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Was it Something I Said? Continuing to Think About Homosexuality

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Well, never doubt the power of the media. My [recent article](#) on homosexuality ignited a firestorm in the public square. Why? We may never know — but the controversy represents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Several thoughts:

I must admit much frustration about the way many in the media have handled the issue. Headlines proclaimed “Seminary President Says Babies Born Gay” — something I neither believe nor said. Other articles and reports claimed that I suggested that homosexuality may be genetic in origin and that genetic therapies should be used to create customized and corrected babies. I never even mentioned genetic therapies or germ-line experiments, and I am adamantly opposed to genetic therapies of such a sort — real or hypothetical. Reading these reports and headlines was a painful and exasperating experience. If I believed those things attributed to me, I would not agree with myself and would condemn myself.

I am even more frustrated with many conservative Christians who read the secular headlines without even bothering to read my article. They jumped to conclusions that I do not hold and castigated me for advocating things I have opposed all my life. I have received a great deal of hate mail from those identifying themselves as homosexuals outraged that I believe homosexual acts to be unconditionally sinful. But I also received mail that can only be described as hateful from those who identified themselves as Christians — people who clearly had never read my article and simply jumped to conclusions or accepted misrepresentations. Furthermore, some who identified themselves as Christians spoke of homosexuality and homosexuals with hate-filled language that literally made me shudder. Do we really love sinners? Do we not understand ourselves to be sinners saved by grace?

I have been gratified by those who have articulated serious concerns, but who later, after reading my actual article, expressed gratitude for a serious attempt to think through these urgent issues from a biblical perspective.

There is no way that I can answer the avalanche of questions and issues individually, but here are a few thoughts that might help us think together.

To my fellow evangelical Christians:

1. Let's get this straight — God's condemnation of sin is not determined by science, but by God's Word. The Bible could not be more clear — all forms of homosexual behavior are expressly condemned as sin. In so doing the Bible uses its strongest vocabulary and places this condemnation in the larger context of the Creator's rightful expectation of our stewardship of the sexual gift. All manifestations of homosexuality are thus representations of human sinfulness and rebellion against God's express will. Nothing can alter this fact, and no discovery in science or any other human endeavor can change God's verdict.

2. There is no conclusive research that indicates any biological basis for sexual orientation. But — and this is a big “if” here — if science were ever to discover a correlation or causation with biological factors, Christians should not be surprised. We believe in the catastrophic and comprehensive effects of the Fall and God's judgment upon sin.

3. Such a discovery, if it were to be accepted, would not change God's condemnation of all forms of homosexual behavior, nor would it mean that this represents the inviolable "identity" of any individual. As I argued previously, moral responsibility does not require absolute moral choice. A soldier in battle may not have chosen to be in a situation of moral anguish, but he is still absolutely responsible for his decisions and actions. Those who commit homosexual acts, whoever they are and whatever their biological profile, are absolutely responsible for their sin. Regardless of any actual or hypothetical orientation, those who commit same-sex acts are responsible for the *choice* to commit the sinful act. Those who claim that they did not *choose* their sexual attraction are nevertheless fully responsible for *choosing* to perform sexual acts the Bible condemns as sin — period.

4. Some Christians seem absolutely convinced that there is no such thing as sexual orientation. There is a point to be made here. No "orientation" can alter the sinful status of sinful acts. Some have written me to say that there is no such reality as a homosexual, only those who perform homosexual acts. This flies in the face of the Bible, however, which speaks of those who commit such sins by their sin — murderers, liars, adulterers, gossips, etc. It does not help to deny this. But, even though no "orientation" can alter the moral status of actions, the fact remains that some persons are sexually attracted to persons of the same sex while the majority are sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex. There are other terms to use here, ranging from "sexual attraction pattern" to "sexual arousal profile," but sexual orientation seems a bit less explicit and is generally understood within the culture.

5. Research into the human genome and the possibility of germ-line therapies raises all kinds of moral concerns, ranging from the creation of designer babies to the redefinition of humanity. In one article, I was said to advocate genetic therapies. I never said that, and I resolutely oppose such proposals. I would not advocate the use of genetic therapies to create heterosexual babies — or any other therapy of this type. The hypothetical question I addressed had nothing to do with genetic factors at all. Furthermore, genetic factors are likely to be so complex and inter-related that no single genetic factor or set of factors is likely to be found to cause anything as complex as sexual attraction.

6. Caring Christians will be aware of the fact that many persons who struggle with homosexuality — males and females — testify as Christian believers or as those troubled in conscience that they simply have no idea where same-sex desire originated in their lives. They do know that they did not choose this pattern of attraction. Again, that does not reduce their moral responsibility in any way or to any degree. But caring Christians, fully committed to the sole authority of the Bible, must want to help persons to understand and deal with this specific temptation to sin.

7. The causes of same-sex attraction are likely to be very complex. The research of Joseph Nicolosi and others points to specific social and environmental factors as a prime cause. Boys who do not identify themselves with Dad by age two are clearly at risk. Dr. James Dobson addresses many of these factors in his book, *Bringing Up Boys*. Given the devastating impact of the Fall, we should not be shaken to our foundations if other causative factors are found. In any event, Christian compassion must lead us to want to know how this would happen in order that we can help those struggling with this sin. We should be thankful for those who, through biblical counsel and guidance, are helping homosexuals to find victory in Christ.

8. Let's remember that all of us are born with a huge moral defect — we are sinners from the start. Christians who have responded with claims that God would not allow a person to be born with a bent toward sin miss the clear biblical teaching that *all of us are* born with a bent toward sin and with a sin nature. We are born marked by Adam's sin and already under God's just condemnation for that sin.

9. The only cure for sin itself is the cross of Christ. No therapy will cleanse us of sin, no treatment will atone. Only the shed blood of Jesus Christ will save, and salvation is found in Him alone.

10. Thanks are due to all who wrote or contacted me about these issues. That is not an easy thing to write, given the caustic tone of many communications and the fact that so many did not even bother to read my article. Nevertheless, I learned from your responses, and I am sure that God intended them for my good. I also want to be humble in asking fellow believers to join me in thinking about these crucial questions. If I have missed something, point it out. If I have violated Scripture in any way, bring this to my attention. If I am confused in any way, point to clarification.

We must be committed to being relentless in seeking to ground our thinking in biblical truth. The issues we face are daunting. The issue of homosexuality will not go away. Bromides and careless thinking will not serve the church well.

Christian families are struggling with sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and a myriad of others who are themselves struggling with this sin or caught in its grasp. Many homosexual persons are waiting anxiously to see if Christians really love the sinner even as we hate the sin. When it comes to homosexuality, the Christian church has often violated its Gospel by appearing to hate both this sin and the sinners who involve themselves in homosexuality.

Here is a haunting question to consider. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 the Apostle Paul condemns an entire list of sins, including explicit references to homosexuality. Then he reminds the church, “such were some of you.” The complete text reads: “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” [1 Corinthians 6:11]. God brings glory to himself through the salvation of sinners — and Paul includes homosexuality in that list. Why do we not see more redeemed sinners testifying to the grace of God in bringing them out of the sin of homosexuality? Could it be because many churches would rather just isolate themselves from persons in this category of sin?

As John Newton, author of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” once testified: “I know that I am a great sinner and that Jesus is a great Savior.” We should seek the glory of God in the salvation of sinners — sinners of every type and temptation.

To those identifying themselves as homosexuals:

Again, I am thankful for your communications. Some were filled with hate and with language that is unrepeatable here. Some of you consider any claim that homosexual acts are sinful to be hateful. Others would insist that declaring heterosexual marriage to be a resolute norm is hateful. Many claim that trying to help a person out of homosexuality is hateful.

I do not expect that anything I can say or write will change that determined response. All I can do is be clear about what the Bible reveals about God’s verdict on all homosexual acts. Christians are called to love homosexual persons, but we cannot love homosexuality. That is simply not an option. We cannot mislead you by telling you anything other than what the Bible says about homosexuality. The greatest act of compassion a biblical Christian can offer is to tell the truth about our sin, and point all persons to redemption through faith in Christ.

Furthermore, I have heard from so many persons who struggle in their consciences with homosexuality — persons who claim with obvious sincerity of heart that they do not know the origin of this temptation and deny that they consciously chose it. I am trying to take this into serious account and not to misrepresent what you say and know about yourselves.

From a biblical perspective, it makes no sense to say that homosexuality is normative supposedly because God “makes” people that way. God does not allow any of us to escape his righteous judgment on our sin, whatever the biological, environmental, social, or historical factors that we may claim as explanatory factors.

My purpose in writing my previous article was, in the main, to draw attention to a very real threat to human dignity that lurks as a possibility on our horizon — a possibility explicitly described in the *Radar* magazine article. This is the possibility that, if a biological marker (real or not) is ever claimed to mark homosexuality in prenatal testing, widespread abortion of such babies might well follow. As the author of the magazine article I cited explained, the liberal commitment to unrestricted abortion rights might well run into direct conflict with liberal commitment to the normalization of homosexuality. In that event, hypothetical in the present time, it will be biblical Christians, opposed to all elective abortions, who will stand for the full human dignity of all human beings, born and unborn.

Keep the communications coming. As I said to my evangelical brothers and sisters, I am sure God means for me to learn much from what you say.

