Ministry tips:

- Explain patiently the goal of non-affirming counselling/therapy and its benefits
 - » It allows a person to explore possible unresolved issues which may otherwise be glossed over by counsellors that are quick to affirm an LGBTQ identity
 - » Regardless of whether the issues contributed to a person’s experience of SSA, it is undeniable that if the person finds resolution to these issues, he/she will attain a better quality of life
- To apply a blanket ban just because such approaches do not affirm the LGBTQ narrative and identity will end up:
 - » Taking away the choices of same-sex attracted individuals who want an alternative and a chance to work on other issues
 - » Taking away access to help/guidance to live faithfully according to their faith (e.g. Christianity)
- Remember that there are poorly crafted programmes from even well-meaning Christians who sincerely still believe that a person with SSA needs to and definitely will be ‘cured’ of it through certain procedures
 - » Be ready to apologise for false over-promises and harmful methods mentioned in the earlier segments of this answer
 - » Give a brief explanation of what Christianity is actually about: **Restoration of humanity to its original wholesome state; reconciliation with God**

- Goal is to become holy, not heterosexual. This standard applies for all sexualities whatever it may be.
- Every Christian undergoes the same renewal of their minds -> to be sanctified and transformed more into Christ's image
- Such true transformation can't be imitated nor imposed. it's purely out of a person's own free will and the work of God in his/her life
- While homosexual acts are sinful, it is never our role to force a person to change.
- We should encourage a person to stop sinning, but leave the person to make the choice on their own and love them regardless of their decision. Our love is unconditional and we should trust that God can and will bring back the prodigal.

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Q9: Does anal sex harm the body?

Quick response:

Anal penetration is definitely a high-risk sexual activity that could harm the body. The rectum's design is meant to excrete, not to receive. Anal sex has a high risk or transmission efficiency for HIV and other kinds of STDs or infections, even among heterosexuals. It also significantly increases the odds of developing anal cancer.

Any casual sexual activity with multiple partners puts the individual at risk of STDs. It is wise to abstain from all sexual activity before and outside of marriage, and to avoid engaging in anal sex.

Male homosexual sexual activity could include various types of sex acts such as oral and anal sex. Anal sex in particular, has been highly debated and scrutinised by society. In this section, we will take a closer look at these two sex acts in the context of homosexual relations.

Anal Sex - A High-Risk Sexual Activity

You may have heard the common term used to describe anal sex - 'high-risk sexual activity'. What's this risk all about and what is the standard to which the risk is compared with for it to be labelled as 'high-risk'?

Comparing anal sex with vaginal sex, the **risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is much higher**. Studies have shown that anal sex, especially being a receptive partner (being penetrated) during anal sex, is the **highest-risk sexual activity for getting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** ^[1]. **Significantly greater transmission efficiency of anal intercourse is also the case among heterosexuals** ^[2]. This is possibly due to the design of the rectum which is meant to hold stool (**full of bacteria**), has a **thinner lining**, and has no natural lubricant unlike the vagina. Tears are more likely to happen, and such tears could increase infections such as anal abscesses or even other kinds of STDs ^[3].

Apart from the risk of STDs, individuals who engage in unprotected anal intercourse are also at the greatest risk for other health issues such as anorectal infections ^[4]. Other studies have also suggested that repeated exposure to semen through anal sex can alter/weaken the immune system of the semen recipients ^{[5][6]}.

Use of condoms are also not very effective in protecting men who have sex

with men (MSMs) from acquiring human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause anal/oral cancer. **Although anal cancer is very rare among the general population, the risk of MSM getting it is 20-40x (20x for those without HIV, 40x for those with HIV) that among the general population** ^[7], some other studies **even estimate the risk to be 30-100x higher among HIV-positive patients** ^[8]. The risk is high because the **cervix and anal cavity are similar in its make-up which is conducive for HPV growth (they are HPV's target chambers)**. The female body seems to be able to clear the virus in a couple of years, but there's no such mechanism in the anus to do so.

Resurgence Of STDs

While HIV infections have decreased from a peak since the introduction of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in the 1980s, we are now seeing **an increase in other forms of STDs like syphilis or gonorrhoea with a relaxing of attitude towards STDs even in medically advanced countries** like the US and Sweden ^{[9][10]}.

Affirmation Narrative Not Effective In General

In Europe where societies/countries are very affirming of LGBTQ and gay sex, the proportion of all HIV diagnoses attributed to sex between men increased from 35% of cases in 2007 to 40% in 2016 ^[11]. The usual diagnosis of the issue is that there is insufficient proactive testing, insufficient use of condoms and treatments. While the uptake could indeed help reduce the challenges faced, the **best way to reduce risk is still to abstain from sexual activity or remain faithful in monogamy**.

PrEP has been promoted as effective in reducing HIV spread but only those who have the means to afford PrEP and take it consistently can keep their HIV viral load low and effectively reduce the chances of spread ^[12]. The cost of PrEP is currently at about SGD400 per month, and the duration required varies from person to person ^[13]. Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is also available for those who suspect that they have suspected HIV exposure, but the cost of consultation and medication can range from SGD500 to close to SGD2000 ^{[14][15]}.

To protect MSM from anal cancer, some have also suggested MSM to take the HPV vaccine which again is costly - costs about \$360-\$500 for the three injections required ^[7].

Wisdom Of Chastity In Singleness, Faithfulness In Marriage

Although sexual activity is pleasurable and strengthens bonding between couples,

there is wisdom in keeping it within the confines of a monogamous relationship even for a non-Christian. It is also wise to abstain from anal sex given its risks of bacterial infection and other issues even within a monogamous relationship (regardless of sexuality).

For Christians, the **biblical position of 'holy sexuality' comes forth as great wisdom.** The avoidance of sex before and outside marriage, plus sex primarily for the procreation of children between married couples (i.e. vaginal intercourse) are still the safest ways to avoid harming our bodies through sexual activity. **God loves us too much to have us destroy ourselves through impulsive, high-risk behaviour.** Let us heed the call of God and turn toward Him, even in our sexual behaviour and sexuality.

Ministry tips:

- Focus on the well-being of the individual and not on whether or not the act is morally right or wrong
 - » If someone opens up to you about having contracted an STD or HIV, focus on helping the person, not on lecturing or 'disciplining' the person
- While HIV transmission is higher among men who have sex with men, other risky sexual behaviours like promiscuity and having sex with sex workers also put people at risk
 - » Stating facts such as anal sex having a significantly greater transmission efficiency or that transmission rates are much higher within the gay community do not suggest that it is a 'gay' virus
 - » It merely tells the reality and current situation concerning the matter
- Holiness is the goal and promoting it is good as it has the accompanying effect of good health/low-risk of sexual diseases
 - » Approach the topic from this angle, with the best interests for the person in mind
 - » People don't care how much you know until they understand or feel how much you care for them

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Q10: What about female homosexuality?

Quick response:

Female homosexual sexual activity may be less risky than male ones, but it is still a channel for the spread of STDs. Avoiding discussion or making plain sexual health risks in favour of ‘affirmation and celebration’ of sexual experimentation or pursuits is not loving the individual.

Again, biblical wisdom on sexuality serves as the best path for our personal health - chastity in singleness, faithfulness (monogamy) in marriage.

The Bible does not mention much about female homosexuality, but it is a part of ‘unnatural relations’ (Rom 1:26), and hence is not an acceptable sexual behaviour.

As covered elsewhere (see Q9), the health impacts of homosexual activity (in particular, anal sex), is probably one of the most compelling secular reasons for discouraging anal sex and encouraging self-labelled male homosexuals to carefully consider their life choices. But what about lesbians, who are, by physical realities, unable to perform penile-anal intercourse?

Health Risks From Female Homosexual Sex Acts

There’s an impression that female homosexual activity is ‘more permissible, and female homosexuality is ‘more acceptable’ on the basis of health outcomes. However, lower risk is not no risk. **Chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage are still the best ways to protect oneself from STDs and other sexual health issues.**

Although transmissions of HIV between two females are rare, there do exist cases that involved the forceful, careless and unhygienic use of sex toys [1]. There used to be a myth that lesbians are not susceptible to HPV, but this has been disproved and instead, a 2016 US study (n=7132) showed that **HPV infection outcomes were more common among non-heterosexual women (i.e. bisexual or sexually queer) and lesbians than heterosexual women** [2]. HPV is **passed through skin-to-skin contact**, thus lesbian sexual practices such as oral sex or digital-penetration/contact are also channels for transmission [3]. Such sexual practices can also spread a host of other STDs [4].

If we compare male anal sex with female homosexual sexual activity, the health risks may seem lower, and some have sought to argue that using ‘health risk’ as a reason to discourage same-sex sexual activity appears prejudiced against gays,

and therefore it is an unreasonable, arbitrary and bigoted argument. However, to argue that health risks are not to be a part of the equation is to firstly, ignore the **immediate health concerns and risks people may be entering unknowingly** and secondly, serve as a convenient cop out **to avoid discussing the very real issues and risky behaviour among sexually active LGBTQ individuals**. Multiple factors contribute to non-sexual risky behaviour such as alcoholism and drug use, **counselling may be required to help address these destructive behaviours**.

Other Concerns

There still remain other health concerns that lesbians are at a higher risk of, as well as certain risky behaviour that some are displaying. Lesbians are reported to have higher rates of obesity, smoking, alcohol and substance abuse [5]. These factors, coupled with the impossibility of becoming pregnant naturally, are thought to be risk factors for cancers (along with HPV which causes most cervical and some oral cancers) [6][7], although more work is needed to be certain [8]. There are no known biological differences between lesbians and heterosexual women that can either increase or decrease risk of chronic diseases, so **behaviour is likely to be the main reason for the higher rates of chronic diseases** [9]. Stress from discrimination is the typical reason given for the above physical and behavioural problems. It's important to note that as associations or correlations, **these problems aren't an inherent feature of lesbians, and that it is hard to establish the direction of causality, but they do reveal certain psychological issues that need to be addressed as they are driving risky behaviour**. Anxiety and depression are also higher in lesbians [5] (also among gays).

Divorce rates within lesbian marriages are also consistently higher than gays [10]. The reason is because women usually tend to initiate divorces, even in heterosexual marriages, and because lesbian relationships tend to be 'more unstable and dynamic'. Anecdotally, lesbians are over-eager to advance quickly from dating to marriage, without proper deliberation. The higher divorce rates could also signal other underlying unresolved interpersonal issues which can wreck any marriage or human relationship, especially intimate ones.

It is important to view such information with eyes of compassion, rather than scorn. It is also worth keeping in mind that **lesbian and gay divorce rates (for the short length of time that same-sex marriage has been legalized) have so far been lower than that of heterosexual divorce rates**. However, it is interesting to note that **Christians who regularly attend church are more likely to marry and have lower divorce rates** than non-devout Christians

and the general population [\[11, 12, 13, 14, 15\]](#). This could be due to the **high view such Christians hold concerning marriage**, and the **mindset that marriage is not for personal fulfilment or gratification**, but have a much larger meaning and those who are married are in for a lifetime of commitment, agape and sacrificial love (see Q17).

By serving cop outs such as ‘conversion therapy’ (when unfounded or unwarranted) or avoiding hard truths about risky sexual and non-sexual behaviour in order to continue the LGBTQ cause and **avoiding the possibility of requiring counselling for underlying unresolved issues is actually harming the individuals** (see Q8). Concerns and issues such as high-risk behaviour, suicide and body-image issues etc. that still linger despite ‘sexual liberation’ and having transformed societies into an affirming one (see Q9) are points which we should consider seriously as they seem to tell us that the remedy is not blind affirmation or celebration of all sexualities [\[16\]](#).

Fluidity, Mutability Of Sexual Orientation

An aspect of female sexuality which is not consciously at the fore is the fluid sexualities of females [\[17\]](#). Secular researchers like Lisa Diamond (herself lesbian) have commented on the **higher tendency of women to experience shifts in their sexual identities, especially between ‘bisexual’ to somewhat ‘heterosexual’ or ‘homosexual’** [\[18\]](#). More recent studies are also in agreement with previous studies showing the shifts in sexual identities over time [\[19\]](#).

This adds another layer of nuance to the conversation surrounding homosexuality; that is, if sexual fluidity is especially prevalent in females (more so than males), then one’s understanding or **self-conception as lesbian may not be as certain as one thinks it is**. Although some may argue that these fluxes are still due to some biological reason, it should expand the conversation to psycho-social causes. It should also **cause us to doubt the narrative of ‘born this way’ and ‘change is impossible’, since sexual orientation and identity are much less immutable than believed**.

Given this, it is possible that there are many more women in churches than previously imagined who have experienced same-sex attraction of some form. They may be silently living in confusion or fear shaming should they come out about it. Churches ought to be open and be safe places to minister to them.

Bible And Lesbian Relationships/Sexual Activity

As with the rest of the bible, homosexual relationships or sexual activity of any form is prohibited. Specifically for females, it is understood that Paul does not

condone relations between women - Romans 1:26 (“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones”, more in Q13).

Homosexuality is not new human behaviour, and neither are homosexual desires acceptable according to Scripture (see Q11). In the next section, we will explore more about what the Bible says about our sexuality and how in recent times, people have been seeking to re-interpret the Bible to teach affirmation of homosexuality among Christian circles (see Q12-16).

Ministry tips:

- Focus on the well-being of the individual and not on whether or not the act is morally right or wrong
 - » If someone opens up to you about having contracted an STD or HIV, focus on helping the person, not on lecturing or ‘disciplining’ the person
- Having a safe space for people to share their struggles or explore Christianity is important
 - » Churches should have clear policies and position on sexuality while extending safe spaces and channels where people can come forth with their struggles without fear of being judged
 - » People need to be listened to first, not fixed
 - » Honour the person, work with them on their own goals at where they are, help them grow deeper in Christ
- Holiness is the goal, and promoting it is good as it has the accompanying effect of good health/low-risk of sexual diseases
 - » Approach the topic from this angle, with the best interests for the person in mind
 - » People don’t care how much you know until they understand or feel how much you care for them

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Christian's Position / Ministry



Q11: What is Christianity's stand on homosexuality? Why the obsession with homosexuality?

Quick response:

Christians should be holding a Biblical worldview - the lens through which we understand our lives and the world. The Bible is pretty clear that homosexuality is one of many sins which may be desirable in the eyes of man but will ultimately only harm the one who engages in it and the people around him/her. The goal of every Christian is not heterosexuality but holiness.

Objective Morality In Christianity

In the Christian worldview, we believe what the Bible says about our (humanity's) origin and purpose - made in the Image of God (Genesis 1:27) and to be conformed to His Image (Romans 8:29). Since **God is the creator of everything, He alone knows how things ought to be.** God's life-giving standards and principles are not subjective. We know this because of who He is:

- a. The Omniscient Creator - All things are created by Him, He alone knows their function
- b. Love - Because He loves, He gives laws to set us apart and the laws do protect us. And when there's transgressions, there ought to be consequences and judgement (justice)
- c. Consistent/Unchanging - The **standards will never waver nor change; it exists independently of people's opinions or beliefs.** He stands for what is good

A Consistent Focus - Holiness & Repentance

Since the fall of humanity, we all have in us **a sinful nature which is at odds with God.** Every one of us has not only sinned but is also unable to find deliverance from the bondage of sin and is in need of a Saviour. The **Law serves the purpose of demonstrating to all of us how holy God actually is and how all of us have fallen short of the glory of God.** All our efforts to earn righteousness are futile and none of us can stand the punishment of sin which is

separation from God. The world is in a desperate need of a Saviour, and for this reason, the Gospel is indeed good news for us as God Himself came to deliver us - **Jesus came to pay the price for our sins that we may be reconciled with God in repentance.**

Christianity beckons everyone to follow Jesus, but we all have a choice to heed the call or to ignore it. **'Picking up our cross to follow Him' is the mark of a good Christian.** Through the Bible, we learn more about Jesus and ourselves - learning to surrender more of our sinful thoughts, struggles and our entire life to Jesus. **Christianity extends a call to everyone towards repentance, holiness, to be reconciled with God, to be born-again and to be transformed into Christ's likeness.**

Homosexuality In The Bible

Homosexuality isn't new. Throughout the Bible we can see several accounts on homosexuality and how God clearly forbids it in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. **Homosexual behaviour is clearly stated as one type of sexual sin** (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Briefly, we will cover why it is clear that homosexuality is forbidden in this section. A deeper study of the scriptures which mentions this topic in the Bible will come after this (see Q12-16).

Briefly Speaking:

Homosexuality goes against God's original design

- There are only two sexes: male and female (Genesis 1:27, Matthew 19:4-6). They serve:
 - » A complementary purpose (Genesis 2:18): There is a difference between a man and a woman. Neither is superior, but we ought to respect the complementary power of the two.
 - » A functional purpose (Genesis 1:28): God created male and female so that procreation can take place.
- Any other deviance is due to the fall of Man - which has consequences/ impact also on the human genome
- Sexual deviant behaviour is both a sin and a consequence of sin (Romans 1:21-32).
 - » SSA is not outrightly mentioned in the Bible as 'sin'; homosexuality is.
- **Marriage as a picture of Christ and the Church** – an intimate, covenantal relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33, Revelations 21:2)

- The Bible has a very clear stance on sexuality: It's all about **holiness**.
 - » As a **commandment of God** (1 Peter 1:15-16): God demands that we be holy.
 - » Greek word “hagios” (2 Peter 3:11) - Being set apart by (or for) God.
 - » Greek word “hagiasmos” (1 Thessalonians 4:7) - Consecration and sanctification. A progressive transformation by the Lord into His likeness.
- The **Christian standard** (Ephesians 4:17-24): Put off your former ways and put on the new self - created to be like God in **true righteousness** and **holiness**

The call to holiness does not discriminate - it is for everyone.

There is hope of change and holiness

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - ‘such were some of you...’
 - » This tells us that some were known for living out as homosexuals (among the list of other unrighteous behaviour)
 - » As Christians, we can have certainty of the washing by the Blood of Jesus, sanctification in Christ and justification in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of God for Holiness
 - » It also calls us to stop living the same wayward lifestyle of sexual immorality

Why Do Some Christians Claim That Homosexuality Is Okay?

In Christianity, we believe that the **Bible is inerrant and is the inspired Word of God**. We ought to **read scripture for what it is and not for what we hope to justify**. When it comes to homosexuality, there's been an increasing number of attempts to **reinterpret scripture to affirm non-platonic same-sex relationships**. This is also known as **revisionist readings of the Bible**. Here's a quick breakdown of the difference between the traditional and revisionist approaches.

Priority	Traditional View	Revisionist View
1	Scripture	Experience
2	Reason/Science	Reason/Science
3	Experience	Scripture

It is not uncommon to hear a revisionist claim that they hold the Word of God close to their heart; however, their approach contradicts this. We can easily identify a revisionist view when we examine the **priorities and purpose of the study of scripture**.

The **Traditional view** takes **Scripture as infallible and foundation** on which we add reason and scientific study to **explain and understand experience**. The purpose of studying scripture is to understand God more such that we may know the way which He is working in us to **grow in Christ-likeness**.

In the **Revisionist view**, the order is reversed: **Experience is the beginning** of the investigation which **often ends up with a conclusion that the Scripture alone is insufficient or even in error** as it is not relevant or accurate for the modern context. The purpose of studying scripture is **often to justify a certain experience and/or attempt to conform Christ to our image**.

Before we do a deep dive into the scriptures which revisionists rely on to affirm SSA or homosexuality (Q12-16), we first look into why Christians seem “obsessed” with homosexuality.

Publicness Of The Issue

As briefly demonstrated earlier, **Christianity’s stand on this topic didn’t change, and will not change..** A natural follow-up would be why Christians seem to relentlessly harp on this issue and not other vices?

It is a **common misconception that Christians are solely focused on homosexuality** as an issue and do not champion other causes which also benefit the society. **Christians in fact have also advocated strongly against many other issues** such as adultery, pornography, abuse, abortion, drug abuse etc. Christianity, like other religions in Singapore, has been **foremost in its contributions to the social sector, defending and lifting the voiceless, helpless and neglected members of society** ^[1-9].

The seeming focus on the topic of homosexuality is **merely a reflection of how hotly discussed the topic has come to be**. As involved citizens or members of the community, anyone (regardless of religious views) should have an opportunity to participate in a dialogue that will shape morality, culture, governance and day-to-day relationships, especially in a pluralistic society like Singapore’s.

On this topic, Christians are increasingly persecuted for their position and unfairly silenced in the public square by convenient cop-outs such as ‘conversion therapy’ and ‘homophobia’ (see Q8). Unlike other topics, **activism for the affirmation**

of LGBTQ does attempt to reshape morality, family and public education. Across the globe, activists are continuously pushing the envelope, and in some countries, we are witnessing increased discrimination for people's faith and active calls for Christians to change their view/stand on sexuality [\[10\]](#) [\[11\]](#).

Christians have been accused as conservative and tense about the topic. However, this is actually just a **proportionate response to a concerted effort to normalise a standard of morality we disagree with and our refusal to be silenced on the topic.** In other words, we are simply participating in a growing dialogue and responding to the activists' efforts.

There are debates about whether SSA is a sin or not.

There are many reasons for and against labelling it as a sin. Instead of debating whether it should be labelled 'sin' or not, we should **focus on two things** that we know for sure:

1. It is not the design of God, and for the Christian, it's **a temptation which shouldn't be indulged in.**
2. **Focus on following Jesus and helping people who experience SSA to also follow Jesus,** who is the anchor of our identity and hope, not a person's sexuality and struggles.

See more in Q20.

Ministry tips:

- Point out the difference between revisionist and traditional readings of the scripture
- Point out why revisionist reading is incorrect
 - » Subjective, unreliable and inconsistent method of reading Scripture - it differs greatly from people to people, depending on their pre-existing assumptions about Scripture and life
 - » Incoherent and not reconcilable with the rest of the Scripture - conclusions don't match with what other parts of Scripture is saying
- Be also prepared to give a defence of the Scripture's authority and authenticity
 - » This is a good opportunity for discipleship and evangelism (many people still don't understand how marvellous the Bible is)
- Ultimately, it's not about winning arguments or clobbering people with the Bible, but about **loving people with the truth of God's Word.** Respond with character reflecting the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

- We need to...
 - » Earn the right to be heard – people don't care how much you know unless they know how much you care.
 - » Use Scripture with love and discernment – discern the right methods and timing to share God's truths; not everyone is ready. We must speak the truth in love.
 - » Be credible witnesses with personal holiness and humility.

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Q12: Is Homosexual Behaviour/Acts Prohibited in the Bible?

Quick response:

Yes. We find clear articulation in the Bible which **prohibits homosexual activity**. They include Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. There are others, but let's discuss these first.

Leviticus Contains Two Well-Known Statements About Homosexual Activity

Leviticus 18:22 (ESV)

You shall not **lie with a male as with a woman**; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13 (ESV)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, **both of them** have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Sometimes people claim that because these verses appear in a book of laws that Christians no longer follow, homosexual sex likewise no longer applies. Others note that in the Old Testament Law, the phrase “an abomination” is often used to describe idolatry. They therefore suggest these verses do not condemn all homosexual behaviour, but only cultic (male) prostitution connected to pagan temples.

However, the language used is not that specific—it refers generally to lying with (having sexual relations with) a man “as with a woman.”

In addition, the surrounding verses describe other forms of sexual sin (such as incest, adultery and bestiality). These have nothing to do with pagan temples or idolatry, and Christians would recognise that they are still forbidden today. It is moral—not just pagan religious—behaviour that's in view.

Furthermore, **Leviticus 20:13 highlights both male parties equally**. This also suggests that general, consensual homosexual activity is the subject (as opposed to rape or a forced relationship).

Paul's Warning And Reminder To The Corinthian Church

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the **sexually immoral** nor idolaters nor **adulterers** nor **men who have sex with men**^{4 10} nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ 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.

In these verses, Paul describes different kinds of people who (unless they repent) will be excluded from the kingdom of God. Four kinds relate to sexual sin, and **two of those specifically to homosexual behaviour**. The ESV translation takes the latter and puts them together as “men who practice homosexuality”, while the NLT translates them as “male prostitutes” or those who “practice homosexuality”.

The first of the terms relating to homosexuality is ‘malakoi’, which when translated literally means “soft ones.” In classical literature it could be used as a pejorative term for men who were effeminate, for the younger, passive partner in a pederastic (man-boy) relationship, or to refer to male prostitutes (hence the NLT’s translation). In 1 Corinthians 6 *malakoi* comes in a list describing general forms of sexual sin, and the **context suggests Paul is probably using it in a broad way to refer to the passive partners in homosexual intercourse**.

The second term Paul uses is ‘arsenokoitai’. This word is formed by combining two words: ‘arsen’ (male) with ‘koites’ (intercourse and literally “bed”). These two words are used in the Greek translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which suggests that Paul is referencing those two passages. (Paul had already made a connection with Leviticus just a little earlier in 1 Corinthians 5, where he condemns the church’s acceptance of a man living with his father’s wife using language that echoes Leviticus 18:7-8. For Paul, the sexual sins which Leviticus prohibits remain forbidden for New Testament Christians.) **Arsenokoitai, then, is a general term for male-homosexual sex.** Its pairing with *malakoi* indicates that Paul is addressing both the active and passive partners in homosexual sex.

What Does All These Mean For Our Understanding Of Homosexuality?

I. Homosexual sin is serious

Active unrepentant sinners—including those actively involved in same-sex

⁴ Two Greek terms are used here: ‘Malakoi’ and ‘Arsenokoitai’, each related to sexual sin; the former referring to the passive person in a male homosexual intercourse, and the latter a generic term for men who engage in homosexual intercourse (see more on next page and in Q16).

relationships—will not enter God’s kingdom. Paul urges us not to be deceived on this point. He assumes there will be those who deny this teaching, and argue that some forms of homosexual conduct are acceptable to God. But Paul is clear: homosexual conduct leads people to destruction. This is a serious issue.

2. Homosexual sin is not unique

Paul’s list includes other forms of sexual sin (sexual immorality and adultery), and it includes non-sexual forms of sin (drunkenness and theft, for example). Homosexual sin is incredibly serious, but so is greed. **We must not imply that homosexual sex is the sin of our age.** If we are to be faithful to Scripture, we must preach against theft, greed, drunkenness, reviling, and defrauding others, many of which are also trivialised in our society, and all of which also characterize the unrighteous.

3. Homosexual sin is not inescapable

Paul continues in verse 11: “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 6:11).

These **forms of behaviour are not appropriate for us Christians, precisely because it is not who we are any more.** Clearly, some of the Corinthians had been active homosexuals. They did once live in these ways but no longer (should) remain in this manner. They have been washed, sanctified and justified; forgiven, cleansed from their sins, and set apart for God. They have a new standing and identity before Him.

However ingrained it may be in someone’s behaviour and psyche, **homosexual conduct is not inescapable.** It is possible for a sexually active homosexual to be made new by God. Being made new **doesn’t necessarily mean the absence of temptation or homo-erotic desire for someone of the same sex.** Paul’s warning to his readers not to revert to their former way of life suggests there is still some desire to do so. **Like any other temptations and feelings, same-sex attraction may well linger, but in Christ, we no longer have to be kept in bondage to these inclinations.** What defined us then no longer defines us now, no matter what our past maybe. A believer in Christ is born-again. We are given a new identity - one that’s made righteous before God, one that is capable of choosing Jesus, **choosing holiness above our temptations and carnal desires.** That, is what it means to overcome.

Ministry tips:

- It is helpful to make a distinction between same-sex acts and same-sex attraction. The scripture condemns same-sex acts but does not condemn a person who experiences same-sex attractions (see Q20 for more).
- Some people may be much more sensitive to the term 'gay lifestyle'. To be able to still talk about the truth of the gospel without watering down things and confusing them, speak straight to the point by using terms like:
 - » 'sexual desire', 'sexual activity', 'romantic relationships' to directly refer to what we may want to communicate by the term 'gay lifestyle'.

Q13: Is Lesbianism Specifically Prohibited in the Bible?

Quick response:

Yes. While the Bible doesn't specifically mention 'lesbianism', the spirit of the writing is clear. Holiness is the goal of all Christians. We are called to not only watch our behaviour, but submit our thoughts to Christ and overcome temptations and wrong desires/passions.

Dishonourable Passions For Suppressing Truths God Revealed

Turning to the New Testament, Romans I has much to say about the nature and character of homosexual behaviour. In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul shows that the whole world is unrighteous in God's sight and therefore is in need of salvation.

Romans 1:18-32 focuses on the Gentile world, describing how it has turned away from God and embraced idolatry. Details in the passage may indicate that Paul is using the Greco-Roman culture surrounding his readers as a case in point.

Romans 1:22-25, v28 (ESV)

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen... ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

The Gentile society faced God's wrath because it has suppressed the truth that God has revealed about himself in creation (verses 18-20). Paul then illustrates how this has happened. He gives three examples of how what has been known about God has been exchanged for something else.

- They exchange the glory of God for images of creatures (verse 23).
- They exchange the truth of God for a lie, worshipping created things (verse 25).

- And they reject the knowledge of God (verse 28), exchanging “natural” relations for “unnatural” ones.

Romans 1:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are **contrary to nature**; ²⁷ and the men likewise **gave up natural relations with women** and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Two Important And Sobering Truths Are Apparent From These Verses:

I. Homosexual desire is not what God originally intended

This does not mean that homosexual desire is the only thing that God did not originally intend. **All of our desires have been distorted by sin.** But Paul does describe **both lesbian and male homosexual behaviour as “unnatural”**. Some have argued that this refers to what is “natural” to the people themselves—heterosexual people engaging in homosexual activity and thereby going against their “natural” orientation. According to this view, Paul is not condemning all homosexual behaviour, but only that which goes against the person’s own sexual inclinations.

But this view cannot be supported by the passage itself. **The words for “natural” and “against nature” refer not to our subjective experience of what feels natural to us, but to the fixed way of things in creation.** The ‘nature’ that Paul refers to shows that homosexual behaviour contradicts God’s design and purposes as revealed in creation and reiterated throughout Scripture.

Paul’s reference to lesbianism as well as male homosexual conduct also supports the idea that he is condemning all homo-erotic activity, and not just the man-boy relationships that occurred in Roman culture.

The **strength of Paul’s language should not make us think that homosexual conduct is the worst or only form of sinful behaviour.** Paul may be highlighting it because it is a particularly vivid example, or because it was especially pertinent for his readers in Rome given their cultural context. Either way it illustrates something that is the case for all of us: **as we reject God we find ourselves craving what we are not naturally designed to do.** Even those desiring heterosexual sex find themselves doing so in a way that does not fully accord with the creator’s design for sex. **There are no grounds in this passage for singling out homosexual people for any kind of special**

condemnation. The same passage indicts us all.

2. Our distorted desires are a sign that we have turned away from God

Paul writes that alongside the gospel, “**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**” (Romans 1:18). Though there will one day be a “**...on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed**” (Romans 2:5b), there is already **a present-day expression of God’s anger against sin**. We see God’s wrath in this: **He gives us what we want**.

In response to the exchanges Paul has described, we see three instances of God giving societies over to live in the wreckage of our sinful desires. This is the present-day judgment against sin. **We ask for a reality without Him and He gives us a taste of it.**

In each case the “**giving over**” **results in intensification of the sin and the further breakdown in human behaviour**. God gives humanity over to impure lusts and dishonourable bodily conduct (Romans 1:24), and to “dishonourable passions” (verse 26). The exchanging of natural relations for unnatural leads to being given over to a “debased mind” and the flourishing of “all manner of unrighteousness” which Paul unpacks in a long list of antisocial behaviours (verse 28-31). **Sin leads to judgment, but the consequences borne in judgment also leads to further sin in our present age.**

The presence of all these sinful acts is a **reminder that we live in a world which has deliberately turned away from God in all sorts of ways**. This world is therefore experiencing a foretaste of God’s anger and courting its final outpouring on the Day of judgment.

It is important to recognize that Paul is talking here in *social* rather than *individual* terms. He is describing what happens to culture as a whole, rather than particular individuals. The **presence of same-sex desire in some of us is not an indication that we’ve turned from God more than others. But it is a sign that humanity as a whole has done so**. It is not the only sign, and in everyone there is no doubt one or more signs. It is **a sign that human nature has been changed from what God originally intended**.

Consent Does Not Justify Nor Legitimise Same-Sex Relationships / Partnerships

The **morality of same-sex partnerships does not solely rest on consent**

alone. An act that is intrinsically wrong does not become morally acceptable simply because there is consent or that the motivation is 'love' and based on commitment.

For everything that has been said earlier, it is clear that from a biblical standpoint, **same-sex relationships/partnerships are not in accordance to the design and intent of God.** Therefore, it is not to be encouraged.

Q14: Was the relationship between David and Jonathan homosexual?

Quick response:

No. David and Jonathan were really close but not homosexual. They had brotherly love, not romantic or sexual affections for each other.

Understanding The Context: King David's Life

There are 10 verses in 4 chapters of Scriptures about the life of King David that were used to affirm homosexual relationships. Is that genuinely the case? Let's examine the verses together.

(1 Samuel 18:1-4, 19:1, 20:3, 17, 30, 20:41 and 2 Samuel 1:26)

2 Samuel 1:26 (NIV)

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me: **your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.**

1 Samuel 18:1-4 (NIV)

¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, **Jonathan became one in spirit with David**, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

1 Samuel 19:1 (GNT)

Saul told his son Jonathan and all his officials that he planned to kill David. But **Jonathan was very fond of David**

1 Samuel 20:3,17 (NRSV)

³ But David also swore, "Your father knows well that you like me..."
¹⁷ Jonathan made David swear again **by his love for him**; for he loved him as he loved his own life.

1 Samuel 20:30 (NRSV)

Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that **you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame**, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"

1 Samuel 20:41 (NRSV)

As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and **they kissed each other**, and wept with each other; David wept the more.

1. Loving human relationships do not have to be sexual

People who suggest that 2 Samuel 1:26 contains a clue to how David and Jonathan were homosexuals hold a view that **dismisses the possibility of powerful platonic friendships** – friendship as an essential form of meaningful human affection blessed by God. Such a view conflates '(brotherly) love' and 'sex'. Consider this: God's love is also "most wonderful" – does this mean it's sexual? Certainly not.

2. There were no sexual innuendos in these passages

1 Samuel 19:1 (GNT) – "**he was very fond of David**" -> 'Fond' in Hebrew: 'chaphets' means 'joy of the heart', and is never used in the Hebrew Bible to denote sexuality.

1 Samuel 18:1 (NIV) – "**Jonathan became one in spirit with David**" merely signified their depth of friendship. There was no 'one flesh' occurring here. The same form of love is commanded of believers in the church (Philippians 1:27).

1 Samuel 20:30 (NRSV) - "**you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame**" does not mean that Jonathan had somehow chosen David as a romantic partner and thus bringing shame to himself and the family. The context of 1 Samuel 20 allows us to easily tell that King Saul was intending to harm/kill David (verse 1, verse 31), all Jonathan did was to take David's side and protect him from King Saul his father, which King Saul saw it to be a betrayal and shame.

The NIV translation makes it clearer for us (1 Samuel 20:30-31):

³⁰ Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! **Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?**

³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. **Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!"**

3. Kissing is a custom with no sexual connotation in Middle Eastern culture

There was nothing erotic or romantic in their kiss. In both ancient and modern Middle East culture, family members and friends greet each other with a kiss on each cheek, a custom with no sexual connotation. Since it was a painful parting of two best buddies, it is not unusual for them to kiss, albeit in a non-erotic manner.

This custom, also common throughout Europe and elsewhere, is reflected in the New Testament command: “**Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss**” (1 Thessalonians 5:26, NRSV).

In 1 Samuel 20:41, David bowed three times, they kissed and wept. There is **nothing inherently sexual about two men kissing in Near Eastern society**. Of the 27 occurrences in the Old Testament, 24 references to kissing contain **an erotic component and all are located in the Song of Solomon**. The other 3 instances are: Samuel and Saul kissed in 1 Samuel 10:1, David and Barzillai kissed in 2 Samuel 19:39, Joseph kissed his brothers, Genesis 45:15, none of them are erotic or sexual.

4. David’s issue was women, not men! Both David and Jonathan had wives

David’s struggle with lust for women is clear in the Bible, which culminates with him committing a string of offence against God after he lusted for Bathsheba. The Bible did not shy from mentioning David’s sins, struggle and repentance. There’s however, no other mention in the Bible about David and Jonathan that they had in any way desired for one another or other men sexually.

Q15: Is homosexuality related to God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah?

Quick response:

Yes. It is definitely a part of the sins against God, but an over-emphasis on it is also erroneous. It is clear that homosexuality existed in Sodom and Gomorrah, and it contributed to the eventual judgement by God.

Exploring Revisionist Readings Of Genesis 19

Genesis 19:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may **know them**⁴."

Genesis 19:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it."

Revisionist Claim #1: "These cities were judged for other sins, not for homosexuality" – see Ezekiel 16:49

Sodom was punished for the sins of gang rape, lack of hospitality and not helping the needy. Sodom was not known as a 'homosexual city'.

Response to #1: Sodom's sin was that of gang rape, inhospitality and homosexuality

Ezekiel 16:50 continued to mention that Sodom was 'haughty' and 'did an abomination' before God – the term "abomination" is used many times in the OT, but mostly in the plural. Here it is used in the singular. What does it refer to in the context of Sodom?

⁴ Hebrew word translated into 'know' is the word 'Yada' (see more on next page)

Throughout the Bible, it is clear that homosexuality is called an abomination or a detestable / perverse act before God (Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27). In Jude 1:7, it is clear that sexual immorality is one of the 'haughty and detestable things' Sodom and Gomorrah committed before God.

Revisionist Claim #2: "There was no sexual interest at all, thus it can't be about homosexuality"

Hebrew word 'yada' (Genesis 19:5, 8) means to 'know' or to be 'acquainted with'. This word does not say anything about sex.

Sodomites merely wanted to 'examine the credentials of' / 'know' Lot's visitors. Their error was only in getting violent and inhospitable after Lot's refusal.

We must take into consideration the whole counsel of the Bible than a narrow interpretation of a single verse.

Response to #2: The Hebrew word 'yada' has been used on at least 10 occasions in the OT that refers to sexual intercourse.

While some might argue that there are 943 occurrences of 'yada' but only about 15 referred to sexual intercourse, one cannot deny that it can be used to refer to sexual intercourse. Some occasions include: Genesis 4:1 (Adam & wife), Genesis 4:17 (Cain & wife), Genesis 4:25 (Adam & wife), 1 Samuel 1:19 (Elkanah & wife), Genesis 19:8 (Lot's virgin daughters), Genesis 24:16 (virgin Rebekah), Judges 19:25 (rape in Gibeah), Judges 21:12 (virgin women in Jabesh Gilead), 1 Kings 1:4 (King did not have sex with Abishag), Numbers 31:17 (non-virgin women).

In fact, in **Genesis 19:8, 'yada' is explicitly used to imply/describe Lot's daughters as virgins (i.e. they have not 'known' a man).** Therefore, it is **more reasonable to interpret the 'yada' in the preceding v5 as sexual intercourse** with these visitors.

The inhospitality argument does not stand. If no sexual interest is involved, why would Lot offer his two virgin daughters for the men 'to do what they like with [the visitors]'

Q16: Will gays and lesbians go to hell?

Quick response:

All unrighteous or self-righteous people will be judged and cast away from God; to hell. In this context, a heterosexual person has no advantage over a homosexual person in this regard because we are all broken people that need to be saved by grace.

Anyone who repents, no matter the label or former self-identity, can receive Jesus and eternal life with God.

Malakos, Arsenokoitai, and Repentance

I Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the **sexually immoral** nor idolaters nor **adulterers** nor **men who have sex with men**⁴ ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

I Timothy 1:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, **men who practice homosexuality**⁵, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

Revisionist Claim 1: “Malakos/malakoi” doesn’t refer to homosexual men but men with a lack of self-control

μαλακοὶ (*malakoi*) – literally means ‘soft’. It was widely used to describe a lack of self-control, weakness, cowardice, and laziness. It refers to vices and describes men with a lack of self-control over lust. Reference to same-sex behaviour only came within the Church after the 20th century due to translation.

⁴ Two Greek terms are used here: ‘*Malakoi*’ and ‘*Arsenokoitai*’, each related to sexual sin; the former referring to the passive person in a male homosexual intercourse, and the latter a generic term for men who engage in homosexual intercourse (see also Q12).

⁵ ‘*Arsenokoitais*’ is the word used here.

Response to 1 (adapted and edited from Sam Allberry, 'Is God anti-gay?'): Context matters, and in classical literature, 'malakos' could be used as a disapproving term for men who were effeminate; for the younger, passive partner in a pederastic (man-boy) relationship; or to refer to male prostitutes.

In I Corinthians 6, *malakoi* comes in a list describing general forms of sexual sin, and this context suggests Paul is most likely using it in a broad way to refer to the passive partners in homosexual intercourse. This also fits Paul's pairing of *malakoi* with the second term he uses. *Arsenokoitai* is a compound of "male" (*arsen*) and "intercourse" (*koites*, literally "bed"). These are the two words used in the Greek translation of Leviticus 18 v 22 and 20 v 13, suggesting that Paul is referring back to those two passages.

Pederasty (paedophilia) is merely a subset of this term. Scholars have pointed out that for Aristotle, people are called '*malakoi*' in reference to the same things (homosexuality in general) as they are called '*akolastoi*' (ungodly), viz '*peri tas somatikos apolauseis*' (concerning bodily pleasures).

Revisionist Claim 2: Meaning for "Arsenokoitai" is ambiguous, and is used for exploitative scenarios. Even if it has to do with same-sex behaviour, the problem is exploitation, not same-sex behaviour

Its exact definition is uncertain due to its extreme rarity. Historians and linguists believe it is likely a form of exploitative sex, mostly but not exclusively of a homosexual nature.

Paul could have used another word '*paideraste*' which refers not only to pederasty but also more generally to homosexual sex and romance but he chose to use *Arsenokoitai*. Therefore, the Bible's condemnation is only on pederasty and exploitative sex, not homosexuality.

Response to 2: *Arsenokoitai* does indeed refer to homosexuality in general. Contrary to what revisionists claim, '*paideraste*' could bear a more narrow meaning than '*arsenokoitai*'.

This term refers to a male engaging in same-gender sexual activity; a sodomite, a pederast. Again, pederasty is a mere subset. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) uses the two words that form '*arsenokoitai*' in its translation of Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 that refers to all homosexual practices. Therefore, it is the right term to be used to refer to homosexual activity in general.

Paedophile actually has its roots in the Greek word 'paidophile', which is related to 'paideraste'. So contrary to what is claimed, *arsenokoitai* might be a better word than *paideraste* simply because Paul wanted to cover a larger spectrum of homosexuality, not just pederasty.

Hope In Jesus

I Corinthians 6:11 continues to say that “Such were some of you; but you **were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**”

Only self-righteous people will go to hell. Who are the self-righteous people? **People who think that they have no sin, or people who think that they have no need for a saviour and are insistent on living according to their own desires.** Self-righteous people are therefore those who **think that they do not need to repent from sins and turn to the Saviour** for forgiveness and justification.

Do gays/lesbians end up in hell? It really depends on what they do with regards to Jesus Christ, and the same principle applies for everyone. **Having SSA is not a greater problem than any of the other temptations listed in the Bible. Heterosexuals are also sexually broken people** - they too can struggle severely with lust and need to repent from it. Their experience of lust and related temptations are also to be overcome not to be pursued, and these temptations may seem to never go away, much like SSA.

All of us are in need of Jesus as our Saviour, whoever puts their faith in Him, repents and follows Him faithfully shall receive eternal life.

Reference:

[1] Is God anti-gay?, 2013, Sam Allberry
<https://g.co/kgs/owPazc>, accessed 21 Dec 2020

Q17: Why can't faithful same-sex couples get married?

Quick response:

From a biblical standpoint, all forms of gratification of same-sex attraction are not aligned with the design and intent of God. The definition of marriage to Christians is one that is exclusive to heterosexual couples. Same-sex partnership is not to be encouraged, and same-sex marriage is impossible.

Marriage, like singleness, is not about 'me' or self-actualisation, it is all for the Lord.

What Is Marriage?

There are different ways which society has viewed marriage. In older times, it's often seen as a means for economic security, and it could even be used as a political strategy to keep or generate ties across people groups. In more recent times, the idea of marriage being a private partnership between two individuals with a love interest became popularised as people are more established socially and economically. Marriage has become a partnership for the improvement, betterment and fulfilment of one another, and if one party is not 'living up to the deal or common goal', exiting the marriage is merely a way to save one's self. In some places where it was banned, polygamy is also gaining legal recognition/decriminalisation - marriage is no longer understood as an exclusive relationship between two individuals, but extendable to a group of people as long as there's consent ^{[1][2]}. Discussions about legitimising animal-human marriages ^[3] or marriages with robots ^[4] are also surfacing.

All these beg the question: "What exactly is marriage?" This is especially important for us Christians as we think about issues of morality related to marriage. Beyond what the world is saying about marriage, we need to know what the Bible says about marriage.

Marriage From The Biblical Worldview

Marriage is more than a social institution, it is more than a legal contract, and it is also definitely more than a phase or milestone in life. **Marriage is a covenant which a man and a woman make to one another in the sight of God,**

and it reflects the covenant God makes to His people. Marriage is the **only context where sex can take place.** It is also the **ideal environment for the upbringing of children.**

Marriage is not for personal enjoyment or self-actualisation, it is a place where mutual self-sacrifice and submission out of unconditional love eventually leads to mutual growth and joy. Jesus Himself modelled the way of love in a marriage - husbands are exhorted to love their wives as Christ loved and gave Himself up for the Church (Ephesians 5:25). We are called to also love one another, even esteeming others as above ourselves and our own ambitions (Philippians 2:1-4). Sure, marriage could definitely bring some form of mutual happiness and even material advantages as two become one in all areas of life including resources, but that is not the goal or primary type of growth found in marriage. It is **in our imitation of Christ that we actually learn to love one another**, it is in this that **growth or maturing of our character and Christ-likeness** actually happens.

Marriage capitalises on the **complementarity between a man and a woman** - a blend of their unique gifts and life experiences, **providing a unique environment that is ideal for child-upbringing.** Involved parents of both sexes have great benefits for children - this is supported by studies ^[5], and generally, studies on same-sex parenting have also failed to be empirically substantive to make a claim that “not a single study has found children of lesbian and gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents” ^[6]. Children are a heritage from God (Psalms 127:3); **parenting is the responsibility of both the father and the mother.** Neither should shrink from the responsibility of parenting and instead should be **good stewards of the young lives** God has put in their hands.

Marriage is not an easy relationship to be in and it should not be seen as superior to singleness or necessary for a fulfilling life. In Matthew 19:4-12, Jesus did not refute His disciples’ conclusion that ‘it is better not to marry’ given that divorce is not the plan of God and should not be taken lightly. **Both marriage and singleness have their pros and cons, neither is superior to the other as each path is capable of testifying about God and for individuals to lead a fulfilling life.**

A married couple witnesses God to the world by **emulating faithfulness and commitment to each other.** Since sex is also only permissible in the context of a marriage, marriage is also the only way to have a glimpse of **God’s creative power where new human life could be brought forth.** Singles on the other hand, by choosing to remain faithful to God and chaste, **testify that God is**

indeed sufficient and they get to steward all of their time and resources to serve God and His people. Singles are not concerned with a spouse or other affairs which are common in a family or marriage; they also get a foretaste of heaven where marital relationships cease.

Neither path is lesser than the other, **it is important for us not to glorify one over the other.** It is best to pursue God and **allow Him to direct our paths** - whether we eventually get married or remain single.

Morality Of Marriage

Whenever we consider the question of morality, we must be clear of the foundations which we build our understanding of 'good and evil' upon. For Christians, **we turn to the Bible for an understanding of morality.** Since God is the creator of all things including our sexuality and marriage, He defines what is good - things that reflect His nature and will bring forth the flourishing of humankind/creation; or what is bad - things that reflect a rebellion against God which in turn will only harm us. **Flourishing/harm are just proxies** that allow us to catch a glimpse of God's wisdom and the fruit of our obedience/disobedience towards His standards of morality. Ultimately, His Word is to be our moral compass, guided by the leading and convictions by the Holy Spirit.

An Alternate Standard For Morality - Consent

Some argue that consent is all that matters concerning the morality of marriage. **Consent is not the supreme factor** on which we can make an assessment of the morality of a decision/an act. There are **many other factors that could easily outweigh consent in our assessments.** For instance, one cannot consent to sell their vote/voting right to another person, that would be irresponsible and dishonest in spite of consent. Neither can one person consent to be eaten by another person (unfortunately a true story [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#)).

Consent could be a factor in our assessment of morality, but it being used as **a deciding factor of moral violation is restricted only to cases where the act is in itself unproblematic/moral, leaving consent to be the final, not primary, factor of consideration.** Therefore when it comes to the discussion of whether homo-erotic acts or same-sex relationships are in themselves moral, 'consent' has little to do with the discussion.

Marriage As A Public Institution

Laws regulate marriage because it is **more than a private affair.** Healthy marriages and families form a major cornerstone in society together with those

who are singles. Marriages and raising of children are therefore matters of public interest. For this reason, laws have been put in place to ensure protection and order within mutually agreed arrangements between married couples and that parents take responsibility for caring for their children.

In Singapore, the government has taken **active steps to support families** by providing subsidies for married heterosexual couples and several other childcare benefits (e.g. housing, baby bonus, childcare leave etc.). These are **not entitlements for every citizen but are privileges and aid to citizens who are taking on the possibility and responsibility of forming a new family unit which raises children.**

Concluding Thoughts

For everything that has been said earlier, it is clear that from a biblical standpoint, all forms of **gratification of same-sex attraction are not in accordance to the design and intent of God.** The **definition of marriage to Christians is one that is exclusive to heterosexual couples.** It is important to remember that **marriage is not to be a vehicle of self-actualisation** but rather, a place of mutual self-sacrifice, unconditional love, and commitment to one another (and children if any). In short, **marriage, like singleness, is never about 'me'; our lives belong to the Lord** who has redeemed us at a great price at the Cross.

Therefore, **same-sex partnership is not to be encouraged, and same-sex marriage is impossible.** The Bible and Christian tradition are very clear about marriage, but we do see attempts to change this view in recent times. Some have tried to argue with inconsistent exegesis to force the inclusion and recognition of same-sex marriages by pastors. Pastors cannot and will not marry two people of the same sex as it **will be a wilful disobedience to God who has Himself created and ordained marriage.** It would also be an issue for Christians (no matter how well-meaning) to be supporting pursuits of same-sex relationships (see Q18).

Because marriage as an institution has a significant role in society, it needs to be clearly defined and regulated by law. Certain special provisions are also provided to support this family unit, especially for its potential to procreate naturally.

Ministry tips:

- Focus on the definition and purpose of marriage from the Bible
 - » Don't get drawn into debates about origins and historical/social purposes of marriage (not easy to handle, and not that relevant actually)

- » Focus on giving the Christian's account and perspective which is rooted in the Bible
- » For pastors, you are ordained ministers of God and ought to serve Him. You can call on this 'obligation' as a reason to non-believers for being both unwilling and unable to marry two people of the same sex
- Take the opportunity to explain also that marriage is not a cure for loneliness. Only God can fulfil the innermost need: to be known and to know
 - » Marriage is not for self-actualisation or necessary for a fulfilling life. Jesus Himself was unmarried yet He alone is perfection
- Share the benefits of singleness
 - » Ability to pursue God without having worldly concerns
 - » It's an experience married people will not be able to enjoy

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Q18: Aren't Christians called to love? Why can't we accept homosexuality?

Quick response:

The reasons behind why Christians will loosen their stance and accept homosexuality in the Church are always empathy and tolerance. The reasons why we say no to accepting and affirming it are Love and Compassion.

To love someone is to protect them and provide the best for them. This includes protecting the person from harm and providing the best possible for the person. Thus, because we love the person, we cannot affirm nor encourage homosexual behaviour and actions, which are harmful or at best risky.

Love And Affirmation - Are They Synonymous?

To love someone is to protect them and provide the best for them. This includes protecting the person from harm and providing the best possible for the person. In the Christian worldview, **every person is intrinsically valuable, but we also understand that not every action is intrinsically good, or even neutral.** Thus, because we love the person, we cannot affirm nor encourage homosexual behaviour and actions, which are harmful, at best risky (see Q9 and Q10).

We do not affirm homosexual behaviours and actions just as we do not affirm any harmful activity such as adultery, stealing, murder, or any other sin in the Bible. Not affirming harmful things is one side of love, while the other is affirming life-giving things which point one another towards God's design for life, such as encouraging one another to embrace and live out our sexuality in a way that honours God's design for our whole being, sexuality included. When it comes to sexuality, there are really only two possible paths and they apply to heterosexuals as well: **chastity in singleness, faithfulness in marriage.** Anything outside of these will only bring harm first to the individual, and then to the people who love them.

Christians are absolutely called to love - to protect fellow human beings from harm, esteeming others as better than ourselves (Philippians 2:1-4), whilst providing the best possible care for one another. **To accept something harmful or to not promote that which is helpful - both would be unloving of**

Christians to do so.

Modelling God's Love

For Christians, our definition of love is found in the very person of God. 1 John 4:10 (NIV) says “**This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**” What this verse is saying is that God's actions reveal His very character of love - **it was not that we had fulfilled any requirements, or that we had first expressed love to God**, that He then decided to love humanity. Rather, **God's loving nature is demonstrated in how He sent his Son - Jesus Christ - to save us from our sins (our disobedience to God).**

God loves us and designed us human beings. He knows what is best for us, including what we should prohibit or avoid for our own good. Because God loves people so much and He's righteous, He hates sin as it separates us from Him and hurts us. The end-game of sin is harm, destruction and even death (spiritual, mental and physical).

Even though we all have sinned, God is stronger than sin's grip and effects. His love never fails, and He can redeem us from our sins, removing sin from us “as far as the East is from the West”. **Everyone who believes in Jesus shall find mercy, forgiveness, strength and guidance to live right with God.** For this purpose, Jesus came to dwell among us, died for us and resurrected - **this is the Gospel.**

While we were still in the wrong, God desired our relationship with Him to be restored and He provided the means to do so - the sacrifice of His own Son. That is the kind of love Christians believe in, experience in our relationship with God, and aspire to live out in our lives. **As such, the Christian love is always looking and working towards the best - especially the best for the other person.**

That is why when it comes to homosexuality, something which is harmful, **Christians are being loving when they do not affirm or encourage it.** Being loving is both walking alongside the person as they handle both the good and bad in their life, and also doing our best to protect them from the bad and providing the good for them. We explore this further in Q23 by looking at two other common approaches and narratives about ‘truth and love’.

Urgent Response, Not Fixation

Some might ask: “well there are so many things out there that create distance

between us and God - why are you only picking on homosexuality?” This question comes from a place where **they feel that Christians are inconsistent for being fixated on homosexuality**, amplifying and focusing only on it while ignoring the many other sins that also harm people - e.g. adultery.

As everyone has limited time and resources, it is wiser to respond and act according to a matter’s significance and urgency. Put it this way: “If a forest is on fire - do you tend to the fire? Or do you talk about conserving the forest?” Both are important, but the urgency of the fire situation necessitates focus and action. **LGBTQ activism seeks to completely change human understanding on sexual morality - not only to normalise homosexuality but even to celebrate it.** These are **some things that Christians can’t do if we want to be faithful to God and His Word.** Therefore, **given the significance of this matter in our current time, it must be addressed** (see Q11 also).

Accepting A Person Does Not Mean Endorsement

Drop the misunderstanding that acceptance = endorsement. **God accepts us just as we are, but He doesn’t endorse every desire and thought which we conceive or entertain.** Let us follow His example: Know the way, show the way, and be the way.

- **Know the way:** The tenets and standards of God found in the Bible about our identity in Christ and by extension, our sexuality. (see also Q11, Q17 and Q23)
- **Show the way:** Actually love the people, don’t just sit and judge one another from afar. Be interested in them as fellow human beings, they have a life, they have their stories and experiences to share. **Focus on loving them, helping them understand that everyone has great intrinsic value because everyone is created in the Image of God, that everyone has fallen short of the glory of God, and everyone can find redemption in Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life**
 - » Share with them the ‘Christian hope’ that is in the Gospel (see ‘Christian Script’ in Q1 and Q32)
- **Be the way:** Live out our lives with great reverence towards God, exemplifying the way just as Jesus did for us. **Be holy just as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Be accountable, be open about our struggles - the Church should be a no-shame zone.** Use our lives to show people that there is an alternative! There is a way to find freedom, overcoming our carnal desires and live a wholesome life. Even if we are to stumble and fall, there is still hope, mercy and abundant grace in Christ Jesus.

Ministry tips:

- **How to start a conversation:**
 - » Begin by asking some open-ended questions to understand the person's position better - "What do you mean by love/acceptance? Could you share with me your understanding of love/acceptance?"
 - » Genuinely listen, and trust the Holy Spirit to guide you with "flags" that are inroads to a deeper conversation. Example: "Loving a person means accepting them for who they are!" The flag here is - **"accepting" still needs to be defined**. And how might we come to an understanding of "who a person is"?
 - » Walkthrough and clarify what the understanding of 'acceptance' and 'personhood' is with the person
- **Remember that behaviour is not the same as personhood**
 - » A person's behaviour and ideas are what we judge; we don't judge the value of a person.
 - » Some may say something like: "Loving a person means accepting them for what they do!" -> we can follow-up with clarifications and an alternate example to examine if the statement is true
 - e.g.: "Really? Now, are we really comfortable with that..? When's the last time you disagreed with somebody? People behave in ways that we do not agree with, yes? Do you therefore conclude that this person is necessarily evil or lesser in personhood/value?"
- **Remember the bigger picture**
 - » Try and see if the person is open to having a conversation that leads to an objective moral standard being established. That is to say, that right and wrong have a reference point OUTSIDE of our own individual, personalized preferences.
- **Avoid saying 'love the sinner, hate the sin'.**
 - » In theory it's true, but it's difficult for non-Christians to understand what it means
 - » For someone with SSA, it may not be easy to separate sexual attraction from their core identity, thus such a phrase can be seen as a cliché and turn off as it has been widely misunderstood (unfortunately)
 - » This topic requires patient and loving engagements!

- **Be very patient and kind**
 - » Often many sympathisers, LGBTQ activists or people experiencing SSA can't separate their SSA from their core identity and hence all they will perceive is that Christians hate homosexuals
 - » It is common to be misunderstood, so always forgive freely
 - » If given the chance, engage them in a conversation to **know where they are coming from**, and for you to explain your position if they are open to it
- If the discussion starts to meander, **remember your focus: Christians believe in a God of love, who designed us (humans) and wants the best for us. The best for us is to live according to the design of life that God has given to us** - anything that goes against that design is harmful to us, and thus we cannot accept that, much less approve or love those actions/way of life.
 - » Even so, for those who pursue such actions or ways of life, we continue to love them and reach out to them, mirroring God's heart and hands that always seek to restore us into a deeper relationship with Him and to His design for life.
 - » Both the protection and provision elements are ways which Christians truly love those who struggle with SSA or any other struggles in fact.
- **Humbly acknowledge that we don't know everything, but we are willing to learn**
 - » Encourage them to seek out the truth together
 - » Persuade, don't try to convince. And agreement may not (in fact very rarely) come immediately
 - » Be prepared to let them be if they are not persuaded; agree to disagree and still maintain the relationship
- **Point people to Jesus; don't point people to another set of rules and regulations.** People change not because of studying/knowledge and persuasive words alone. People are transformed because God opens their eyes and wins them over to Himself

More on healthy sexuality that honours God:

- [http://evangelicalfocus.com/lifetech/2932/Our sexuality is rooted in the nature of God himself because God made us in His image%E2%80%9D](http://evangelicalfocus.com/lifetech/2932/Our_sexuality_is_rooted_in_the_nature_of_God_himself_because_God_made_us_in_His_image%E2%80%9D) , accessed 22 Aug 2020

Q19: Aren't we pushing people away from God if we offend them because of this topic on sexuality?

Quick response:

We are called to be faithful witnesses and preach the Gospel as it is, not as we carefully curate in hopes of 'winning the lost'. The Gospel can be uncomfortable as it points out how sinful we all are and are in need of God's forgiveness and Jesus as our Saviour. As difficult as it feels, we need to have faith in God and remember that it is Him who saves, never us.

While the message of the Cross could be offensive to the hearer (1 Corinthians 1:18), we are not to be offending in our speech and behaviour. It is possible, and it is our call as Christians, to bear the Fruit of the Spirit while evangelising. Truth without love is not truth, love without truth is not love. We need to share Truth in love.

The Christian Dilemma On Evangelism

Some Christians may be concerned with offending or pushing people away because of Christian talk on homosexuality, calling it a sin and being unwilling to affirm it within the Church. This concern often comes from a good heart for evangelism - believing that people will choose to sin anyway and thus it's best to ignore/accept the behaviour or avoid talking about it in order to keep the relationship. The resulting thought may be like this:

"We need to be accepting and more tolerant - and this is what it means to love the "sinner", and maintain the friendship/relationship so that if the person wants to know Christ one day, there's an avenue for it (that's us because we maintained that friendship)"

Unfortunately, **this view holds on to certain misconceptions about biblical evangelism.** We will not apply the same thought or reason if we know a friend who is someone's husband/wife and is committing adultery. We will not tolerate the behaviour in hopes of 'maintaining the relationship' for future evangelism. It's foolishness and injustice to the other affected parties and to this friend who may

truly not know better.

We need to remember the following about evangelism:

1. Salvation is God's burden and timing, not ours.

As Christians, we recognise **not only that we can't save ourselves; we also have no ability to save our friends**. While it is true that we need to have the person's welfare in mind and constantly pray for them to come to know Christ, we will never know how long the wait might be or how the person might come to Christ. We need to trust God that He is mighty to save, and often salvation comes with or even through conviction, which can be very uncomfortable or offensive.

2. The example of Jesus

It's a nice thought to want to maintain relationships for the sake of possible future conversations about Jesus. But **to compromise by permitting/accommodating obvious sin will be to bear a poor witness of the holiness and standards of God**. If a salt loses its saltiness, how can it be useful again? If we are to flip-flop our stand depending on who we are speaking with, we undermine our own credibility to disciple Christians or even to share the Gospel. **Without Holiness, no one can see God (Hebrews 12:14).**

Let us look to Jesus as our prime example. When speaking with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-26), He did not compromise on His values and said what was required even when He knew that it would upset and turn the young man away. **Jesus did not seek to appease him, neither did He loosen His take on the Ten Commandments in order to maintain a relationship** with the young ruler in hopes that he will stay around to listen to Him or immediately follow Him. **Jesus is about our spiritual relationship with God, He is about holiness; He is Holiness.**

3. Presenting the Gospel as faithful witnesses

Since we are really called to be faithful witnesses, **to avoid talking about sin as it is, even for very empathetic reasons, is not being loving at all** as it will be to (unintentionally) put forth a false gospel message.

The core message of the Gospel is "acknowledge that you have fallen/are unrighteous and come to Christ who freely forgives everything."

If we are to compromise on holiness, no one can see how they have fallen, and thus not see their need to come to Christ. As faithful witnesses, we need to present the Gospel as it is, not as we hope or carefully curated in order

to avoid offence and 'win souls'. The message of the Cross, the Gospel, will always be foolishness to the perishing, but power to those who are saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). We have to trust God.

What About Offence?

The fear of offending and turning people away from God is rooted in our misunderstanding that we are responsible for and in control of another person's salvation. We may think that by maintaining the relationship, these people may turn to us in times of need or when searching for God. But this is a huge assumption that most likely wouldn't even come through. If they are in need and have no regard or consideration of the Gospel to begin with, we Christians will be the last person they will approach for help and affirmation. **Those who feel that they are experiencing unwanted SSA will approach the Christians that have been consistent yet gentle** in their approach on this topic.

Therefore, it is **wiser to trust God and be a faithful witness of the Gospel.**

Message And The Messenger(s)

Now on being a faithful and loving witness, there's a fine-line between us being offensive/offending and the Gospel message being offensive/offending. **We can maintain our Christian view on homosexuality without being an offensive and insulting person.** We should definitely work on our own mentality, speech and behaviour when sharing the Gospel. **We must revere God in our hearts, be ready to give a reason for the hope that we have in Christ, and when we do so, do it with gentleness and respect while keeping a clear conscience** (1 Peter 3:15~16).

Always remember that the person you are speaking to is also **made in the Image of God and has inherent worth no matter how much disagreement is going on.** Revere God, keep on loving and be patient with the person. Keep a gentle tone and posture. Let your speech be filled with respect and truth. **Do your homework** - read up, study, discuss and be equipped to give good reasons for the faith and your stand. If the person is still offended even after you have given a reasonable account for your position in a loving manner, they are offended by your message and not by you. **This is beyond our control. It is solely the person's own choice, and as much as we may be uncomfortable with it, we must have faith and trust God for their salvation.**

Ministry tips:

- Avoid ALWAYS talking about sin of people
 - » The point here is to speak of sin as it is - sinful and a rebellion against God, and NOT to always talk about sin. That would be annoying and unrelatable
 - » We should not be afraid to take the biblical stand concerning sin, but neither should we go about judging people
 - » We are all sinners justified by grace, through faith alone
- Remember love
 - » Love is not self-seeking, neither does it take pleasure in shaming/ridiculing even the enemies
 - » Love wants the best for the beloved, it is not proud, it seeks to build up rather than to destroy the person (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
- Be a faithful Christian yourself
 - » Diligence in bible study, willingness to keep learning, humility and a commitment to holiness - these are essentials as a Christian which will help us speak truth in love better
 - » We must be a good witness of the Gospel in both words and deeds

Q20: Does God still love me if I experience same-sex attraction? Can one have a gay partner yet remain celibate and holy?

Quick response:

Yes, God still loves you if you experience SSA because being tempted is not a sin. This is the same scenario as how a faithful Christian may struggle with the temptation to consume pornography for the rest of his/her life.

No, a romantically involved same-sex relationship is not in line with God's holiness as it involves giving in to the temptation SSA presents. If the relationship is claimed to not have any 'romantic' element to it, why then call it a same-sex relationship? It's nothing more than a strong platonic friendship.

Holiness must be on God's terms. To evaluate if a decision or even a thought is holy, we got to look at the end game of its trajectory. By tracing the trajectory of SSA, we know that the end of pursuing it is not holy unto God and hence, we should not even entertain thoughts along the trajectory - this includes entering into a same-sex relationship.

Does God Still Love Me If I Experience _____?

We all struggle with something. There may also come a point in our lives when we struggle with the thought of whether God still loves and accepts us if we experience certain temptations repeatedly, especially where mainstream culture suggests that strugglers can never be accepted by God. The question hits harder when the experience recurs daily, such as the case of someone who experiences SSA. Clarity can be achieved by relooking at SSA from a biblical perspective.

Is SSA Sin?

Is it wrong to experience SSA? In other words, in Christian/biblical terms, is SSA a sin? What does the Bible say? 4 things to note:

1. The Bible does not explicitly speak of SSA per se.
2. The act of same-sex intercourse as a sin. (Romans 1:26-28, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Timothy 1:10, 1 Corinthians 6:9)

3. There can be bad passions that lead us towards sinful behaviour, i.e. temptations (Romans 1:24-32)
4. Being tempted is not a sin (Hebrews 4:15)

SSA is much more like a form of temptation than sin itself. Both SSA and opposite-sex attraction can lead a person to sin. A heterosexual person could entertain/harbour sexual thoughts about someone who is not his/her spouse and that's sin. This same person could, however, choose to pick up his/her cross, deny these temptations and not pursue or fantasise about the sexual thoughts, and escape from sin. Likewise, a person who experiences SSA and pursues it has also sinned, but if the person does not pursue it, the person has not yet sinned. Therefore, we can conclude that SSA which is not acted upon mentally or physically, is not a sin.

Why Is SSA A Temptation? Why Is Pursuing It Sinful? - The Trajectory Of Sin

Desires and thoughts can be sinful on their own even though the sin has not yet been committed (Matthew 5-7). The Bible (James 1:13-15) tells us that evil desire gives birth to sin that in turn leads to death. To evaluate if a thought is godly or sinful, we need to consider its trajectory.

James 1:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but **each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.** ¹⁵ Then, after **desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

Temptations don't come from God because they leads us away from God while God desires to reconcile us to Him. Experientially, we can also easily realise that different people struggle with different temptations as individuals. Why is this so? **We all have a fallen nature in us that sets us on various paths in rebellion against the Will of God for us.** Our own inclinations and desires are corrupted by sin, and thus we each have different evil inclinations or desires. **Temptation is only powerful when our fallen desire/inclination is aligned with the stimulus.** This explains why some people don't seem to struggle much with the temptation to embezzle funds while some others might. We each have our own struggles to overcome.

SSA is a form of temptation as it leads us away from God's desire for us. The end of pursuing SSA is as suggested by the 'gay script' (see Q1 for more info) - to

act upon the sexual desires, which is sin. Therefore, **as loving Christians who sincerely care for another Christian who may be experiencing SSA, we cannot be encouraging the pursuit of SSA** in the form of establishing a romantic relationship or engaging in same-sex activity.

What About Celibate/Non-Sexual Same-Sex Relationships?

When we say ‘same-sex relationship’, there must be some romance within the relationship. The gay couple can definitely choose to remain celibate and not sin physically. But a romantic relationship goes beyond having sex; **it includes embracing SSA and pursuing it (at least mentally, possibly some degrees physically) which gives some level of personal pleasure.**

Applying the understanding of ‘the trajectory of sin’, **all forms of same-sex romantic relationship are going to be sinful.** To engage in a same-sex romantic relationship requires one to pursue and give in to the SSA. **To accept SSA as part of the design of God for us is wrong as the Scriptures have been very clear about it. Insistence will only resemble self-righteousness** (see Q11, Q12 and Q16). We have already established that this only leads us to a path that’s away from God.

Furthermore, to remain in a ‘celibate same-sex relationship’ is to **walk dangerously close to sinning.** The **same goes for heterosexual couples - co-habitation is strongly discouraged** to avoid placing the unmarried couple in a place of overwhelming sexual temptation. There’s no guarantee that we will always be sober enough to keep ourselves from sexual sin. The Bible has a wise teaching concerning this: flee from sexual immorality! (1 Corinthians 6:9).

It’s also good to pause and think: “what is a gay partner?”, “what do we mean by celibate same-sex relationships?”, “is romance even involved?” **If the relationship is without sexual tension or romance, no matter how intense the intimacy is, it’s really just a strong platonic friendship.** There’s no need to call it ‘celibate same-sex relationship’.

The Love And Acceptance Of God

Does God love those with SSA? Of course! God still loves you if you experience SSA because being tempted is not a sin. **No one is free from temptations, no one is without sin. God loves even sinners and forgives those who are willing to repent (Romans 5:8-10).** This therefore means that just as a habitual porn consumer can be forgiven and repent from this behaviour, people who have participated in homosexual intercourse can too be forgiven and find a path of escape from the unwanted temptation when they decide to pursue God

wholeheartedly instead (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Ministry tips:

- A person only chooses to walk away from a sinful relationship after realising and placing faith in God's goodness for them
 - » Always remember to respect and pay attention to the person's feelings while having a conversation about their same-sex relationship
 - » Don't force the person to immediately break up, gently lead the person into an understanding of God's good desire for them
 - » Give them time, ample support and a listening ear. If they are willing to open up their struggles in a same-sex relationship, it's a sign of great trust towards you. Cherish it even while engaging the person to help them discover God's love and goodness for him/her
- Do not immediately exclude a Christian who came out as struggling with SSA from the congregation and leadership roles
 - » The church must decide for itself policies concerning membership, leadership and marriage - all taking the biblical perspective
 - » Whatever your church policy is with other sins/struggles, apply the same standard of accountability, discipline and grace with those who struggle with SSA

Q21: What about asexuality?

Quick response:

To be asexual means to be completely void of sexual inclinations and attraction. Asexuality is often self-identified. It is impossible to objectively prove if a person is born asexual or will remain that way their whole lifetime, and neither is it important to prove this point to anyone.

Asexuality can be commended if this gift of celibacy is stewarded to serve the kingdom of God wholeheartedly.

Romance And Sex

Some people may argue that romance and sex are separate things, i.e. it's possible for people to experience romantic attraction but have little or no sexual attraction towards another. We have earlier mentioned that 'celibate same-sex relationships' are also not in line with the will of God for us (see Q20), in this section, we will explore 'asexuality' and what could this mean in the conversation on homosexuality.

What Is 'Asexuality'?

The asexual identity has gained greater acceptance as being an integral part of the LGBT identity relatively recently, although little is understood about it. However, a recent systematic review in 2020 attempted to characterize the 'sexual behaviour' and 'psychological processes' associated with asexuality [1]. Asexuality is generally described as "a lifelong lack of sexual attraction". It was thought that asexuality could be a consequence of medical problems that affect arousal and sexual desire, but in recent years, it is classified as a sexual orientation instead of a form of disorder [2]. At the same time, certain 'dysfunctional sexual beliefs' have been associated with people who identify as asexual. For women, notions such that sexual desire are fundamentally sinful or that sexuality declines with age may contribute to this. Men may likewise believe that sex is a way of establishing power/a sense of superiority over men, or that their sexual performance is of prime significance to a partner.

While some self-reported asexuals say that they have 'always felt this way', It may take others many more years to finally identify as asexual, as they may be aware of their romantic attractions towards men or women, but not aware of their lack of desire for sexual activity with either sex. Some claim to still possess sexual libido, but don't want to perform it with anyone. Hence, asexuality is deceptively complex, and complicates the relationship between sex, sexual attraction, romantic or emotional/platonic attraction, and many others.

Sub-Groups Within Asexuality

Some asexuals do participate in sexual activity such as masturbation or even intercourse with someone else but nonetheless identify as asexual due to a lack of desire or not deriving pleasure from it. An asexual identity is therefore different from being a chaste single which is a decision and commitment to not be involved in any romantic/sexual relationships or sexual activities.

Victims Of A Sex-Saturated Culture

Self-labelled asexuals feel alienated in a sex-saturated culture ^[3]. Self-identifying asexuals rarely report distress due to the lack of sexual interest, other than from social stigma or pressure from romantic partners. In other words, asexuals do still engage in sexual activity with 'romantic partners', but do not find it pleasurable nor interesting, and could feel stressed when expectations on sex with their partners are misaligned.

Issue of Idolising Marriage and Childbearing

Christians who think they are asexual may also feel alienated in a church environment that places much emphasis on marriage and childbearing. There may be a tendency to view oneself as 'less than' or underappreciated, similar to celibate people who identify as LGBTQ.

However, **Scripture actually has a high view of singleness or celibacy.** Matthew 19 alludes to persons who are born as eunuchs (unable to have sex, analogous to asexuals), and those who chose celibacy for the kingdom of Heaven. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul recognizes the disadvantages of being married and encourages singles to remain unmarried for Kingdom purposes. In other words, **there is a special and celebrated place in the Church for single-living, alongside the calling to marriage; both paths are awesome and blessed by God.** It is worth remembering that Paul was thought to be single, and Jesus certainly was single, yet they lived abundant and purposeful lives ^[4]. One could say that a person can be single and live to see 'fruitfulness' and 'multiplication' as in the case of Genesis 1:28 in the lives of the people they have sown into.

A Christian who has the characteristics associated with asexuality **need not feel pressured into marriage, or feel less worthy if one is not led to marriage.** If an asexual person does feel called to married, the prospects of and expectations of sex within marriage must be discussed properly between both partners. While love and sex are important, they are peripheral components of a marriage which should be much more than a reflection of a couple's romantic love and desire for each other. Marriage should be a covenant towards

each other ^[5], symbolizing the self-sacrificing relationship between Christ and the Church, and the context to have children (see Q17). Although both partners should grant each other their conjugal rights, sexual desire does wane over time in marriage, hence sex should not be the lynchpin.

Inherent Value, Dignity And Finding Fulfilment

In a sex-saturated culture, the lack of sex seems to also signal an incomplete human experience. If the assumption that the lack of expressing one's sexual identity diminishes a person's humanity or dignity, it begs the question: "Do asexuals thus lack dignity?" From the biblical standpoint, **no one is different in their inherent value, dignity and will find fulfilment only in Christ**. Until we are able to put away our carnal desires and expectations of life, we won't be able to truly live as we are bound to the direction of sin within us.

An over-celebration of marriage plus equating singleness with loneliness also contribute to the narrative of affirming non-heterosexual sexual activity and relationship preferences. The **biblical view on sexuality covers asexuals as well: regardless of our sexuality, it's all about stewarding our time, resources, mind and body for God instead of self-gratification**.

Ministry tips:

- Asexuality is not necessarily the gift of singleness
 - » While an asexual person may be inclined towards singleness, they still have choices to make concerning their sexual behaviour and thoughts on relationships
 - » Holiness is regardless of sexuality - it's chastity in singleness, faithfulness in marriage

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Q22: Can I ‘pray the gay’ away? / Should we pray to be heterosexual?

Quick response:

It is possible for a person to cease experiencing SSA, but that is not the goal in Christianity. God didn't say be straight for I am straight. He said be holy for I am holy.

If a person so decides that SSA is unwanted, there's nothing wrong with praying for God to help with the temptation, to pray for the attraction to subside or even 'go away'.

Holy Sexuality

Dr. Christopher Yuan mentioned in his book 'Holy Sexuality and the Gospel (2018)' that “the **Bible does not bless every indiscriminate variety of opposite-sex relationship**”. He also explained that Christians should not pigeonhole ourselves into the wrong framework for biblical sexual expression but embrace God's vision for sexuality. **God's vision of sexuality is not based on the heterosexual-bisexual-homosexual paradigm that we often have. God's vision for human sexuality is holiness - chastity in singleness, faithfulness in marriage; holy sexuality** (see Q11 also).

God The Father

God invites His children to bring their requests to Him in the right spirit (James 4:1-10), according to His will (1 John 5:14-15), and for His glory (John 14:13-14). He also asks us to trust Him with all our hearts as He directs our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 16:9) according to His ways and thoughts which are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). Our good Father is able to answer our prayers in ways that exceed our own expectations of what we are able to ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

As such, Christians with SSA, **like any other Christian, can bring their heart's desires to God**, doing so with **a posture of being open to however He may lovingly and wisely choose to respond to their prayers**. They may ask God to change their sexual and romantic desires, while knowing that God will give them what's best as they entrust their prayers to God and pursue a restorative journey with Him. In the process of restoration and knowing Jesus better, healing

may come in various forms or ways in their lives. The SSA may not cease, but God is more than capable of helping us follow Him.

Is It Even Possible For God To Take SSA Away?

No one can or should promise to be able to change another's sexual orientation, but we can **remain open to the possibility that God can work a wondrous miracle by answering someone's prayer in creative ways.** For some, they experience transformation in the ways they see and relate to themselves and others. For others, their healing/freedom may most deeply occur in the kinds of behaviour they pursue. Shifts or changes in sexual and romantic desires may occur for some, while sexual orientation may remain the same for others.

As mentioned in Q8 on conversion therapy, change is indeed possible, but the **change of sexual orientation is not the main goal in Christianity.** The ultimate goal is the transformation of our hearts and minds - changing from a state of rebellion from God to the awareness of our being/identity in Christ and the precious gift of salvation God had given us.

If God Doesn't Answer My Prayer, Does He Not Love Me?

Some may wonder why God seems to treat different people differently - granting a larger degree of relief from the struggles with SSA for some while seemingly not providing as much help for another. God works in mysterious ways which no one can fully comprehend. What we can comprehend, we should hold on to dearly. **Prayer is not for us to wrestle God's arm into granting our wishes; prayer ultimately helps us align ourselves with God.**

We each struggle with our fallen human nature in this 'here but not yet' reality, in which we can already experience a foretaste of God's kingdom, but the fullness of His kingdom has not yet arrived. **Our decision to carry our cross daily and live a life holy unto God is a beautiful testimony that Jesus is indeed our hope and more than enough.** We do not need to cling on to earthly things for a sense of fulfilment or comfort. We are testifying to the world that, on our own, we are not able to manage all the stresses and difficulties of life and our struggles, but with God, it's possible to live in a different way.

Goal For Christian Experiencing SSA

The all-consuming goal of a Christian with SSA is the **same as all Christians: to love God fully and the people around them as themselves.** As we all pursue God's abundant goodness and restoration for us, it is important to be open to however that may come. No matter what form it takes,

same-sex attracted Christians, like all Christians, are continually invited to wholeheartedly trust, intimately understand, and practically express God's character in their lives (Jeremiah 9:24).

Ministry tips:

- Don't assume that every Christian who experiences SSA automatically desires to overcome it
 - » Christians will only come to that conclusion on their own when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit, are convinced that it is not the Will of God for them, and that they are so much more than their sexuality/sexual attractions
- Don't compel a Christian to pray his/her SSA away unless the individual has specifically expressed that it is unwanted and they truly want freedom from it
 - » Patiently engage in a dialogue when the person wants to
 - » Share the biblical standard of sexuality and God's wonderful heart for us
 - » Encourage members to pray for strength to be holy as He is holy in all areas of their lives
 - » Pray for the individual to find their purpose in God
 - » Sexuality is not the core of a person's identity but being a beloved child of God is.

See also:

- Holy Sexuality and the Gospel, 2018, Dr. Christopher Yuan
<https://g.co/kgs/M69cir>; accessed 15 Nov 2020

Q23: Should we support a loved one to pursue homosexual desires?

Quick response:

Support our loved one in their pursuit for wholeness, not just happiness. Because we love them, we wouldn't be encouraging the pursuit of homosexual desires or any other sexual activity outside the context of a heterosexual marriage.

We should, and can still support the loved one who has decided to pursue their desires - being there for them, offering unconditional love without affirming their pursuit.

What Is Love?

Culture asserts that if we don't grant people their 'freedom to love' (i.e. to love anyone they want without constraint/boundaries), we are bigoted or loveless. The acceptance of a person's preferences, the affirmation of non-heterosexual relationships and sexual behaviour seems to be at the pinnacle of this narrative about love. But is this all that love is about? Is that how, as Christians, we ought to love one another or a loved one?

God Is Love - What Is Godly Love?

Contrary to culture's belief and accusations by activists, Christians are not called to be bigoted or loveless. Instead, **Christians are called to emulate the highest form of Love - God's nature.** In the famous passage of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, we see a picture of what godly love looks like.

Some professing Christians claim that the LGBTQ narrative of love is the standard which God calls us to. One example is Matthew Vines who spoke about 'love being the good fruit' while conveniently ignoring the **context of Jesus's teaching on good fruits - which is fruits of repentance, not fruits of good-feelings.** Some other well-meaning Christians do the opposite. They over-emphasise the need for immediate perfection/repentance instead of being a loving witness for truth. All these complicate our understanding about God's love, and we hope to break it down in this section.

Let's take a closer look at the **2 narratives of love, and the 3 ways it plays out in reality** while relating to someone who holds a different position.

Christian approaches		Pro-LGBTQ / Revisionist approach
'Truth' (Well-meaning, but harsh)	Truth + Love (In the example of Jesus, and 1 Cor 13)	Love (Well-meaning, but permissive)
Gets impatient when point doesn't seem to be taken/ understood	Patience [Whatever and however long it takes to demonstrate the Love and Truth of Christ]	Patient/tolerant until the other person doesn't affirm the LGBTQ approach/ narrative
Upholds truth as the absolute regardless of how the other person feels. Tends to call out the sin/ label sinners without extending pastoral care to the person	Kindness [Exercising self-control in our actions and uses words to build-up, not tear down/ attack others no matter their position]	Kind and empathetic to allies, harsh to those who disagree. Tendency to blanket label people who disagree as bigots/homophobic
Takes pride in knowing the truth. Tendency to bible-thump	Not Boastful [Doesn't parade knowledge nor boast of self-righteousness but gives all glory unto God]	Takes pride in sexual/gender identities. Tendency to parade it and desire others to affirm their expression
Tendency to comment before listening. Tendency to portray a sense of all-knowingness (at least in attitude). Also might be unwilling to listen/ try to empathise with the individual's thoughts and experiences	Not Proud [Humble and willing to listen. Doesn't seek to 'win']	Tendency to take a totalitarian position and ignore alternative views. Believes in intellectual superiority over those who disagree. Often branding others as uneducated/ bigoted
Tendency to condemn others in the name of God and the Scriptures	Doesn't dishonour others [Never demeans or shame another, upholds the view that all are made in the Image of God indiscriminately]	Tendency to put down a person based on their non-affirming/conservative views

Christian approaches		Pro-LGBTQ / Revisionist approach
'Truth' (Well-meaning, but harsh)	Truth + Love (In the example of Jesus, and 1 Cor 13)	Love (Well-meaning, but permissive)
Might find greater satisfaction in winning an argument/proving Bible knowledge rather than persuading the individual and ministering to actual (often immediate) needs	Not self-seeking [doesn't seek to win arguments or impose personal preferences. doesn't seek personal gain but the best for the other party]	Promotes a self-seeking behaviour - individuality > community benefit and continuity. Demands others to conform to the LGBTQ-affirming beliefs and position
Gets triggered when stubbornly opposed	Not easily angered [cool-headed, self-controlled]	Gets triggered when opposed or when not affirmed of sexual/gender identity
Tends to remember old arguments and resurface them in fresh conversations regardless of a person's feelings or current state/journey in repentance	Keeps no records of wrong [Always forgiving, don't nurse bitterness and wrongdoings]	Tends to bring up past hurts/negative experiences and build a victimised position based on it without forgiving the trespass
Tends to only rejoice when someone is willing to accept the Bible's truths. Might attempt to do so by any means deemed necessary (even unbiblical ones ironically)	Doesn't delight in evil... rejoice in truth [Seeks Truth, shuns evil]	Celebrates an unwholesome pursuit - one that's away from pursuing Jesus; from pursuing truth.
Tends to be overly protective - enacting too many boundaries/rules due to a lack of trust, afraid of having conversations to discuss various perspectives. Tends to give up hope on the currently unrepentant	Always protects, trusts, hopes, persevere [Protects dignity, mutual trust/accountability, always hopeful, perseveres in difficult times]	Tends to only protect their own freedom of speech Tends to give up on conversations with conservatives/those that disagree Promotes a high-risk sexual ethic/lifestyle
Tends to only love those who seem to want to repent. Tends to brush off the unrepentant and cease caring for them.	Never fails [unconditional, unending]	Tends to love and accept only those that conform to their position

As Christians, we believe that Truth is found in the Scriptures, in the person of Jesus. It is therefore important for us to seek out **truth from the inerrant Scripture, supported with logical reasoning and stay informed with new scientific discoveries.**

Truth will not contradict itself, and when we set our hearts and minds to seek Truth with integrity, have faith that God's truth will prevail and His wisdom be made clearer, better known to us.

As Christians, we are informed of our **equal identity, status and position in God**. No one is better than another, everyone is a sinner saved by grace, justified by faith alone. Everyone has a journey and unique life experiences which should not be ignored but instead needs to be heard. We need to be willing to look at individuals for who they are - image bearers of God, and extend the same love God has for us while patiently leading us back to Him. **Love fiercely protects, it doesn't simply condone everything; God doesn't condone behaviour that hurts His loved ones.**

Truth that isn't loving isn't truth, love that isn't truthful isn't love. We see both converge in the person of Jesus - dying for us at the cross out of love, and because the truth about sin cannot be ignored.

What Can We Do To Support A Loved One Then?

- **Begin with the self**

Always begin with ourselves - **get our own relationship with Jesus on the right path**. There's no way for us to 'change' anyone or instil conviction into another, but we are **in control of how we submit our own thoughts to Christ, and how we can live for Christ**.

No one walks away from something originally perceived as good when a better alternative doesn't exist or is not understood. Instead of affirming the pursuit of unwholesome relationships/desires, demonstrate and model how the pursuit of God can indeed be beautiful. If we can't even have a fruitful and wonderful relationship with Christ, living out holiness, no one will see God and no one will want to choose to live holy too (unless God chooses to intervene in a miraculous way).

- **Be a great listener**

Never shame people for their views especially when they open up to you. We have to learn how to listen without judging. There is a time and place for correction, but most of the time, people need to first be heard. **They need to**

know that you and I will unconditionally love them - the best way to do so is to not react in fear/anger/disappointment when someone opens up to us. If someone decides to open up to us, it's a demonstration of trust and an often unspoken desire to be unconditionally loved.

While the journey ahead can be difficult for both parties, **seek to build trust and safe spaces where honest conversations can take place, where ideas can be exchanged.** Be with your loved one, show genuine care and concern for them, **offer practical help/care even if they have chosen a path that's not what you desired for them.** Be patient, keep them in prayer always, and love unconditionally.

– **Be the family**

It can be very difficult for someone who struggles with SSA to say yes to singleness (however long it may be) if they can't find the love, intimacy and genuine relationships which they should be able to find within the church. We need to build strong platonic friendships within the church, we need to love and care more for one another. **Be the spiritual family in Christ Jesus** for one another so that no one will have to feel left out and robbed of a family.

Ministry tips:

- Establish clear biblical teachings on sexuality
 - » Before jumping into sexuality, a good foundation on the following should be built:
 - Authority and credibility of Scripture
 - Image of God (Imago Dei)
 - Fall of humanity
 - Redemptive work of God
- Have good support groups within the church
 - » Equip parents with godly parenting values and practical tips
 - » Equip discipleship group leaders to listen and counsel members (no matter the struggle)
 - » Have core teams equipped to help parents and to train parents on how to manage their emotions and journey with their child if the child comes out to them about their struggles with sexuality
 - » Have leaders equipped to mentor and journey with youths if they choose to come out
- Read widely to gain perspective - helps with developing empathy

Q24: Can a person still be a leader in church if he/she is same-sex attracted?

Quick response:

Overall, churches should look to the Bible for the core standards of a leader/elder. Churches need to have doctrinal clarity concerning core beliefs and expectations of leaders and members. Churches may have slight variations in their own policies concerning employment and appointment of leaders, but in general, the bare minimum is to have someone who is faithful to God, willing to be honest and accountable.

Everyone has struggles; SSA could be just one of the possible temptations someone struggles with. Whatever the standards are, be sure to apply it equally and consistently without bias throughout the church.

Disciples Of Jesus

The earliest leaders of the Church were disciples and followers of Jesus. Despite having spent time and being taught by Jesus Himself, not a single one of them was perfect. Jesus chose His twelve not because they were special or perfect, but He had a plan for each of them. He accepted them and used them just as they were. Jesus constantly prayed for them, patiently taught and nurtured them. Rebukes were also made when necessary, but Jesus never abandoned or shamed them. From all these, we understand that **leaders of the church are neither perfect nor infallible - these are not the qualifications for church leadership.**

Biblical Standard For Leadership

Elsewhere in the Bible, we do see standards for church leadership (e.g. Titus, I Timothy, I Peter). Leaders and members of the church should also strive to have a united mind and understanding of the Word of God within the community, and on the essentials of Christianity across the body of Christ; the Church. It is better for churches to frame policies in a non-antagonistic manner by sharing firmly what they believe and stand for rather than what they don't stand for. In the context of LGBTQ/homosexuality, **a church could articulate its position to members by affirming the Biblical view of sexuality, singleness and marriage instead of merely denouncing homosexuality.**

Churches need to be clear on their doctrines/beliefs and expectations of members and leaders as failure to do so could have very negative implications down-the-road. When there is a misalignment of expectations, a member who aspires to serve in a ministry or as a leader in church could be in for a rude shock when they realise that they are disqualified from leadership for certain beliefs or practices they hold dear.

An example could be a member who cohabitates with his girlfriend but shows great talent for leadership and ability to teach the Bible. The member could sincerely desire to be a discipleship group leader but denied the opportunity as his lifestyle clearly contradicts the church's stand on sexual holiness - that sexual intimacy should only take place within marriage and cohabitation is strongly discouraged. This member could be hurt and utterly disappointed to realise that after years of growing and bonding with the church, he now has to decide to stop having pre-marital sex and move away from his girlfriend until they are married OR be unable to take up leadership positions or even partake in certain church activities (especially since some churches may have a stricter expectation for members who wish to be baptised or partake in holy communion etc.). This scenario is entirely avoidable - if only the church and leaders were more upfront to members about the church's beliefs and standards.

It is therefore better to **be clear on your church's doctrines and expectations of leaders and members to create an environment conducive for discipleship and development.** Establishing clear standards and expectations can also save you and your members from suffering unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts in the future.

Understanding Leadership

Even before discussing this further, each church must decide for itself what it considers as 'leadership positions'. This is important as church ministries have various layers of involvement, commitment and expectations. One possible way to go about making the distinction is to **look at what the role entails** - Does it require teaching of doctrines? Does the person in that position hold a large influence over others? Does the person in that position represent the church to members of the public?

Usually, teaching roles will require a much higher standard in doctrinal alignment than roles that don't. Influential/key positions of a ministry may also require a certain level of doctrinal alignment. This isn't to say that other roles in ministry are less important, it is just a **matter of influence on doctrinal understanding and discipleship of other members within the community.**

These are important as Jesus rebukes not only people who are openly defiant in their lifestyle/choices in life but also those who believe and teach against the Word of God (Revelations 2:20). It is therefore the responsibility of the church's management/top leadership to decide which roles/positions will require what level of doctrinal alignment from potential candidates.

SSA And Leadership

When it comes to same-sex attracted persons, the standards should not differ. Having a clear understanding of SSA and its distinction from LGBTQ identity and pursuits could help in decision-making. SSA is a temptation; when not pursued, a person who experiences SSA should be made eligible for leadership. He/she should be considered as a candidate like any other opposite-sex attracted candidate. **Both candidates are equally capable of sexual immorality, and are equally subject to maintaining integrity in order to lead.** Therefore, the bottom-line is that churches must be consistent in their enforcement of church policy on leadership.

A person with SSA could well be more accountable, responsible and faithful than someone who does not experience SSA. It all comes down to how transparent the person is willing to be, their track record, their beliefs, their character and resolve to be faithful to Christ in all circumstances. **No one should be discriminated against based on their sexual attraction/orientation if they show themselves to be a faithful follower of Christ.**

When it comes to leaders who struggle morally, it is **best for that leader to step away from a position of leadership for personal restoration.** This will allow the person to be free from the expectations and responsibilities of leadership, thus giving the needed space for personal repentance and reflection. It also protects those who may have been hurt by the mistakes of the leader - giving them the space for healing and rebuilding of trust with the leadership as a whole. **Churches may vary on their view of whether to or when to restore the person to leadership, but at the end of it all, we are all ultimately accountable to God.**

Concluding Thoughts

There is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be recommended for churches to take up concerning the appointment of leaders.

A church need not publicly announce their stand on all areas, but **it is good to be clear on what the core church's beliefs are.** Churches do need to have doctrinal clarity and policies on membership and leadership in order to

create a **conducive environment for discipleship and church growth**. Each church has to have clearly defined set of beliefs, expectations of leaders and members, and **consistently apply/enforce the same standards for everyone**. Decisions to appoint or remove leaders are purely up to the top management/leadership's discretion.

Ministry tips:

- Be consistent and clear in your church policies
 - » Focus on what the church stands for and believes in, not what the church doesn't believe in
- Do not immediately exclude a Christian who comes out as struggling with SSA from the congregation and leadership roles
 - » If you have valid reasons to remove a leader or bar the person from leadership (e.g. lack of accountability, criminal records etc.), have a separate conversation with the person before deciding to allow the person to remain or take up a leadership role
 - » Whatever your church policy is with other struggles or sinful behaviour, apply the same standard of accountability and grace with those who struggle with SSA

See also:

- Center for Faith and Sexuality - Pastoral Paper 9 "Guidance for Churches on Membership, Baptism, Communion, Leadership and Service for Gay and Lesbian People"
<https://www.centerforfaith.com/resources>, accessed 15 Nov 2020

Q25: Is change futile and a myth? What about ex-gays?

Quick response:

Sexuality is not as immutable as believed. Change is not a myth and ex-gays do exist. From the hundreds of testimonies that are emerging from the global Christian ex-gay community, it is apparent that change can happen.

Our focus should not be directed at changing sexual orientation, but at the sharing of the Gospel itself. We are called to be transformed into Christ-likeness.

That said, it is important to distinguish between wilful attempts to wish away one's experience of SSA as opposed to a God-directed transformation. A 'forced' or promised change in sexual orientation is not what Christianity is about. When people attempt to do so, it may backfire later in life resulting in disillusionment, bitterness, hurts and a deeper belief that sexuality is completely immutable.

Mutability Of Sexuality

As mentioned earlier in Q8, sexuality is not as immutable as believed. People can experience change in their sexual attractions over time - some shift from being exclusively heterosexual to bisexuality, there are also those that shift from exclusively homosexual to not-exclusively homosexual (see Q5 and Q7 also). As such, change is not a myth and 'ex-gays' do exist. By 'ex-gay' we mean people who once engaged in same-sex relationships/sexual activities and self-identified as gays but have now ceased to self-identify as gays and no longer pursue same-sex relationships or sexual activities.

Ex-Gays Do Exist

Some people suggest that ex-gays are simply 'not truly gay people' or 'straight people figuring out their sexuality'. By doing so, they are ignoring a person's entire life struggle, self-identification and diminishing their words. It may be a case where there's a misunderstanding of what it means to be 'gay'. The **belief that ex-gays are simply not truly gay people comes from a place of assumption that 'gayness' is immutable**, but we have seen how that's not really true and SSA could be unwanted (see Q5, Q7 and Q8). We also clarified that being 'gay' is not the same as being same-sex attracted. A person is gay when having embarked on

same-sex relations and self-identifies as gay (see Q1 and Q2).

Take for example a man who was a heavy smoker but decided to quit after getting married for the sake of his wife (who doesn't like smoking for health reasons but doesn't manipulate him). Does it make the person 'not a smoker' to begin with? No. Neither did the spouse do 'conversion therapy' to make him quit. What happened here is that the man had a change in his mindset and priorities (well-being of his wife, and to please his wife).

Such is the case as well for those who are ex-gays. They have discovered and decided for themselves a very different path - one that isn't about affirming nor pursuing their SSA, but **pursuing something else which they perceive as greater and better.**

Ex-Gays Are Not Brainwashed People

There are also claims that 'ex-gays are brainwashed people, often brainwashed by religion'. This is not an uncommon allegation as it almost seems like ex-gays are 'always Christians/religious'. **Truth is, we don't know how many ex-gays there are in the world, and many are increasingly trying to hide themselves in a society where hostility towards ex-gays has intensified.** So, this claim is rather baseless and unfair to individuals who dared to speak up and share their personal testimonies.

Such statements are not only misguided but also rather insulting/offensive, as though the ex-gays had no ability to assess their own lives, desires and decide what's best for them. It may be the case where many ex-gays chose to turn from their pursuit of homosexuality because they have come to know Christ, but the suggestion that this equates to brainwashing, manipulation or peer pressure is unfounded.

Christians believe that there's no greater pursuit in life than the pursuit of God. Our identity as the redeemed children of God takes first place, and thus **it is quite a natural progression that this Christian identity displaces the gay identity, leading to a radical change in life choices concerning their sexuality.** The same change in priorities and thinking can take place for any Christian who may have been placing other worldly achievements at the core of their identity. Another example could be a rich person who is obsessed with amassing wealth - he/she could later decide to pursue God with all that they have instead of pursuing wealth, and thus decide to renounce the former ways of life. We will hardly argue that this person is brainwashed for having a changed mindset and priorities in life. **Such is the change for anyone who is replacing the pursuit of their life with the pursuit of Christ.**

Biblically Speaking, Change In Mindset Is Not Only Possible But Intended/Expected

2 Corinthians 3:18 speaks of our transformation into Christ-likeness as Christians:

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Concerning sexuality, the same expectation applies as seen in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ 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.

Again, the objective is not heterosexuality. SSA may never go away, and that's not the goal. **Sanctification is towards holiness, and it applies to all forms of sexual immorality.** A change in mindset would mean not placing sexual desires at the core of a person's identity, and instead focus on the pursuit of Jesus in one's life.

What About Ex-Ex-Gays?

Proponents of change being impossible love to cite how some former leaders of ex-gay ministries have themselves reverted to pursuing their SSA, how other Christian leaders who may have championed sexual purity have also changed their mind and denounced purity as harmful to the LGBTQ community. They exist too and while they speak for themselves, they don't nullify the experiences and choices of other ex-gays. Many of them used to believe that sexual orientation can be wilfully changed/'corrected', only to be disillusioned after failed attempts and many years of believing/championing this thought [\[1\]](#). It is no wonder they now actively support implementation of a ban on 'conversion therapy' (see Q8 also).

Forcing someone to change their sexual orientation is unethical, and we as Christians should not do that. **Promising change - claiming to be able to change sexual orientation through coercive or unbiblical efforts is also something we must avoid.** Why should we even set people up with such promises when it's not even our goal?

Pursuit of God is what we are really doing, and in our course of discipleship, we should be imparting this value to younger believers. **Holiness extends to every part of our lives, including sexuality.** Some are going to struggle more than others in this area, while others struggle in areas that have not much to do with sexuality. Yet, the **struggles are uniquely personal for each individual, and it is also extremely common for us to pray for the struggle to end or be taken from us.** From time to time, some of us **may also find ourselves failing and we need to repent.** We will not in any way suggest that a man who has 'overcome' his gambling addiction for a considerable amount of time but relapsed into another wave of gambling addiction is an example that the struggle with gambling itself is harmful nor the objective of being a good steward (another aspect of holiness) is impossible. **Such is the way of a Christian who is trying to remain faithful to God.** We therefore should not also suggest the same of people struggling with their sexuality.

We should also not condemn people who relapse into a former lifestyle. They have reasons for doing so, regardless of whether the reasons may be sound or not. **We have to respect their choices, we also have to continue being a faithful Christian ourselves - faithful to both truth and love.** God is patient in our rebellion, backsliding and struggles. We too should exercise the same love, patience and kindness to one another. Let us be encouraging, let us be salt and light, let us be good witnesses for Jesus - carrying truth in a loving manner.

Ministry tips:

- Don't discriminate and see a Christian differently based on their kind of struggle
 - » See people for their efforts invested and commitment to becoming a faithful follower of Christ
- Be consistent in treatment of everyone
 - » Give credit/honour when it is due, mete out punishments when it is due as well
- Patiently pray for those who 'backslide'
 - » Only God knows the plan He has for them. Let us lovingly pray for them, continue a meaningful relationship with those who may have given up pursuing Jesus
 - » Avoid condemning them outrightly. We can judge ideas, decisions and actions but not the person

See also:

- Testimonies by ex-gays: [Truelove.is](#), [Anchored North](#), [Living Out](#)

Reference:

- [1] 24 Former Ex-Gay Leaders Write In Support Of Kentucky Bill To Ban Conversion Therapy, 2020
<https://www.metroweekly.com/2020/08/24-former-ex-gay-leaders-write-in-support-of-kentucky-bill-to-ban-conversion-therapy>, accessed 22 Aug 2020

Q26: My friend came out to me, what should I do?

Quick response:

Nothing much different from what is already commanded in the Bible and what we will do for someone else opening up about their (non-sexual) struggles to us. Be a genuine person and friend!

Thank your friend for the precious trust and keep it well. Practice active listening and withhold judgement. Assess the situation and understand the goals of the person before responding accordingly. You may not be well-prepared (mentally, emotionally etc.) to respond with answers immediately, so don't attempt to, either. Arrange for a follow-up and commit to it, prepare well for it.

Our goal needs to be to love the person and to provide a safe space for conversation. Let your words be gracious even when someone disagrees or rejects you. Constantly seek to have the best for one another.

Situational Ministry

There is no single answer to 'ministry' or what to do when someone opens up to us about their struggle or difficult situation. People open up about their previously secret struggle/situation to another for a **common reason but often different goals**. It is important for us to understand the distinction and be discerning in our 'ministry' to a loved one.

The common reason is 'the desire to be understood or accepted', in other words, be heard and listened to attentively; finding comfort, love and possibly forgiveness. It is an unfortunate tendency for the listener to begin attempting to 'fix' the person or the problems even before actually listening and understanding the person's struggles. We must always **remember the mercy that was shown to us by God, and therefore extend the same mercy, same comfort and care to the person who is opening up to us.**

Withhold judgement, listen empathetically and ask clarifying questions; i.e. practice Active Listening (see [1, 2, 3] for more details).

We have **no ability to fix another person**, but we can **listen attentively, show genuine care and concern for them**. If the situation allows it, let us

also point them to the One who is the best comforter and guide out of their miseries - Jesus.

We must be aware of the different goals each person has and be discerning while listening. Generally, there could be the following kinds of people opening up to us with their respective goals.

a) The returning prodigals

Some people open up about their secret struggles because they **desire help with it**. They could be opening up because they find themselves struggling against something undesirable yet are seemingly bound to, and **they are seeking help in their journey to live right with God**; i.e. overcome temptations and avoid sin.

b & c) Seekers or Challengers

Some others open up because they **are questioning the faith**. It may not always be a bad thing and we need to tread with wisdom. Among these, there could also be **genuine seekers of truth or others that have already made up their minds** about what 'truth' is and are here to **challenge existing interpretations of the Bible or your held convictions**.

Conversation With _____

The situation can present itself in many forms, but generally speaking, the above represent 3 broad goals following a conversation of 'opening up'. After **actively listening** to the sharer, assess where the person is coming from (the goal) and carry on the conversation.

a) The Returning Prodigal

- Thank the person for their trust in you and affirm the person of their courage and desire to pursue righteousness.
- Affirm that the struggle is not unique, that we are all struggling one way or another; we are all sinners saved by Grace. If you have an appropriate/similar experience, you may share a little on your own struggle and journey of pursuing righteousness (only if you are comfortable sharing it and if it is helpful).
- Ask clarifying questions about how their struggle is impacting them, their relationships and their personal walk with God (if necessary, take the opportunity to briefly align views with the Bible).
- Ask the person what or how he/she wants you to help with.

- If the person desires further assistance that is beyond you, it may be good to introduce the person to a counsellor or someone that is an overcomer of the same struggle.

b) The Cherished Seeker

- Thank the person for their trust in you and affirm the person of their courage and desire to pursue righteousness
- Affirm the person of your love and desire for the best for the person, and you will be a seeker of truth together with him/her
- During the first conversation of the ‘opening up’, it may not be the best time to do a Bible Study together about the topic at hand. Don’t be quick to jump into it if you are not ready - it is important to get our facts right. Arrange for another session to have a personal study together with the person on the topic.
- Ask clarifying questions about their struggle or questioning. E.g. ‘What got you interested in the topic or raised your awareness in this area of struggle/questioning?’, ‘What are the sources of information which you have been referring to?’
- Ask also how things may be for the person - is it negatively impacting them, their relationships and their personal walk with God?
- Ask them how else you may be able to help.
- If the person desires further assistance that is beyond you, it may be good to introduce the person to a counsellor, someone that is an overcomer of the same struggle or a pastor.

c) The Sincere Challenger

- Thank the person for trusting you enough to open up with their views about the shared matter. Affirm the person of the relationship you two share, and that you respect their view and sharing.
- Affirm the person of your love and desire for the best for the person, and you will be a seeker of truth together with him/her.
- Ask the person what is their desired outcome from the sharing and what the person is expecting of you/the church. Listen, you may not need to engage deeply on the points shared, give yourself time to process what is being said as your immediate emotions/reactions may do more harm than good.

- Ask clarifying questions about their questioning. E.g. ‘What got you interested in the topic or raised your awareness in this area of questioning?’, ‘What are the sources of information which you have been referring to?’
- Ask also how things may be for the person - is it negatively impacting them, their relationships and their personal walk with God?
- The person may have unfortunately experienced several hurts and disappointments from other fellow Christians or the church. If the cause of hurt and disappointment is due to poor approach/treatment of the person, it is only human to acknowledge the grievance and possibly apologise on behalf of the transgressors. If the grievance is due to differences in perspective instead, acknowledge the pain felt without having to apologise.
- The first conversation is hardly the right time and place to have deep conversations. Agree to have follow-ups to talk about it, set the parameters/ things to be discussed at the next conversation and work towards it.

Concluding Thoughts

Everything above is not limited to a person opening up about their sexuality or struggles with SSA. A good conversation regardless of the topic always includes mutual trust, respect and commitment.

What we do for someone who opens up about his/her SSA **should not be much different from someone opening up about another struggle or experience of temptation.** We need to love one another and carry each other’s burdens in our common journey of pursuing Christ. If the person is not a believer, actively listen to their sharing, help them at where they are (this includes practical help) and gently journey with them to **find clarity and truth.** As Christians, we believe Jesus is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. Pressing in to find truth is a possible path which God sets us on to eventually know Him or to know Him better.

In a world where many world-views exist, it is common to encounter questions or situations that challenge our convictions. As Christians, **we need to know what we believe and why we believe. We must be ready to give a defence for what we believe in. If we indeed love our loved one, the trouble of getting ourselves equipped or learning a brand new topic which is foreign to us should not get in the way.**

Lastly, remember that **our goal is never to win an argument with the person or ‘convert’ the person to our point of view. Our goal needs to be to love the person and to provide a safe space for conversation.**

Work with the person at where they are, be a good friend/loved one. There may be disagreements at times, so it is again important for us to know what we believe in and not waver on our biblical perspectives. At the same time, we must also be able to agree to disagree with the person and move on harmoniously. **Do your best to keep the peace, hold on to the Truth, and trust in the Goodness and Sovereignty of God.**

Further ministry tips:

- Remember love and truth go together in any kind of ministry and engagement
 - » Loving the person includes **helping the person in a practical manner beyond just praying**
 - e.g. if a person had just broken up with a partner of the same sex, don't celebrate it! Grieve with them; listen to their story and where they feel hurt. Provide comfort and a listening ear in their process of recovery from a heartbreak
 - e.g. if someone is opening up after having suffered some consequences of pursuing same-sex activities, hear them out, grieve with them, find help for them and pray for healing together
 - » Truth means being unwavering in our pursuit of God and holding on to biblical convictions
 - Being accommodative and affirming of something that is biblically wrong/sinful is not actually loving the person since it leads the person only to harm and destruction
- Be patient, always ready to agree to disagree
 - » Also, don't jump into discussion if you are not ready. Do what is best for the person, do your best and prepare for the conversation
- Avoid creating a sub-community in the church just for people with SSA
 - » A healthy church is one where someone with SSA will be able to fit in with any group of believers within the church
 - » Focus on creating a truly inclusive and loving church where **no struggle is too shameful to be discussed or brought up**. This means that all leaders and members must learn to be gracious, loving and **unlearn their own prejudices against struggles that are unknown to themselves**

- » There can still be counselling, focus-group discussions and talks specifically for the topic of sexuality (it is better to talk about SSA and other sexual preferences under the umbrella of [holy] sexuality as a whole), but do not let people with SSA feel alienated or ‘othered’

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Social Engagement / Answering Common Hard Questions

Q27: Why does Christianity forbid people to love? What is love?

Quick response:

'Love' is wanting the best for the loved one. Love doesn't only seek to empower, it seeks to protect what's valuable. Christianity and its position against sexual perversion seeks to protect what's most valuable to God - us humans; individuals that Christ died for.

God Is Love Or God Hates Love?

People often ask this question with an assumption that God is against love and sex. This assumption pictures God as a distant kill-joy and not the source of goodness... but this is actually a very different god from the God of the Bible.

God of the Bible is not only the creator of human sexuality; holy sexuality reflects His glory. When sex happens within the context of a heterosexual marriage, it has the potential creative power like God to create a new human life. Humans are extremely valuable to God, and we can all agree that children need good parents. What separates good parents from bad ones are their behaviour and attitudes which can be identified with 'boundaries' or 'lines'. God, through the Bible, gives us these guidelines that help us create the best possible condition for human, or the child's, flourishing.

Being the author of sexuality and the greatest lover of humanity, God gives us laws as guidance in our fallen state and sends His Son to redeem us. Laws alone however have no ability to make us good, hence Jesus's work on the Cross and the Holy Spirit to help transform us into Christ's image. The Word of God continues today not to kill love, but rather to protect love and the loved ones.

Love Deserves Protection

We face an issue today that effectively makes Christianity counter-cultural. Mainstream Western culture today understands love in a rather specific way - romantic and erotic. Love is also perceived to be the key to human fulfilment, and hence, to stand in the way of consensual romantic/erotic love is a 'cardinal sin' which cannot be tolerated. Receiving this love has become the pinnacle of

human experience - **love has become something to be consumed** rather than a selfless virtue.

There is another way to view love - where **love is humble, not self-seeking, and committed unconditionally**. Such a love is a virtue which creates environments for human flourishing. It doesn't have to be romantic or erotic though these could come as a subset within the context of monogamous heterosexual marriages which have the capacity to naturally conceive and provide for the offspring. Such love is precious. **Such a structure too deserves support, celebration and equipping.**

This love is what Christians and other conservatives stand for - **the protection of unconditional, humble and committed love which provides an environment for human flourishing**; it doesn't look at what's in it for the person receiving or giving that love, it looks at what benefits the beloved and future generations could get. This love deserves protection, as ultimately it serves to protect humans who have great individual value.

Protection From Radical, Dangerous Change

The family unit has been the traditional building block of society. Activists have often pointed to the failings of the heterosexual families/marriages to justify a need for change and recognise alternative forms which seem to be equal or even better in certain circumstances. However, the issue isn't so much about a flaw in the heterosexual family set-up, the **issues and failings are due to our fallen human nature**. Furthermore, any form of sexual perversion or sex acts outside of marriage inevitably harms the people deceived by the fleeting moment of pleasure. We have seen how adultery has brought down marriages, we have seen how sexual promiscuity/increased sexual activity outside of monogamous marriages have led to the proliferation of STDs and HIV, and we know that non-heterosexual sex (especially MSM) is also a high-risk sexual behaviour (see Q9 and Q10). All these are on the rise since the sexual revolution in the 1960s ^[1,2]. **Preventive measures may help to reduce the risk, but nothing is better than a complete avoidance through chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage; responsible sexual behaviour** ^[3,4].

If we are unable to prove that the alternative which has to be accompanied by a radical overhaul of society is indeed better, why should we rush into things and cause problems (which already are teething) through the change of laws to affirm a completely liberal sexual ethic? Why not take the time and effort to discover for ourselves if the alternative is truly better before championing for it? This is a

journey which both camps on this debate can settle on in order to truly benefit individuals and generations to come.

Conclusions From A Christian Perspective

Christianity doesn't stand for the heterosexual family because it likes that set-up. Apart from the Christian belief that monogamous human marriage is a mirror of the relationship between Christ and the Church (which cannot be reflected through any alternative set-up), it also holds this position because of the **observable goodness it is capable of**.

God loves us so much that He wouldn't even spare His Son just to redeem us. His laws were given to help us understand our design and the conditions that will allow for human flourishing. Upsetting it is bound to **generate a whole barrage of 'unintended' negative consequences**. Therefore, when Christians take the position of not affirming the LGBTQ narrative, **we really are simply saying that there is a better way forward, and we ought to have civil, reasonable and honest discussions about this**.

In our Christian view of love, there's no greater love than that which is to lay down our lives for another. Are we willing to do the same for one another when standing for truth is becoming increasingly difficult? The reasons why a Bible-believing Christian will agree to the affirmation narrative are empathy and tolerance. **The reasons to say no to are biblical love and compassion.**

Ministry tips:

- Avoid bashing 'the freedom to love', focus on how love means wanting the best for the loved one, keeping the beloved away from harm
 - » Be humble again to admit that one doesn't know all things
 - Actively listen to the person's view without giving your answer so quickly (or even at all!)
 - Seek to understand where the person is coming from
 - » Invite people who disagree to join in a journey of seeking truth and actually do it
 - » Be ready to agree to disagree

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Q28: Why are Christians so self-righteous?

Quick response:

A person is not self-righteous when he/she has a different opinion or point of view, not when he/she is trying to speak up for truth, and definitely not when he/she is simply attempting to live righteously. Rather, a self-righteous person is one who thinks that he/she can have no fault, and in the Christian's context, it's a person who believes he/she is not in error even when Scripture tells them the opposite.

Christians recognise their own flaws and need for a saviour. Like everyone else, we may not always perfectly articulate what we believe in, but that should not be a reason to stop all sharing about the faith. Christians believe that knowing Jesus is the best thing in life. It is life-changing. Wouldn't you want to share something as great as that with someone you love?

The Self-Righteous

Anyone can quickly behave self-righteously, and if we as Christians have done so, we seek to do better. Christians, however, don't think that they are righteous in their own right. On the contrary, Christians should well recognise that they are unrighteous on their own and therefore need to rely on Jesus every single day. We (Christians included) are all fallible people with tendencies to think that we know it all; that we can't be in the wrong.

A person is not self-righteous when he/she has a different opinion or point of view, not when he/she is trying to speak up for truth, and definitely not when he/she is simply attempting to live righteously. **A self-righteous person is one who thinks that he/she can have no fault.** In the Christian's context, our standard of morality is the Scripture. We also believe that everyone has fallen, and the laws of God serve as a mirror to point out our flaws (see Q11). **A self-righteous person is therefore a person who believes he/she is not in error even when Scripture tells them the opposite** (see also Q16).

Arrogance Or Love?

At the heart of the question: Why do Christians think they know better than everyone else? And even if they did, what right does that give them to impose it on others?

Christians are passionate about an approach to life that we believe truly helps ourselves and others flourish. Yet, we don't claim to know everything and neither do we see ourselves as better than others. That is why we are open to all who are likewise searching for keys to flourishing in this life; to journey together and find the truth behind what makes life fulfilling.

When we believe something is truly good, we would want to share it with others, especially our loved ones. If something has benefited our lives, we want others to experience that benefit for themselves too. The Gospel has such a positive transformative power in us that Christians desire to share this good news to their loved ones. **When we truly love someone, we desire the best for him/her, and in this case, it's sharing the knowledge of the Gospel, of Jesus and His way.**

Do Christians impose upon others? Sometimes in the media or a very vocal minority might portray Christianity as passing out judgments on others. However, for the most part, **Christians are not interested in doing so. We do however believe that we all answer to a holy and righteous judge, God Himself.** God alone is the ultimate Judge who has seen all of humankind and their misdeeds. He knows how much better our lives could be if only we understand and live by His ways, yet **He does not force anyone to change their behaviour or beliefs.**

In the same way, while **Christians do not agree with certain beliefs or behaviours, we do not force others to change their beliefs or behaviours.** Yet, like the heart of God that longs for us to live life to the fullest by being right with Him, Christians also express this same heart in the way we conduct our private, social and civic lives.

Both in our personal lives as well as our social and civic lives, Christians are called to live in such a way that points our fellow human to who God is and how He has designed our world to be lived in. Obedience to God is the driving motivation, a life lived to the fullest is the fruit of our pursuit of God.

Everyone Has A Concept Of Righteousness

We must realise that **everyone has their own moral compass** - we all hold views on what is right or wrong. What Christians are often attempting to do is to guide a friend, a loved one towards what they personally have experienced to be good. How do we know what is good? Certainly not by shutting one another down but by holding respectful conversations with one another.

We share a common interest of wanting the best for one another, so let us stop our finger-pointing, labelling and name-calling. Let us come and reason together, let us put aside our assumptions of one another. Let us have an exchange of ideas, of what we think is best for the other. **Let us not be self-righteous but honestly and humbly seek the truth together.**

Ministry tips:

- Begin by seeking to understand the person's point of view - "Could you help me understand what you mean by "self-righteous"?"
 - » Genuinely listen, and then trust the Holy Spirit to give you "flags" that are inroads to a deeper conversation. Example: "I mean self-righteous like they always think they know what's right and wrong, and they think they are better than those who think differently!" The flag here is the issue of right and wrong.
 - » You might then say, "Thanks for that. So could I ask you, do you believe what you are saying right now is "right"?" and follow-up to share, "We share what we truly believe in. In other words, we share what we believe to be right. Perhaps we can have a conversation about how both of us want to live out what's right, and how we think we can best to do that?"
- Encourage seeking truth together
- Avoid trying to correct people and win an argument
 - » Be patient and listen. Don't be quick to respond with your own points.
 - » When the opportunity arises, share the counter-narrative - how the boundaries of the Bible helps us to flourish and how wholesome goodness comes with abiding in Christ
 - » Leave it to the individual to decide. Agree to disagree while keeping the relationship together
 - » Remember that the person before you is also made in the Image of God. You can reject his/her ideas, but appreciate and value-add to his/her journey in life.

Q29: Why are Christians homophobic?

Are Christians homophobic because they disapprove of homosexuality?

Quick response:

An underlying assumption in this question is: “Disapproval = fear of homosexuality”.

Christianity’s disapproval of homosexuality does not stem from fear. Instead, the disapproval is coming from a position of love. We desire the best for others, and even though we may differ in our view of what’s best, we certainly don’t wish harm upon another.

Christianity champions love and disapproves of homophobia. We disapprove of homosexuality because we believe that a better path exists, and that path is holiness in pursuing Christ Jesus.

Homophobia Explained

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines homophobia as the “irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals” [\[1\]](#). The Encyclopaedia Britannica has an entry that calls it “culturally produced fear of or prejudice against homosexuals” [\[2\]](#). By both definitions, the elements of ‘fear’ and ‘discrimination/prejudice’ should be present for one to be accurately described as homophobic.

The Christian position has neither.

Disapproval VS Fear Or Discrimination

While there may be some Christians who fear or hate homosexuals, Christianity and its teachings do not. The key here is what is driving our beliefs and actions. If our beliefs and actions are based on fear, we as Christians must have the humility to acknowledge it, recognize that fear is an unbiblical foundation for our beliefs and actions (1 John 4:18) and thus rectify them. **Christianity’s disapproval of homosexuality does not stem from fear. Instead, the disapproval is coming from a position of love** (see Q11).

Just as with any other behaviour that would harm us or others, Christians would be

doing the right and loving thing to disapprove of such behaviour. Same-sex sexual behaviour is known to be more risky, especially MSM (see Q9 and Q10), thus the disapproval is to protect people from such risks or harms. Concerning SSA, we believe that embracing it will **lead us away from God and towards harming ourselves or falling short of actually finding greater fulfilment which is only in Christ alone**, therefore we will not and cannot support it since we love people and want the best for them (see Q18 and Q23 also).

Christianity therefore actually strongly discourages homophobia, as Christianity champions love and not fear as the basis of our beliefs and actions. Loving others means wanting and working towards the best for them. It doesn't leave room for discrimination or harm. While both parties may not necessarily see eye-to-eye on what is the "best" for the other, **love certainly is (and should be) the core motivation behind why Christians take their stance on homosexuality and many other issues.**

Danger Of The 'Homophobia/Homophobic' Label

When the term "homophobia" or "homophobic" is used to label Christians, it is important to recognize that more often than not, it is a term commonly and loosely used to silence any conversations that do not align with the viewpoints of LGBTQ activists. It **shuts down any possibility of meaningful discussions and attempts to better understand one another's different point of view.**

To our LGBTQ friends and allies, **calling a person homophobic isn't going to help the person become more understanding.** The end result is ironically not increasing understanding through conversation but forced compliance through social pressure. If you are truly interested in building bridges and safe places, let us drop the labelling and start sharing with the other's best interests at heart.

Christianity's Approach To Homosexuality/LGBTQ

There is **a myth that Christians are hung-up on homosexuality and think that homosexuality is one sin so severe and worse than any other.** This is false, and Christians don't solely focus on tackling homosexuality (see Q11). If anything, perhaps we haven't been paying enough attention to it and thus haven't been able to live out our fullest potential as a friend or minister to someone who is part of the LGBTQ community.

Christianity had a part to play in ending many of the misgivings in humanity. Abolition of slavery, selfless protection of Jews during the Holocaust, resisting materialism, sacrificial giving, missionary trips to help the needy, pro-life movements are just

some of the many other causes Christians have fought for. Why do we do that? **Again, it is because of love. We believe that everyone is made in the Image of God, deserving of dignity, protection and care.** Our approach to homosexuality may seem a little out-of-proportion in some places, but it is **really just a proportionate response to the pressure we face concerning this topic - it is a reactionary response.**

Christianity is not a religious movement hoping to oppress people; it is about God's call to all of us that we may repent and rediscover ourselves in Him (which is the true reality). Every rebellious thought and action against His Word is an area for improvement for the Christian, the messiness of human sexuality is but one area of the greater ongoing rebellion. We want the best for people, and Jesus is what we know to be the best.

Ministry tips:

- Focus on active listening than correcting or trying to win an argument
- Avoid being hung-up on this point. On-lookers with a reasonable mind will quickly realise who's the bully in a conversation
- Practice what you preach: **Don't stress on homosexuality alone – talk about holy sexuality** which also rebukes wayward heterosexual behaviours
 - » Even better, live a life that's holy in all areas!
 - » Make pursuing God your number one goal in life, let your love for people be evident in your words and deeds as well
- Sexuality is not everything – point people to their identity in God and the abundant life God promises
 - » Focusing on a person's sexuality alone is not going to make someone want to know Jesus.
 - » Christians should focus on loving the individual and patiently introduce the person of Jesus to the individual.
 - » We will have what we need, not necessarily what we desire, for our desires can be contrary to the Will and plan of God for us. We all need to learn to know and trust God.

References:

- [1] Definition of Homophobia
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homophobia>, accessed 23 Aug 2020
- [2] Homophobia
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/homophobia>, accessed 23 Aug 2020

Q30: Why are Christians imposing their religious views on a secular public?

Quick response:

Christians are also citizens of a nation; they too belong to a larger society which does not necessarily share their worldview. As any good, active and concerned citizen would do when faced with a major societal debate/discussion or dilemma, Christians likewise will and are simply doing the same – participate in it.

And no, Christians have no power to determine or force people to believe what they believe in.

Define impose - A position may be said to be imposed when it is established as something to be obeyed or complied with by others.

One might consider this on two levels:

1. While Christians are bound to abide by behavioural standards from their own worldview,
2. Christians have no ability to prevent non-Christians from living life in a way which violates the Bible if they so wish to

It is therefore false, theologically and practically, to say that Christians are imposing their religious views on a secular public that is bound not to the Bible but to laws which it sets up for itself as a nation/society.

Singapore's System

Singapore's secularism is much closer to 'pragmatic/accommodative' secularism and not perspectival secularism. Singapore is a multi-religious society; not a secular one. Singapore does not abide by hardline-secularism. Neither is Singapore's brand of secularism anti-theistic, nor is it an exclusion of conservative thought from the formation of public policy (perspectival secularism). It would also be inaccurate to describe the public/society as secular, since it is evident that Singaporean society comprises multi-religious constituents, each with their own moral codes.

Because of the accommodative approach, Singaporeans can enjoy religious liberty and pluralism in our society where religions are recognised in society without having

any of them gaining political dominance^[1]. Any meaningful discussion of secularism in Singapore must therefore also account for the coexisting realities of religious liberty and religious pluralism. The **involvement of religious groups in civil society discourse isn't an infringement on secularism. It is a part of it.**

Operationally, the **separation of religion and state does not exist in puritan form.** The Singapore government consults religious groups on matters of public morality like the integrated resorts and gets communal blessings from religious leaders over our MRT tracks. Furthermore, nobody complains when more than half of our public holidays are religious in nature and when there are religion-based statutory boards like the Hindu Endowments Board and MUIS funded by public money. These exist for the benefit of the nation. It is the prerogative of religious institutions to express their opinions in the public square - this is the **nature of the democratic republic.**

Citizens Who Propose, Not Impose

We too have children, family and friends who will be influenced by what is in the mainstream public and therefore seek to contribute to what constitutes mainstream public life.

Christians and other religious people are citizens too and have equal weight in social discourse. They propose their views, not impose them. This is the reason why policy and law are crafted in the legislature, not the court of public opinion.

To argue that Christians are driving the policy landscape of the nation is to engage in a dangerous argument which has as its outcome, delegitimizing the independence of the Parliament and the Judiciary.

Religiously-Informed, Not Exclusively Religious In Reasoning

Furthermore, religiously informed views need not be grounded solely in religious reasoning and may be validated by other means (see Q9 and Q10). For instance,

- Medical science on homosexuality and practices are non-religious
- Social ramifications and consequences are also non-religious
- Spending of tax-payers' money is also non-religious

The **expression of a reasonable viewpoint is an inalienable right which everyone shares, and positively contributes to robust civil society discourse.** We are not headed towards a theocracy just because religious folk want to have their voice heard in the public arena. Public policy is handled by the

legislature where different views ought to be taken into account fairly, not the court of public opinion where it seems like the one who shouts the loudest wins.

Religious groups which are part of **society have equal opportunity, and a moral responsibility to voice their conservatism when it concerns the formation of social/public policy**. If religious groups are not permitted to articulate their positions, who then will be the bastion of the conservative social position which is as valid as a liberal one?

It's Not Just Christians Who Hold This View.

Christians and Catholics make only 18.8% of society. Muslims make another 14% of society.

If (BIG IF) you had full buy-in from these communities, you would still need to account for 32.2% of the conservative camp because the latest IPS poll indicates that about 64% of Singaporeans find 'sexual relations between two adults of the same sex' to be at least almost always wrong ^[2], and another survey that shows 55% actively support 377A as compared to only 12% that oppose it ^[3].

So while morality is steering this discussion, the idea that *Abrahamic* morality is steering this discussion is clearly an overstatement.

Fairness In Assessment

Equally, one should ask why one moral system should be given precedence over another moral system other than for reasons grounded in public good. **To assume that the "freedom to love" is a neutral position with no moral basis is false.** Just as morally conservative Singaporeans are in social contestation to have their voices heard, so too is the "love is love" camp.

A returning question to the questioner could then be: "What gives you the right to impose your views on me and the rest of society by pretending that they are secular or neutral positions?" Most importantly, "what makes your moral position better than ours? What are your reasons?"

All members in a society have the freedom to formulate their own opinions and participate in public dialogue. Regardless of whether these views are religious in nature or come from personal sentiments, views must be weighed for their merits and demerits before being enacted as law.

Ministry tips:

- » Don't be afraid to participate as long as you keep to the character of Christ in your participation
- » Don't ridicule or shame an antagonist. Instead, repay evil with good, and keep a clear conscience that those who slander you will be ashamed on their own because of their own action/words
- Be reasonable and base your arguments in facts
 - » Prepare well for a discussion
 - » Know what the biblical position is and why it is reasonable
- Don't be afraid of sharing why Christian morality is a valid system (see Q11)

References:

- [1] Religion and Politics in Singapore
<https://cathedral.org.sg/courier-online/single/religion-and-politics-in-singapore>, accessed 12 Nov 2020
- [2] Singapore society still 'fairly conservative' but the young, educated more open towards homosexual issues: IPS, 2019
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/ips-survey-gay-homosexual-issues-conservative-society-11496758>, accessed 23 Aug 2020
- [3] 55 per cent of Singapore residents support Section 377A: Ipsos survey, 2018
<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/55-per-cent-of-singapore-residents-support-section-377a-ipsos-survey>, accessed 23 Aug 2020

Q31: Why is positive portrayal of homosexuality in the media even an issue?

Quick response:

Media has a great influence in our lives. It not only has the power to inform, it can normalise behaviour and beliefs. When it comes to normalizing anything, we should consider carefully whether what is being portrayed to us is accurate or truthful.

Demonising a person or people group shouldn't happen over the media, and it's something that as Christians, we need to discourage such unfair portrayals especially when there's ill-intent. Nevertheless, it is another extreme to quickly engage in cancel-culture over any form of negative portrayal, especially when the context allows for it and it's factual/gives a sense of our less-than-perfect reality.

Lastly, in all fairness, would LGBTQ advocates also fight equally against the demonising of religious people or anyone who disagrees with them too? We have to be fair in our assessments and responses.

Understanding The Matter And Concerns

Questioners may be wondering: "What is wrong with promoting homosexuality in the media? Why are we (everyone - Christians, non-Christians, pro-LGBTQ or pro-family) making a big deal out of homosexuality being in the media?" We could begin understanding this by searching for common ground and clarifying perceptions. In our engagement, we can start by asking something like, "Could you help me understand what you mean by 'positive portrayal'?"

Listen carefully to understand what the concern of the person is. Some consider the 'lack of positive portrayal' as **only presenting homosexuals as villains** or homosexuality in general as taboo, or as perverted people. **Others consider 'lack of positive portrayal' as not celebrating homosexuality** as a norm or equal kind of relationship as heterosexual ones. Maybe some others feel that it's just the lack of homosexual characters or themes in general.

There is a **core assumption behind this question - that homosexuality is perfectly normal** (even born this way) and thus should not be censored/should receive equal amount of air-time or positive portrayal. However,

science has shown that no one is actually born gay, although some biological correlations are observed (see Q5). Correlation is not the same as causation. Furthermore, homosexual sex acts (especially between men) are more risky and harmful to the body (see Q9 and Q10). Will it really be a good idea to be celebrating it in public media? This is where and why Christians and conservatives are concerned.

Why Might Christians/Conservatives Be Concerned?

1. The influence of Media

Everything the media transmits is a message. Hence all of us, Christian or not, should evaluate the messages the media sends and ask ourselves whether these messages are truthful/beneficial or not. **We need to be aware of the great influence the media has on our lives.** The media informs, entertains, and often serves to educate. The young are especially impressionable and are influenced by what they see via the media. We actually recognise the need to protect children from premature exposure to adult themes (e.g. sex, gore etc.) and have put in place classifications for the regulation of media content. Concerning homosexuality, **conservatives believe that young children should not be prematurely exposed to such an adult theme since they are still trying to understand and make sense of their own sexuality.** Many young people who experience SSA at some point stop experiencing it after puberty (see Q5), but what they see on the media can cause them to open up a Pandora's Box through sexual experimentation and thus influence their identity-formation.

2. Proportion of representation - realistic or false impression?

When the media does represent homosexuality, we need to evaluate if the portrayal is accurate or truthful. Also, is there a particular agenda behind the specific kind of representation? There is a space for fictional stories and creative expression, which we will look at later.

In terms of proportion of representation, we should recognize that there is **a small percentage of the population that identifies as homosexual or with non-binary sexual identities.** Yet, in disproportion, there are many more films coming out with such themes as their central message. That should cause us to pause and ask **what are the driving forces behind the heavy feature homosexuality or same-sex behaviour in the media.** It seems as though there is a concerted effort to promote homosexuality, pressure from the media to impose acceptance/affirmation and to normalise it through the sheer overwhelming volume and celebration of representation. Such an effort can create a false impression and hyper-inflate the size of the

'LGBTQ'/homosexual population in the world which can have downstream effects on perceptions of law etc.

3. Negative portrayal and fairness

For those who are offended when homosexuality is portrayed in a negative light, they might be doing so out of a concern that a certain negative stigma is being perpetuated. These are valid concerns, and thus we should **evaluate the purpose of any form of negative portrayal**. By negative portrayal in this context, it would mean portraying a homosexual person as having mental struggles or as a sexually perverted person or a criminal.

If the negative portrayal is meant for entertainment (i.e. obviously fictional) and not to intentionally make all homosexuals seem mentally unsound or criminals, we should not be too quick to attempt to shut it down as this would mean the death of diversity in creative writing and expression. Of course, if the intention is to generate fear towards homosexuals, it is something that we should recognise and not support.

The **same would apply to any other form of identity**. We do see from time to time, films that make church leaders seem like hypocrites, unscientific, sexual predators etc. Religions are also often dismissed in films as mysticism and unreasonable. Some of these films do so to give a sense of reality - that there are indeed Christians/religious folks who have failed to conduct themselves properly. Christians generally tolerate such negative portrayals if the context is not meant to ridicule, and have chosen to speak up civilly if the portrayal gets overboard.

In a world where there is a diversity of human experience (both good and bad), the media helps us grasp the reality of it and to reflect upon it. If at the heart of the LGBTQ activism is a desire for fair, positive portrayal of homosexuality in the media, would they then also stand up for the Christians or others who have their identities misportrayed in the media? It is unfortunate that the obvious observation about the West is that often when LGBTQ is being celebrated across the media, Christians/Conservatives are painted as homophobic, backward and unloving. We cannot have double-standards, we should all stand for what's right and fair; we should have mutual respect and the media should not participate in ridiculing or shaming a particular group identity.

Why Not Just Cancel All Negative Portrayals?

Cancel-culture is one that seeks to call-out and boycott something OR someone who had committed a 'cardinal sin' in the eyes of the public/society. It could easily go out of control into extremes, demanding a form of

totalitarianism in media space or society in a bid to produce an ‘ideal’ or ‘positives-only’ environment. This is, however, unhealthy and a departure from reality.

To remove all negative imageries is to **divorce the media from reality**. All lived experiences have positive and negative sides to them. This is why context matters when we are considering when is the time to ‘stand up for righteousness’ and when it’s not. **The human experience is rich, some wonderful, some terrible**. If we wish to accurately and truthfully depict the life experience of a person or people group, there will definitely be certain negative aspects being portrayed since no one is perfect!

Before we go on a spree to call-out or boycott things we don’t agree with, we need to consider the intent and context of the production - is it done with ill-intent? We need more conversations, not vengeful silencing. **Mutual respect and understanding are necessary to create a more inclusive, fair and accurate media space for all.**

Concluding Thoughts

Homosexuality and those who feel same-sex attracted are certainly part of our society, but to promote homosexuality and SSA as things only to be celebrated is to provide a very narrow perspective of the realities of living with same-sex attraction.

Christians are not trying to make a big fuss over homosexuality; the response is a proportionate one with the LGBTQ activism on multiple fronts.

For a small percentage of people, there is a huge push in the media and other sectors of society for homosexual behaviour and activity to be normalized or even to be celebrated. That in itself should give us pause - there are many other small identity groups out there, but why is that this particular identity group holds such strong sway on the media? Furthermore, if homosexuality is agreed/found to be something negative (for individuals and society as a whole), it has to be argued that we should not be promoting something harmful/negative as good over media. The reaction of conservatives is largely due to the lack of positive reasons to normalise homosexuality in society (see Q11).

Ministry tips:

- Always appreciate the person’s willingness to dialogue
 - » The person is already taking a step forward to share their emotions with you. It’s a privilege and opportunity for relationship building and clarification.

- » Listen before responding. Don't be quick to correct others who disagree with your view but with patience, listen to them and try to understand where they are coming from.
- » Respond with your view and reasons with grace without the expectation that the person will be persuaded immediately.
- People calling for a boycott or complain against negative portrayals may have unresolved grievances
 - » Take time to listen to their perspective
 - » Ask clarifying questions: "What do you find negative and why?", "What do you mean by positive portrayal?", "Do you think the proposed positive portrayal is an accurate portrayal?"
- Be prepared for this media-saturated age
 - » It is unrealistic to try and censor everything (regardless of the liberal-conservative spectrum)
 - » We need better media literacy in this media-saturated day and age
 - » We have to train children to be mature in their thinking, to be able to process information from the media and to navigate this world while holding on to the biblical worldview
 - » Parents must take up the responsibility of being guardians and guides for their children, to bring them up in a way that allows children to think critically and fairly
 - » Difficult topics can no longer be avoided. If we love our loved ones, we will do what it takes to be able to engage the topics when they surface

Q32: What does Christianity have to offer? What is the alternative for a Christian with SSA?

Quick response:

Hope and true Love.

Christianity offers an alternative script to the LGBTQ's script. Christianity offers the opportunity for self-discovery together with a God who cares. This alternative for a Christian with SSA is the same alternative offered in the Gospel for anyone - wholeness and fulfilment through a genuine relationship with God.

We are more than our sexuality and struggles. We are immensely loved by God and capable of loving both God and Humankind wholesomely.

Meaning And Worth Of Humanity

In today's modern world, **sex has been conceptualised as a basic human need**; an experience that all humans should have a right to because to be denied it will mean being less-than-human. The world's offer is therefore two-fold: Permission and celebration. It can sound something like this: "Sex is beautiful and it fulfils you. Have sex however you please. Don't try to stop another person when sex is a private thing and mutual consent is all that matters. Take necessary precautions to protect yourself against unwanted situations (e.g. pregnancy and diseases)".

It is wise to judge a tree by its fruit. What are the logical outworkings and consequences of embracing such a view of sex? Similar to the consumption of the forbidden fruit which Adam and Eve did, it brought not the promised fulfilment but chaos and suffering. We are doomed to suffer if we set up for ourselves an idol to find peace, purpose and fulfilment apart from God. In this case, sex has become an idol when we say we can't live without it.

The Bible gives us a much better hope, **an alternative script to what's currently popular in culture (see Q1)**. The value of a human rests on us

being made in the Image of God. Neither our achievements, our accumulated assets, high intellectual capacity, heritage, nor sexuality determines our worth and identity. Sexual experience is therefore not the pinnacle experience for a human, and neither is it a necessity. Because **humanity is so valuable and sex is a beautiful sacred thing, God doesn't want us to be defiled, and neither does He want sex to become common.**

A (re)New Paradigm: Holy Sexuality

To the Christian, **sex is much more than a mere experience, but it is not a need.** Sex is pleasurable, but that's not the highest call of sex. Sex to a Christian is sacred, and it has the unique potential to create new life. **Stewarding our sexuality and our bodies** are part of what it means to love God and the people around us.

Holiness is not about changing our attractions or cutting off all desires (which are not within our control), but submitting our thoughts in reverence toward God, with the assurance that in doing so it really benefits us as well. To be holy is to be set apart - to belong to God. This applies to both hetero- and non-heterosexuals equally. In our lives; holiness is crucial.

Chastity In Singleness, Faithfulness In Marriage

With our fallen nature, we struggle with many things and sexuality is no exception. Concerning sexuality, the path of holiness consists of only two possibilities: **chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage**⁶. This is a blanket standard for anyone who seeks to know and love God, i.e. for all Christians.

Single And Chaste - Purpose And Hope

A person who is **single/unmarried is called to live a path of chastity (either for a season or for life).** This season could be shorter for some, for others it could be longer, to another it could be for life, and to yet another, a season that would return (e.g. widows/widowers). Regardless of the duration, **chastity is the only path for the single/unmarried to be sexually pure.**

Jesus left us no room for guessing about the standard of being sexually pure: We ought not to look at another person with lust, for doing so will be to have already committed adultery. This is a universal standard regardless of a person's sexual attraction. "What's the point?" some may ask and fairly so. Some also have the misconception that a single/unmarried person is less fulfilled, less capable to serving God or being a testimony for Him, given the limitations in experiences such

⁶ See more in Dr. Chris Yuan's book: Holy Sexuality and the Gospel (2018)

as married life, sex and parenthood. With such a view on sexual purity, Christianity looks like a kill-joy, chastity looks like a consolation prize and a life without sex and marriage seems unfulfilled. Yet, these are far from the truth.

For the Christian with SSA, **by choosing to live a sexually pure life, a single/unmarried person is boldly testifying to the world that Jesus is indeed sufficient, just as the Gospel had proclaimed to us.** Salvation and ultimate fulfilment are not found in human relationships or sex. The Great Commission is a call for all Christians who abide by the Great Commandment. It is amazing as it is executable by anyone regardless of ethnicity, time period, sex, sexual orientation and any other thing that we identify or live with. We execute it best by living out the Word of God, by bearing the Fruit of the Spirit, by being the representative of Christ in the world and in the lives of people around us. Jesus himself was single; He remained chaste and obviously had no biological children. His ministry was one that pointed all of us to God.

Christianity also calls us to **put aside our destructive reliance on material things and relationships for personal fulfilment and meaning.** Some people look to achievements, career, wealth and popularity for a sense of fulfilment, some others turn to sex/sexuality or marriage. But none of these can give us true peace and joy, since the offered 'peace or fulfilment' is temporal and completely dependent on things that can be taken away. **Christianity thus offers hope not only to those experiencing SSA but to anyone who is weary and burdened with the cares and pursuits of life and the material.** It all changes with a change in the way we view ourselves - from someone who's insignificant in the world to someone who's highly valued and even cared for by God.

Therefore, whoever is single/unmarried, you are in great company! Jesus is not just your consolation prize in your singleness. Your singleness is your opportunity to participate and share in the life that Jesus Himself lived for the kingdom of God. **Your lifestyle, your choices, and your conviction to stay chaste serve as powerful testimonies for God.** And regardless of your sexuality or struggles, Christianity offers everlasting peace and joy that is independent of your life's situation, plus an eternal fellowship with the One who loves you the most.

Faithfulness In Marriage - A Picture Of Christ, The Church And Human Flourishing

Marriage is an institution created to allow for the flourishing of humankind, and it has a clear definition in the Bible. Jesus affirmed that from the beginning, **such a union should only be between a male and a female** (Matthew 19), thus excluding the possibility of same-sex marriages (see Q17 and Q23).

It can be painful to be denied something that we want very much without understanding why the denial.

It may also be helpful for us to **examine our own motives for desiring marriage**. Perhaps it's a misconception about marriage. It's a common saying that when someone gets married, they have 'moved on' to the next stage in life. However, such a misconception easily causes us to put 'marriage' on a pedestal, as though without it, we are again less fulfilled. In reality, it's a different path altogether which **comes with its own set of blessings and challenges, just as singleness has its own**. Both the path of singleness and marriage are beautiful and testifies to the world about our relationship with Jesus. **Counter-cultural chastity in singleness testifies to the sufficiency of Jesus, marriage testifies to the commitment and faithfulness of God to His Bride - the Church, which is all of us Christians.**

Neither is essentially better than the other, each serve a different physical purpose, but both are valuable in testifying about God.

Another misconception is that marriage will help a person overcome sexual temptations. This is quite far from the truth. **Marriage is not a special status which dispels sexual temptations. It is an avenue for sexual expression between the married couple**, while it can also be a powerful motivation to resist temptation, **it has no ability to stop the lure and assault of temptations**. A married person must work hard to resist all temptations to cheat, physically, mentally and emotionally, on his/her spouse.

It could also be that we have too rosy an imagination of marriage. Life with a spouse is not a bed of roses. To make the commitment of 'for better or for worse' is a major decision which should be made with reverence toward God. **A strong commitment to God, a realistic view of marriage and its commitment helps couples to remain committed to one another when the going gets tough** (see Q10 and Q17). If two are getting married only for the 'good stuff' that's enjoyed in marriage, they will be in for a really difficult time when disagreements and hardship arrive, and they will.

Lastly, the point of the institution of marriage is therefore to again **testify of God's intention for human flourishing - it protects humans** and provides **a safe context where sexual activity happens, it also serves as a solid bedrock for bringing up children. God is pro-human, not pro-institutions**. Because marriage as an institution protects life and allows for human flourishing, clear guidance on marriage is given in the Word of God. **It is not a life stage that must be attained in order to be a complete person (i.e. it's not**

about self-actualisation!). While marriage allows married couples to know God in a way that's different from singleness, it still is not a necessity.

Christianity offers individuals, single or married, an opportunity to overcome existential boredom, and a path to self-actualisation in Christ, with Christ. **Whether in singlehood or marriage, a deep relationship with God gives and directs our lives with great purpose because singleness and marriage both testify about God and God has blessed both paths.** There is great hope for the Christian/person with SSA because with God, you can catch a glimpse of eternity (there's no more marriage/marital relations in heaven) and live a blessed, fulfilling life.

A Family - The Body Of Christ

Sometimes by not getting married, individuals struggle with thoughts about loneliness or FOMO (fear of missing out) especially when they see married people having abundance of support in the church and enjoying their family ties and times together. Contrary to popular belief, married people too at times struggle with loneliness, and could admire singles for their freedom. **Marriage isn't the cure for loneliness and the grass is always greener on the other side.** The reality is this: the grass is greener on the side that you water. **The church as a community has to step up and be the universal family of God's people, to all people.**

Christians are not perfect, the Church today too isn't perfect, neither is any family on earth because we are all fallen in our very being/nature. But the **church has a commitment to Jesus, and we will continue striving to be better.** We cannot promise to offer people a perfect home, but we ought to offer them a home, a family. Whether one is single or married, the church exists as a community, a family where we take care of one another and love passionately as brothers and sisters in Christ. **The church can't offer a perfect family, but we do offer one that constantly seeks to improve itself.**

A Radical Conversion

Change is not always bad. To argue that 'it's wrong to expect a person to change' is to mean 2 things:

a) the person is already perfect, any change is to become less than perfection, b) to not want the person to improve and be better through change; to not love the person at all.

To say that Christianity is interested in converting people's sexuality is to grossly

misunderstand the Gospel. **Christianity seeks not to change people's sexual attraction or orientation, it seeks to convert our human-centric way of life to one that's God-centric.**

The Gospel has **3 major and indispensable themes which inform a person of their inherent worth, their need for a saviour, and salvation through Christ Jesus.** We are all made in the Image of God but are also in need of a saviour as we have with us the consequences of the Fall of humanity. Our hearts and minds have been darkened; we are geared towards self-centred ways of life that's incompatible with community living which we have been made for. We are set on fulfilling our desires at the expense of others, sometimes even at the expense of our own overall well-being.

The Gospel is good news because in Jesus, we can find forgiveness for our misdeeds, we also find the refuge, the comfort and strength we need to overcome these self-centred and unwise inclinations. In Christ, we have the grace and mercy of God to pick up again when we fall; we can repent and find that Jesus is indeed more than enough. This is utterly comforting and satisfying. **The Christian message is not one that calls a person to change his or her sexuality, it is a call to surrender their will to the One who actually knows it all, and what's best for us. Paradoxically for the Christian, it is when we lay down our lives, we find that we truly live.**

Ministry tips:

- Focus on Jesus and the hope the Gospel brings to everyone
 - » Everyone needs Jesus, and He alone is the answer to our crippling loneliness and striving for meaning, purpose and fulfilment
- Don't elevate singleness nor marriage one above the other. Both are equally valuable to God who alone fulfils us and knows the plans He has for us

Appendix: “How should the Church approach the issue of gender pronouns and deadnames?”

Context: MOE Saga Over Transgender Issues

In mid-January 2021, transgender issues made headlines ^[1,2] after an anonymous student accused the Ministry of Education and school management of intervening in hormone replacement therapy (HRT) ^[3]. MOE took to Facebook to debunk the claim ^[4]. They also said the following, “We invite the student to approach the school to clarify and discuss how the school can support his schooling better.” Reference to the student as a male triggered huge backlash online, with over a thousand comments criticizing the “misgendering.” (PDF available below.) The few who supported the Education Ministry’s stance were called “hateful” and “transphobic”, and one was even banned from commenting further ^[5]. It’s also significant that mainstream media like CNA and The Straits Times referred to the student as a girl. MOE and the Institute of Mental Health released a joint statement to say that the decision on hormone therapy ultimately rests with the students and their parents. Parental consent is needed for minors i.e. those under 21.

Here’s a short series of FAQs on the matter.

I. Does this issue of gender pronouns affect the Church?

This matter is between authorities and the student. However, the church must keep an eye on such developments and speak on it when necessary. **Education policies on transgender issues that will affect the schools with religious affiliations** – these include the Christian mission schools.

On a larger scale, this is part of a **wider transgender activism** that cuts through the whole of society, including the use of gender pronouns in everyday speech, the accessibility of single-sex groups, use of bathrooms, HRT for children and youths, parental rights, etc. There is already such activism in Singapore, with a letter written in response to the MOE saga, signed by dozens of activist organisations ^[6]. There are also local websites with large followings on social media who are also pushing for such issues ^[A].

These are influencing culture, and **will eventually involve the Church**. This is clear from the heightened tension between religious groups and society in other countries. In the US, there are cases where Catholic schools have been slammed for taking a biblical stance towards transgenderism [7]. Religious teachers in public schools were also fired after refusing to use gender pronouns for transgender students [8]. Over in the UK, religious groups protested against a revamped sex education curriculum that kicked in last year [9,10].

As pastors and church leaders with the responsibility to guide fellow Christians and lead them towards Christ, we must start to grapple with what the bible says on this issue.

2. What are preferred gender pronouns?

Pronouns are tools in the English language for referring to people. They are historically tied to the biological sex of people, such as him or her. We use such pronouns daily.

The term “gender pronouns” gained popularity these few years with the rise of transgender activism. Proponents argue that using the pronouns that do not match a person’s identified gender is disrespectful and causes harm [11,12]. There are others who say gender isn’t confined to just male or female and may request the use of gender-neutral pronouns such as “ze/hir/hirs” [13].

What started as pronouns being used to match transgenders’ identified gender (e.g. referring to a biological male who identifies as a female with she/her pronouns), has now grown into a movement where people state their preferred pronouns in social media, schools and workplaces [14,15] [B]. Currently, proponents are pushing to make this a common practice. Efforts to police speech in the form of using preferred gender pronouns and avoiding deadnames is already happening [16].

Nonetheless, this practice is highly divided and politicized [17]. Many disagree with the move, citing their rights to freedom of speech and religion [18,19,20]. Some LGBTQ advocates have also criticized it for causing discomfort to those who are unsure about their identities [21,22,23]. There’s been backlash, with one transgender entertainer even being cancelled over such views [24].

3. Should churches use preferred gender pronouns?

Before we dive into the matter, it is important to remember the wider context. The use of gender pronouns is just one of many issues where the church is confronted with changing social norms that are at odds with God’s word. In all these matters,

there are general guiding principles of speaking the truth in love, which sometimes involves saying things that people prefer not to hear.

The Church should use pronouns that match biological sex, in accordance with its witness about human nature i.e. that God created man and woman (Genesis 1:27, 5:2; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6). At the **pulpit, or in official communications, the Church should uphold these biblical foundations**. Conversely, if the Church uses preferred pronouns, this encourages the belief that gender can be changed, and allows people to remain in confusion over their identity. The Church shouldn't be complicit in this.

Some Christians have argued that it is hospitable to use a person's preferred pronouns, and refusal to do so may damage the church's ability to witness ^[25]. However, we believe that love rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6), and our message should not compromise it. As long as we communicate our beliefs in a way that is civil, respectful, and keeps our conscience clear (1 Peter 3:15-16), we can leave the rest to God.

However, things may change at a pastoral level when dealing with individuals. If someone is having gender dysphoria, the Church may wish to take a different approach. **We recommend avoiding pronouns altogether and to use the person's name or surname**. The Church may also wish to use gender-neutral terms like "this fellow member."

As for the related issue of using deadnames, i.e. name of a person before gender transition, **the Church can choose to use it once as a reference point, and use the new name of the person in the rest of the communications**. This is to respect that people have free will in choosing their names (which isn't directly connected with a person's biological sex but more to do with cultural expectations).

4. How should the Church respond to accusations of misgendering?

First, such accusations are commonplace. They have the effect of a smokescreen, where an online mob hurls accusations of "transphobia," "bigotry," "hatred," and "bullying," **without dealing with the substance of the issue** i.e. whether or not children and teens are capable of consenting to irreversible therapy, or whether the possible negative consequences have been sufficiently communicated to the patient and family.

Ultimately, the Church will have to ride out the dissent. In substance, it disagrees with the premises of these accusations that gender is different from biological sex and is based on what people believe about themselves. However,

the Church believes that gender is based on biological sex and cannot be changed at will.

5. Is the Church disregarding science?

Transgender activists argue that transgenderism is based on science, but this is not settled. One article uses “science” to prove that gender is a spectrum [26], but was taken apart [27]. The lack of a clear scientific basis for transgender claims has led others to argue that their rights shouldn’t rely on science [28, 29]. Critics also say that ideology has entered its domain, affecting its credibility [30, 31, 32].

In fact, **the Church’s stance is arguably scientific, since it recognises differences based on biological sex, which is an empirical reality**, according to two biologists [33]. It also recognizes the fact that there are also studies showing harmful risks related to transgender therapy [34], and some have even called this the largest experimental treatment today [35].

Since the Church is called to be a loving and faithful witness to God’s design and truth, we need to adopt a truthful and pastoral approach while ministering and witnessing to those struggling with gender dysphoria. Love the person, listen to the person’s journey and struggles, do our best to be there with them through the difficulties all while being a faithful witness of the Gospel – only the Gospel can truly lift us up from the various struggles we all face.

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- <https://www.ricemedia.co/current-affairs-features-singapore-trans-discrimination>
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