

Gender, Sexuality, Marriage and the Bible

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Questions about sexuality, sexual identity, gender and thus sexual expression are dominant issues today. Many, both in the church and in society, are confused about sex, morality and personal identity. In Australia we are currently debating whether or not we should redefine 'marriage' to include same-sex couples. This paper seeks to address these burning issues and offer clear guidance based squarely on what the Bible has to say.

This paper will assist those wanting to follow a Christian lifestyle. Any who want to know what God says and how we are to handle our creator's gift of sexuality will learn what the Bible teaches by exploring eight key passages.

The Bible opens with a description of God creating the universe and humankind. These opening statements provide contours for discussing gender, sexuality, marriage and the Bible. The Bible has not even the slightest hint of ambiguity when discussing human sexuality.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26–27 NIV

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." . . . So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:18–25 NIV

The Bible does not have a negative, prudish, and unenlightened view of sex. When God created man (singular), He created them (plural) male and female. This means that to be human, is to be sexually differentiated and at the same time to share a common humanity. Neither male or female is exalted above the other, both are equal primarily (Moltman, *God in Creation*, p. 222).

Scripture recognizes that our physicality—our gendered nature as well as our biological, social, psychological need to be intimate with others, is given in the creation itself. As such, our sex and

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sexuality provide occasions for faithfulness in our relationship to God and neighbor (Erin Dufault-Hunter, "Sex and Sexuality," p. 719).

Gender - Masculinity and Femininity

Sexuality is fundamental to the distinction between individual and individual. The female is to the male and the male to the female, the other man, and as such fellow man. Under Israel's constitution this differentiation was to be acknowledged by dress styles (Deut. 22:5), and hairstyles (cf. Lev. 21:5ff; 2 Kings 9:30; Song of Solomon 7:5).

Gender - Identity and Public Worship

Gender difference clearly remains in the New Testament. The problem being addressed in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 involves both genders. In the church this differentiation between male and female was to be acknowledged by hairstyles and/or plus or minus a head covering. For a woman her hair is to be her covering. For a man his hairstyle is to reflect his maleness and in worship is not to wear headwear (Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*).

This depicts a **veiled** male priest offering a liquid sacrifice on an altar pouring it with a saucer. He is flanked by religious personnel assisting him during the preliminary purifications, accompanying him to the sound of the double flute, handing him the incense casket or reminding him the sacred formulas to be pronounced.



This difference and community belong to the very image of God. God Himself as Trinity exists as the one God in a unity of difference and unity. Socially open companionship between people is the form of life that corresponds to God (Moltman, p. 223).

Human sexuality is a fundamental expression of humankind created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Today we must recognize men as male and women as female. Such a recognition does not allow a false uniformity in which this created distinctiveness is blurred, nor in the tension of opposition or inequality, nor in individualistic isolation, but in equality of status and complementarity and in the unity of relatedness. Everyone is born with a biological sexual identity, either female or male.

In the Bible the focus on sexuality falls more on what people are than on what they do. Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the virtuous woman who is more than just a child bearer. She engages in activities that have often been considered the prerogative of males.

Barth believes we must strenuously resist any typology or characterization of men or women as defined by particular tasks (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, pp. 200-202). In Genesis 1:26-27 the making of man and woman as sexual beings is specifically linked with their creation as God's image. Biblically, therefore, sexuality is integral to human personhood and men and women must seek to faithfully guard their male or female nature. We must resist attempts of men seeking to become female, or females wanting to be men, or wishing to be either asexual or bisexual.

Therefore Genesis 1 and 2 is a summons to both a man and woman to be true to themselves. Man is to be faithful to his masculinity and the female to her femininity and "to be faithful to this their human nature and to the special gift and duty indicated in and by it" (Barth, p. 200). This differentiation is to be reflected in their inter-personal relationships, social relationships, familial relationships and their worship.

Today many assume that sexuality (including but not limited to sexual preference and orientation) is key to our personal identity and thus to our fulfillment as humans. Under the New Covenant believing women and men partner for the sake of the kingdom. "Healthy" sexuality does not necessitate being "sexually active"; celibacy becomes an expression of fidelity to God's good work in the world, not a denial of God's gift or intention for creation (Matt. 19:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:8, 32-33), (Dufault-Hunter, 719).

Gender - Morality and Marriage

Morality as prescribed in the Bible is the standard Christians are called to adopt. The Bible teaches that God only sanctifies heterosexual marriages and condemns adultery, fornication, homosexuality and a wide range of other specific sexual sins (Gen 2:23; Matt 19:3-6; Rom 1:26-28, 1 Thess 4:1-8; Heb 13:4).

Homosexuality is a confusion, since it involves the effort of achieving union with a "mirror" image of oneself. This "other" is not sufficiently different to permit the union for which humankind was so remarkably formed (P. Michael Ukleja, "Homosexuality and the Old Testament", p. 261).

Heterosexual "marriage provides a commonly chosen context in which believers practice agape and eros love, as it habituates us to fidelity, patience, and cooperation. Sexual intercourse ritualizes and enhances this partnership of unity in difference and, if it is to be fulfilling, requires seeking not only one's own pleasure but also that of the other" (Dufault-Hunter, 719).

Gender – male and female, equality of persons

Five times the Bible states that humankind, created by God, is created in/as God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:2; 9:6; 2 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). The declaration that God made humankind in "the image of God", affirms the dignity and worth of humankind, and elevates each

individual, male or female, - not just kings or nobles - to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinization (David J. A. Clines, *The Image of God in Man*, Tyndale Bulletin, 1967, p. 53). Women have an equal share in the kingdom of God to come; and even now as a citizen of the kingdom, they experience the grace of God equally with men (1 Peter 3:7). According to 1 Peter 3:7 a wife is not to be viewed as a believing man's chattel but as a partner of equal dignity before both man and God.

Gender - Marriage – a heterosexual union

The truth about marriage is embedded in nature. The Bible clearly affirms heterosexual marriage, and also teaches that same sex unions, like adultery, violate the biblical ideal of marriage. Jesus asks:

Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

So Jesus declares that in the first marriage and in every marriage since, it is God himself who joins particular members of the opposite sex together in a natural relation unlike any other.

Gender - Same sex unions, equality or inequality of persons

Gay/lesbian activists are launching a frontal assault on the definition of marriage, relentlessly campaigning to have the dictionary definition changed. Same-sex activists are clamouring for the State to grant gay and lesbian couples equal marital status as that of heterosexual married couples by describing such unions as a marriage. Wanting to describe a same sex union as a *marriage* comes from a faulty understanding of marriage.

By using the expression "marriage equality" it is suggested that unless same sex unions are described as a "marriage union" then the two partners in a same sex union are some how inferior. It is being suggested that we are not acting "justly" by not allowing "equality" for gay and lesbian couples to be married. But the issue is about *redefining* the word 'marriage' not equality.

Since 2008 gay couples have full relationship equality and the same benefits as any other co-habiting couple including Medicare, tax, superannuation, inheritance and next-of-kin status. They have full equal rights to civil registration of their relationship with the government. There is no discrimination as far as their relationships are concerned. (Bill Medley, p7).

Married or non married status has nothing to do with equality or inequality of persons.

This is made clear by a parable from the orchard.

One day a great commotion was heard in the orchard.

The pear tree was in tears.

Some trees were shouting abuse at the peach tree.

The pear saying asking: "Why can't I be called a peach?"

After all I am basically the same as a peach. I wish I could be recognised as a peach.

If I was to be called a peach it would make me equal to a peach.

It's just not fair to discriminate against me.

Why can't I be called a peach?"

Obviously a pear is not a peach,

neither is a same sex union the same as a heterosexual union.

Why?

Because it is different in kind.

Gender – helpful definitions and designations

Heterosexuality refers to a primary orientation toward a member of the opposite sex.

The term *homosexuality* refers to a primary relational and sexual orientation toward a member of the same sex.

The use of the term *homosexuality* itself has been much debated in public discourse, and many individuals who identify themselves as having an orientation to the same sex prefer the designation LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered), particularly because it includes a broader and more nuanced range of orientations than simply homosexuality. This is sometimes expanded to LGBTQIA or LGBTQIA+ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/questioning/intersex/asexual). The a + sign sometimes is added to the end for anyone else not covered by the seven other initials.

Gender – Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is defined in terms of relationships with others. Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation is usually discussed in terms of three categories:

- heterosexual (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the other sex),
- gay/lesbian or homosexual (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of one's own sex), and
- bisexual (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to both men and women).

Since the late 1960s the status of persons with a homosexual orientation within religion and society has been one of the most debated and divisive issues to arise, whether for Christian ethicists, biblical scholars, mental health professionals, biologists, advocates of ballot initiatives, legislative bodies, or denominational deliberations.

In 1948 the Kinsey Institute Report changed general attitudes toward homosexuality and heterosexuality. Instead of viewing those practices as polar opposites people were led to view everyone on a continuum between exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality. The

report also affirmed that between 5 and 10 percent of the population is exclusively or primarily homosexual in orientation.²

Stott reported that, "in Britain the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967 declared that a homosexual act performed between consenting adults over 21 in private should no longer be a criminal offense."³

Likewise Logan notes that in 1973 the American Bar Association called for the repeal of all laws categorizing homosexual activity between consenting adults in private as a crime.⁴

Socarides reports,

On December 14, 1973, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association, meeting in Washington, D.C., eliminated homosexuality from its official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. In essence and by direct implication this action officially declared homosexuality a normal form of sexual life. Henceforth, the only "disturbed homosexual" would be one who was disturbed because he was homosexual. He would be considered neurotic only if "unhappy."⁵

Clearly the social cry of Western society has been one of re-evaluation with respect to the legality, if not the morality, of homosexuality.⁶

Findings from Scientific Research

Those advocating a more inclusive approach to LGBT individuals often appeal to the disciplines of biology, genetics, psychiatry, psychology as important resources for aiding our understanding of human sexuality in contrast to the biblical explanations that prohibit same-sex relations (Siker, "Homosexuality ," pp 372-373). But this appeal lacks evidence.

The most extensive review ever undertaken of the scientific research on homosexuality and transgenderism has recently been published. This 143-page report, "***Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the biological, psychological and social sciences***," is co-authored by distinguished scholars, Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer and Dr. Paul R. McHugh. Together these two scholars, who have impeccable and impressive credentials, ***reviewed over 200 peer-reviewed research articles on sexuality and gender in the biological, psychological, and social sciences, painstakingly documenting what scientific research shows and does not show about***

² M. Kent Millard, "Model for Thinking about Homosexuality," and James C. Logan, "Theological/Ethical Perspectives on Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality: In Search of a Christian Understanding*, ed. Leon Smith (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1981), 25, 53.

³ John R. W. Stott, *Homosexual Partnerships: Why Same-Sex Relationships Are Not a Christian Option* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 5.

⁴ Logan, "Theological/Ethical Perspectives on Homosexuality," 24.

⁵ Charles W. Socarides, "Homosexuality Is Not Just a Life Style," in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality*, Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York: Seabury, 1976), 149.

⁶ Stott notes that there is now a division between what is sin and what is a crime: "Adultery has always been a sin, but in most countries it is not an offense punishable by the state. Rape, by contrast, is both a sin and a crime." This leads to confusion and ultimately to a question as to whether something which is not a crime (one's experience) should be considered a sin (one's morality) (Stott, *Homosexual Partnerships*, 5).

sexuality and gender.⁷

The major takeaway, as the editor of the journal explains, is that “some of the most frequently heard claims about sexuality and gender are not supported by scientific evidence.”

Dr. Mayer, who is a scholar in residence in the Department of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and a professor of statistics and biostatistics at Arizona State University, wrote in the preface that in writing the report he had “consulted a number of individuals who asked that I not thank them by name.” He explained, “Some feared an angry response from the more militant elements of the LGBT community; others feared an angry response from the more strident elements of religiously conservative communities.”

Mayer also stated, “I strongly support equality and oppose discrimination for the LGBT community, and I have testified on their behalf as a statistical expert.” He then dedicated his work on the report, “first, to the LGBT community, which bears a disproportionate rate of mental health problems compared the population as a whole ... And above all ... to children struggling with their sexuality and gender.”

Dr. McHugh, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, served as the psychiatrist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital for twenty-five years and specialized in treating the mental disorder now labeled “Gender Dysphoria.”

Both researchers expressed compassion for those struggling with these conditions and the need for more valid research in a variety of areas.

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Major Scientific Findings

- Examining 200 research articles their report shows that some of the most frequently heard claims about sexuality and gender are not supported by scientific evidence
- The report has a special focus on the higher rates of mental health problems among LGBT populations, and it questions the scientific basis of trends in the treatment of children who do not identify with their biological sex. More effort is called for to provide these people with the understanding, care, and support they need to lead healthy, flourishing lives
- sexual orientation — the idea that people are “born that way” — is not supported by scientific evidence
- there are no compelling causal biological explanations for human sexual orientation
- Compared to the general population, non-heterosexual subpopulations are at an elevated risk for a variety of adverse health and mental health outcomes.

⁷ The Fall 2016 issue of *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology & Society* contains a report by Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer, an epidemiologist trained in psychiatry, and Dr. Paul R. McHugh, arguably the most important American psychiatrist of the last century. <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/introduction-sexuality-and-gender>

- The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex — that a person might be “a man trapped in a woman’s body” or “a woman trapped in a man’s body” — is not supported by scientific evidence.
- Studies comparing the brain structures of transgender and non-transgender individuals have demonstrated weak correlations between brain structure and cross-gender identification. These correlations do not provide any evidence for a neurobiological basis for cross-gender identification
- According to a recent estimate, about 0.6% of U.S. adults identify as a gender that does not correspond to their biological sex

Genetic Determination – homosexuality

The American Psychological Association reports:

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. To date, the claim that homosexuality can be tied to fixed heredity or biological trait cannot be supported by scientific evidence (<http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.pdf> p. 2)

Prior notes:

A long-standing and controversial debate is the role of genetic determination: homosexuality. The idea that homosexuality is not a choice has become the prevailing meme for just about everyone except religious conservatives. Evidence suggesting the possibility of a genetic link to homosexuality is taking what's been considered a moral issue out of the moral realm.

But with the addition of a non-moral issue such as athletic propensity into the mix, a new challenge, as well as an opportunity, arises. If genes can ultimately be linked to a whole range of human behaviors—from the amoral (physical strength and speed, obesity) to the moral (homosexuality, promiscuity) to behaviors in between (risk-taking, alcoholism)—then we come full circle and find ourselves face-to-face with a moral choice again.

We must either throw in the free-will towel altogether, or go back to the drawing table and figure out what it means to be moral agents, genetic dispositions notwithstanding. And we must identify which human behaviors still manifest the moral dimension of the human condition.

For, despite some thinking to the contrary, these genetic discoveries do not negate biblical teaching. Instead, they illuminate the truths of Scripture in a new and powerful way. If indeed I have the genes not only for left-handedness and blue eyes but for risk-taking, too, and if I lack the "sports gene" (oh, what embarrassment that gene test might have spared me in

junior high!), then this only confirms the truth of the psalmist's prayer: "You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:13-14).

And what of Paul's lament? "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do. ... As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me" (Rom. 7:15-17). Whether sin literally resides in the genes or not, Paul truthfully confesses that sin is living in him, as it is in all of us.

And in the middle of this passage from Romans are these words: "And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good." God's law is good, not only when we abide by it, but even when—especially when—we don't.

Are we predisposed to sin, genetically or otherwise? Absolutely. But God has determined a way to freedom, and that way originates not in the genes but in the Genesis and repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Karen Swallow Prior, *Sin in the Double Helix*- posted on the web).

The Bible and Homosexuality

A fundamental question confronting the church today has been whether the full inclusion within the membership church of LGBTQIA+ persons of faith represents a movement away from fidelity to a normative understanding of human sexuality as revealed in Scripture and tradition.

Six texts in the Bible deal directly with homosexual sex: the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:1–10; the Holiness Code in Leviticus 18:20; 20:13; the statements in Romans 1:26–27, additional remarks in 1 Corinthians 6:9; and 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7.

Genesis 19:1–10

*And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may **know** them"* Genesis 19:5.

Of the thirteen times the word "know" occurs in Genesis, seven times it means "to have sexual intercourse with" (BDB, 394; cf Gen 4:1, 4:17, 25; 19:5, 8; 24:16; 38:26; 1 Sam 1:19; Judges 19:25 etc).

This passage clearly suggests sexual violence, indeed homosexual rape. Lot correctly sees their desire as a wicked thing. The Sodomite wicked desires only confirm and endorse God's intended cataclysmic judgment on the cities of the plain.

Jude 7, comments on this passage and describes actions of the Sodomites using the term: *ekporneusasai*. *Ekporneusasai*, is defined as *indulge in illicit sexual relations/debauchery*⁸, a general term indicating any type of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. This is made specific by the following phrase that, more literally translated, reads, "departed after a different type of flesh." Thus seeking sexual intercourse with a person of the same sex would be seeking a different type

⁸ "ἐκπορνεύω," BDAG, 309.

of flesh than that which one was supposed to seek.⁹ The prefix *ek* seems to indicate a lust that gluts itself, satisfies itself completely.¹⁰ The verb *porneuo* means “they gave themselves up fully, without reserve, thoroughly, out and out, utterly.”

Leviticus 18:20 - adultery

The sacredness of heterosexual marriage was taken very seriously in Israel’s laws. The Levitical codes clearly condemn adultery and same-sex relations. This verse states: *Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her (adultery).*

This verse defines adultery as specifically forbidden in the seventh commandment. Violation of another man’s wife broke the marriage bond and destroyed the home. Adultery tears apart the fundamental building block of human society — marriage and the family. It is the most dangerous of covenantal violations (Malachi 2:14-16), and one that the prophets connect with idolatry (Jer 3:9; 5:7; 7:9; Hos 4:13-14); (Richard S Hess, “Leviticus,” p. 742). Men lightly call it “cheating” today, but in God’s sight it is a capital offense.

Leviticus 20:13 - homosexual intercourse

If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable (Gay/Lesbian). Male homosexuality is identified as “something detestable, repugnant”. The Old Testament bans every type of homosexual intercourse, including a consensual one, not just male prostitution or intercourse with youths (Andreas Köstengerger, “1 Timothy,” pp. 503-504). These passages are consistent with God’s purpose for human sexuality, as presented in Genesis 1-3.

Some within the church argue that such prohibitions concern only cultic practices in ancient Israel and so are no longer binding on Christians. But these Levitical proscriptions concern immoral behaviour. We need to ask, “How does the general pattern of the Scriptures direct us to understand this prohibition?”

The answer is that homoerotic behaviour contradicts God's purpose for all his creatures. The laws contained in the Old Covenant concerning diet, punishment by stoning, or wearing mixed fabrics have been abrogated. They are not reiterated under the New Covenant.

These proscriptions against homosexual behaviour in Leviticus 18:23 and 20:13 are still highly relevant because they have been reincorporated into the New Testament code - the New Covenant (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 7 (Ukleja, p. 265-266). The prohibition of homoerotic acts addresses every age.

⁹ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 52.

¹⁰ “ἐκπορνεύω,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 3522.

Romans 1:24-27 - same-sex relations

This is the most significant biblical passage to address the question about same-sex relations. This is the only biblical passage that discusses both male and female same-sex activity.

The argument in Romans 1 is tied inseparably to what is enshrined in the Genesis account of God's creative activity. Because of the sin of exchanging the truth about God for a lie, normal sex drives are channelled into "against nature" expressions. Human passions are disturbed and the primary created relationship, male and female, is distorted into homoerotic behaviour (verses 24, 26-27).

The passage emphasizes individuals with "degrading passions," "burning with lust," and engaging in "unnatural" activities that are shameful and perverse.

This passage in Romans gives a theological rationale for the mandatory condemnation of homosexual behaviour.

Therefore God "gave them up" in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves . . .

*For this reason God "gave them up" to degrading passions. For their women exchanged **natural** relations for those that are contrary to **nature**, 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.*

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God "gave them up" to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done. Romans 1:24, 26-27, 28

Nature means "in accordance with the intention of the Creator", one's natural constitution and **contrary to nature or unnatural** means "contrary to the intention of the Creator" as established by God in the creation of the human race. (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to Romans*, 1:125, 126). Homoeroticism thus represents an exchange (Romans 1:26) of what is "natural" for what is "against nature," and is a primary breach between the two designed for each other. These relations dramatize human rejection of God's primal purposes.

It is here that the extent of divine judgment is emphasized by the threefold use of - "**God gave them up**". God's judgment gives persons freedom to go their own way. "God gave them up" to do what they want.

The act of homosexuality per se is wrong. It does not matter what the motives are. It does not matter about one's genetic make-up or hormone count. The act of homosexuality is in and of itself wrong. This passage speaks of individuals being consumed with passion for someone else of the same gender. That sounds definitely like someone with a homosexual orientation.

When it states women were exchanging "natural relations" for unnatural (Romans 1:27), it is implied that they were exclusively homosexual in practice. They were confirmed practicing homosexuals, not heterosexuals experimenting with homosexuality.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 male prostitutes and sodomites

In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 we come upon a crucial translation issue. The passage occurs in the context of a vice list that includes behaviors contrary to God's will. The text states that "*wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God,*" referring to "*fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes (malakoi), sodomites (arsenokoitai), thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers.*" Homoerotic activity is symptomatic of rebellion against God—alongside thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers.

The translation issue arises with the Greek terms *malakoi*¹¹ and *arsenokoitai*,¹² which the NRSV renders as "male prostitutes" and "sodomites". A colloquial rendering could be: "male prostitutes and the men who hire their services"?

1 Timothy 1:10 – sexual morality

We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral (pornois), for those practicing homosexuality (arsenokoitais), for slave traders/kidnapers and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1 Timothy 1:9–11

The word translated 'sexually immoral', *pornois*, refers to those guilty of some form of sexual immorality. It reflects the seventh commandment of the Decalogue and its application later in the Mosaic law (e.g., Exod. 22:16, 17; Deut. 22:22–30; Lev. 20:10–21).

'Homosexuality' *arsenokoitai* condemns those who lie with a male as with a female, a sodomite. Such behaviour is a perversion of the God-ordained orientation of sex and reflects the Old Testament condemnation of homosexuality (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18; and then also Gen. 18:20; 19:4–7; Ezek. 16:48–50, especially v. 50; Jdg. 19:22, 23), (George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*. pp 85-86).

In the case of homosexuality, motives are not the issue. To make motives the issue finds no exegetical support in the Scripture. Homosexuality, according to the Bible, is wrong in and of itself.

The biblical teaching about same-sex relationships in both the Old and New Testaments is uniform and consistent – namely, that all such sexual relations are sin. There are no qualifications, exceptions or exemptions to this biblical teaching. Thus, if one follows the moral logic of Scripture, it is clear that that same-sex relationships are morally wrong.

¹¹"μαλακός," BDAG, 613. Pertaining to being passive in a same-sex relationship, *effeminate* especially of men and boys who are sodomized by other males in such a relationship . . . 1 Cor 6:9 ('male prostitutes' NRSV is too narrow a rendering; 'sexual pervert' REB is too broad

¹²"ἀρσενοκοίτης," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 1786. One who lies with a male as with a female, a sodomite: 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10. ἀρσενοκοίτης," BDAG, 135. a male who engages in sexual activity with a persons of his own sex, *pederast* 1 Cor 6:9.

Gender – attraction, longing, lust for sex with another person

Most people will experience desires that should not be fulfilled and with longings for things illicit. Some times a person wants the wrong things. The fact that a person is drawn towards say binge drinking or promiscuity does not mean they have to embrace such desires and act on them. For the Christian, they are morally responsible before God for their choices.

As DeYoung (2015) points out resisting sexual desire is a part of discipleship for every Christian, no matter what our marital status and no matter what kinds of attractions we experience, (p. 114).

Jackie Hill-Perry writes in a letter entitled: “Love Letter to a Lesbian”

You see what God says about homosexuality, but your heart does not utter the same sentiment.

God’s word says it is sinful, your heart says it feels right.

God’s word says it is abominable, your heart says it is delightful.

God’s word says it is unnatural, your heart says it is totally normal.

Do you see the clear divide between what God’s word says and how your heart feels?¹³

Those with a high view of Scripture and the continuity of tradition affirm that it is homosexual activity that is condemned, not same sex attraction. In this view, a homosexual orientation is not itself a sin, but it is a cross to bear and a desire that must be resisted like other desires to do what is sinful in God’s eyes.

Likewise, a man or woman who “lusts” after a person of the opposite sex is warned against pursuing such desires. It is both realistic and practical to distinguish between orientation, desire and practice.

A Christian understanding of temptation, fidelity, sexuality goes further. It is God’s grace and the Spirit at work within us that enable us to resist temptation. Sure, those temptations come in different forms. But whatever the biological basis for temptation, the means of overcoming it involves more than changing behavior. It involves training the brain, yes, but training both the emotions and the brain in a spiritual way.

The Bible exhorts: *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things”* (Philippians 4:8).

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

This approach emphasizes that the Bible makes no room for a positive evaluation of same-sex relations, and that the constant teaching of the church has been to condemn all forms of homosexual expression. Homosexuality is seen as a disordered condition that can, in some cases,

¹³ Jackie Hill-Perry. “Love Letter to a Lesbian.” Quoted by Kevin DeYoung, (2015). *What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality*. IL Wheaton, Crossway, p. 116.

be changed and corrected through various forms of therapy and counseling. For some who hold this view, homosexuality is not necessarily an orientation but rather a chosen set of behaviors contrary to God's will (Jeffrey S. Siker, "Homosexuality ," pp 372-373).

Pro-homosexual writers warp the Scriptures.¹⁴ They are more interested in the feelings of sinners than in the clear guidelines of God's Word. They are more concerned with making homosexuals feel accepted than they are in pointing them to the Saviour. Love is "that which seeks the will of God in the object loved." Homosexuality is not the will of God. Homosexual behaviour can never be the "loving thing" to do. (P. Michael Ukleja. Homosexuality in the New Testament. pp 354-355)

The Challenge for individuals and local churches

Pleas for the specific recognition of "gay rights" reverberate through our culture. People are ridiculed for their stand against the public approval of homosexuality. For individuals and local churches the challenge is:

- What is the authority of Scripture, and how should it be interpreted?
- Is God's word to be submitted to and allowed to have the last say on what is right and what brings glory to God (Titus 2: 11-14)?
- Is obedience to God's expressed will in the Bible to take precedence over desiring what is sinful?
- Is acting on an intense longing a justification for indulging in what the Bible describes as sinful behaviour?
- Are same-sex relations to be condemned as a violation of God's revealed will, or are they to be celebrated as another expression of God's revealed will for human sexuality?
- What defines me as a Christian?
 - ◆ My gender?
 - ◆ My sexuality?
 - ◆ My sexual sin?
 - ◆ My union with Christ?

¹⁴ In recent years there has been a number of self-proclaimed evangelicals who have written books arguing that Christians today should accept same-sex attracted people in committed monogamous marital relationships. Evangelicals who have written popular books promoting this viewpoint are Ken Wilson, Wendy VanderWal-Gritter, and Matthew Vines, and those producing more scholarly books are David Gushee, Mark Achtemeier and now James Brownson (2016), *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing The Church's Debate On Same-Sex Relationships*, pp312. Three examples highlight how Brownson subverts Scripture's authority:

- (1) Brownson claims that when Paul refers to "nature" in his epistles (such as in Rom. 1: 26-27), Paul is simply reflecting the ancient pagan assumptions about gender (237, 248).
- (2) Brownson asserts that the Bible's teachings on SSR fail to take into account the experience of committed same-sex couples today in which there is a fruitful expression of committed love (277-78). Thus, biblical authority is effectively undermined both by ignoring the Holy Spirit as the author of the biblical teaching for the church throughout the age of gospel, and by simply dismissing the biblical teaching as culturally and historically conditioned by the authors' ancient view of SSR.
- (3) Brownson assumes that there is no fixed creational moral order. He makes no reference to biblical scholars who appeal to such an order, such as Craig Bartholomew, Al Wolters, Oliver O'Donovan and Richard Middleton. Without a creationally-rooted moral order, it becomes much easier to argue, as Brownson does, that morality and gender complementarity evolve and change with different social and cultural circumstances.

Appendix A

The Christian's Scriptural

Identity and Position

The following statements summarize your scriptural identity and position in Christ and form the foundation for your freedom in Christ. Read these statements aloud often. If you are presently involved in a spiritual conflict, read these statements aloud at least once each day for a month.

Who Am I?

Exodus

I am not the great "I am" (3:14; John 8:24,28,58), but "by the grace of God, I am what I am" 1 Corinthians 15:10

Matthew

I am the salt of the earth

"You are like salt for the whole human race" 5:13

I am the light of the world

"You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid" 5:14

John

I am a child of God

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" John 1:12

I am part of the true vine, a channel of Christ's life

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:1, 5

I am Christ's friend

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15

I am chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His fruit

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" John 15:16

Romans

I am a slave of righteousness

"But thanks be to God! For though at one time you were slaves to sin, you have obeyed with all your heart the truths found in the teaching you received. You were set free from sin and became the slaves of righteousness" Romans 6:17-18

I am enslaved to God

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to holiness/sanctification and its end, eternal life" Romans 6:22

I am a son of God; God is spiritually my Father (; Galatians 3:26; 4:6)

"because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father" Rm 8:14-15,

"It is through faith that all of you are God's children in union with Christ Jesus. To show that you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father, my Father." Galatians 3:26; 4:6

I am a joint heir with Christ, sharing His inheritance with Him

"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" Romans 8:17

1 Corinthians

I am a temple—a dwelling place—of God. His Spirit and His life dwell in me

"Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you!__Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God;" 1Corinthians 3:16; 6:19

I am united to the Lord and am one in spirit with Him

"But anyone who is joined to the Lord is one in spirit with him" 1Corinthians 6:17

I am a member of Christ's body

"All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of his body. . . . for we are members of his body" 1Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:30

2 Corinthians

I am a new creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, a new being; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

I am reconciled to God and am a minister of reconciliation

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:—that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Galatians

I am a son of God and one in Christ

"All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman" Galatians 3:26, 28

I am an heir of God since I am a son of God

"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." Galatians 4:6-7

Ephesians

I am a saint

Ephesians 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

1Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Colossians 1:2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father."

I am God's workmanship—His handiwork—born anew in Christ to do His work

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" Ephesians 2:10

I am a fellow citizen with the rest of God's family

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household," Ephesians 2:19

I am a prisoner of Christ

"Christ Jesus made me his prisoner, so that I could help you Gentiles. As a prisoner of the Lord, I beg you to live in a way that is worthy of the people God has chosen to be his own." Ephesians 3:1; 4:1

I am righteous and holy (4:24).

“and make you into a new person. You were created to be like God, and so you must please him and be truly holy” Ephesians 4:24

Philippians

I am a citizen of heaven, seated in heaven right now (3 :20; Ephesians 2:6)

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ . . . And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:6

Colossians

I am hidden with Christ in God

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” Colossians 3:3

I am an expression of the life of Christ because He is my life (3:4).

“Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!” Colossians 3:4

I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved, forgiven all my sin (3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4).

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:12-13

I Thessalonians

I am a son of light and not of darkness (5:5)

“But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.” 1Thessalonians 5:4-8

Hebrews

I am a holy partaker of a heavenly calling

“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess” Hebrews 3:1

I am a partaker of Christ; I share in His life

“We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.”

Hebrews 3:14

I Peter

I am one of God's living stones, being built up in Christ as a spiritual house, a priest

"And now you are living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house. You are also a group of holy priests, and with the help of Jesus Christ you will offer sacrifices that please God" 1Peter 2:5

I am a member of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1Peter 2:9-10

I am an alien and stranger to this world in which I temporarily live

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" 1Peter 2:11

I am an enemy of the devil

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" 1Peter 5:8

I John

I am a child of God and I will resemble Christ when He returns

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" 1John 3:1-2

I am born of God, and the evil one—the devil—cannot touch me

"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him." 1John 5:18

SINCE I AM IN CHRIST, BY THE GRACE OF GOD. ...

Romans I have been justified—completely forgiven and made righteous (5:1).

I died with Christ and died to the power of sin's rule over my life (6:1-6).

I am free forever from condemnation (8:1).

1 Corinthians

I have been placed into Christ by God's doing (1:30).

I have received the Spirit of God into my life that I might know the things freely given to me by God (2:12).

I have the potential to understand the mind of Christ (2:16).

I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God (6:19,20).

2 Corinthians

I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God in Christ, and I have been given the Holy Spirit as a pledge guaranteeing my inheritance to come (1:21; Ephesians 1: 13, 14).

Since I have died, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ (5:14,15)

I have been made righteous (5:21).

Galatians

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I am now living is Christ's life (2:20).

Ephesians

I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (1:3).

I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy, and I am without blame before Him (1:4).

I was predestined—determined by God—to be adopted as God's son (1:5).

I have been redeemed and forgiven, and I am a recipient of His lavish grace (1:6-8).

I have been made alive together with Christ (2:5).

I have been raised up and seated with Christ in heaven (2:6).

I have direct access to God through the Spirit (2:18).

I may approach God with boldness, freedom, and confidence (3:12).

Colossians

I have been rescued from the domain of Satan's rule and transferred to the kingdom of Christ (1:13).

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins. The debt against me has been cancelled (1:14).

Christ Himself is in me (1:27).

I am firmly rooted in Christ and am now being built up in Him (2:7).

I have been made complete in Christ (2:10).

I have been buried, raised, and made alive with Christ (2: 12,13).

I died with Christ and I have been raised up with Christ. My life is now hidden with Christ in God.
Christ is now my life 3:1-4

2 Timothy

I have been given a Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (1: 7).

I have been saved and set apart according to God's doing (1:9; Titus 3:5).

Hebrews

Because I am sanctified and am one with the Sanctifier, He is not ashamed to call me His brother
(2:11).

I have the right to come boldly before the throne of God to receive mercy and find grace to help in
time of need (4: 16).

2 Peter

I have been given precious and magnificent promises by God, by which I am a partaker of God's
divine nature (1:4).

The above has been adapted from Neil T. Anderson,

Victory Over the Darkness (Regal Books, 1990). Used by permission

Appendix B

An interview with J. Alan Branch, author of:

Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science, and The Scriptures.

Weaver Book Company, 2016 - 224 pages

Hi, I'm Fred Zaspel, executive editor here at Books At a Glance, and we're talking today with Dr. J. Alan Branch. Dr. Branch is professor of Christian ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, and author of the new book, *Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures*. It's an important book addressing a very important contemporary discussion, and we're glad to have Dr. Branch here with us.

Dr. Branch, welcome!

Branch:

Thank you. I'm so glad to be here, Fred.

Zaspel:

The title of your book makes it pretty obvious, but just to make sure we have the discussion in focus, tell us what your book is all about and what is the contribution you are hoping to make.

Branch:

Well the title is borrowed from Lady Gaga's song, *Born This Way*, in which she basically makes a connection between one's sexual identity and one's racial or ethnic heritage. So the big point of the book is homosexuality is not a trait like your skin color, your hair color or your eye color. It's quite different. There are some data out there that correlate with higher incidence of homosexuality among some people groups when looking for certain variables, but there's no data that shows or proves causation as of yet. So there's a big difference between correlation and causation. And homosexuality is not a trait like your hair color your skin color.

Zaspel:

Explain for us the connection that is claimed to exist between sexual morality and ethnic heritage. What is this all about?

Branch:

Well the idea is that once ethnic heritage or skin color or body type and all these the sort of things are determined by our DNA in utero and so we don't use those things, they are simply things with which we are born. So the main argument that is popular in our culture right now is that homosexual identity is much the same way.

One doesn't choose this, it is in fact an innate, immutable characteristic so it is something a person is born with and that cannot be changed any more than one can change their race or ethnicity. So what the data shows is that there are some characteristics or variables – when scientists do

research on homosexuality, what they are looking for are different variables and how those variables are connected with a higher incidence of homosexuality within certain people groups, within certain, not even people groups really, samples.

So you have to imagine a scientist has a group of people that he has in his or her sample which they've drawn from somewhere, there's always places where they can get them, so then they go mining around within their sample to find if there's anything in common all the folks have.

So what you find in almost every sample is this: if they have found something, what they find is some trait or variable that occurs more frequently among people who claim to be homosexual. But in every sample you'll have some people who have the trait in question but who are not homosexual. Then you have other people in the sample who do not the trait in question yet they are homosexual.

What that means is none of these traits are necessary or sufficient to cause homosexuality but they do correlate with a higher incidence. We have to stress over and over again correlation does not equal causation and the helpful distinction between those between those two terms is usually lost in the public media when these findings are released to the public.

Zaspel:

Let me read a paragraph from your introduction that gets to the heart of your thesis, and then perhaps you can comment on it for us.

The urgent question for us to answer is, "Are homosexuals really born this way?" In this book, I hope to offer a plausible answer to these and other questions associated with the relationship between scientific research and the moral status of homosexuality. A review of the research will show that, while there are some genetic or biological factors that correlate with a higher incidence of same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior, as of yet there is no proof of genetic or biological causation for homosexuality. The vital distinction between correlation and causation is central to my argument.

Branch:

Well, there are numerous studies out there. What I would say to the person listening is: there has been an enormous amount of research into homosexuality, what causes it, especially on the biological genetic side and so biologically what I mean by that are things such as brain structures, typically, and then genetically of course comes out of your DNA. So what I would say is that homosexuality tends to emerge early. Most people, when they are asked about the first time they felt same-sex attraction, they're going to say puberty. That shouldn't surprise any of us, that's a time of sexual awakening for everyone.

So I would say it emerges early but "emerges early" and being "born this way" are two different things. So it may feel as if someone has been born that way. I can understand where they might feel that way, but when you start digging into the data it's much harder to prove that. The genetic evidence is quite inconclusive. There's a recent study on the Xq28, which is a region of the X-chromosome which was originally identified by Dean Hamer back in 1993, and a couple of guys,

Sanders and Bailey out of Chicago in 2014, claim to replicate some of Hamer's findings along with some new areas of interest on chromosome 8, but even by their own admission when they talk about their findings, what they are claiming is "Well we found something that is statistically significant."

Well, saying he found something that is statistically significant is far different from saying this trait is therefore caused by this variable that we have identified. Because even in their own sample, not everyone in their sample who was homosexual shared the trait for which they were searching. So it's a finite sort of argument that you have to be very attuned to, and you have to listen very carefully to the claims that are being made. Statistically significant does not necessarily mean A causes B.

Causation works like this: if trait A exists, then behavior B is going to follow. Inevitably. Nothing like that has been found for homosexuality where if A exists, you can absolutely predict with absolute certainty that that person will be homosexual. Even Sanders and Bailey in their widely published research in 2014, admit that their own research doesn't provide findings which are sufficient to predict if a child in utero will be homosexual. So they admit that it has a weak predictive power. What they have found is something of interest. Well, saying something is interesting is far different from saying something causes homosexual behavior.

Zaspel:

Explain for us the implicit theological argument that is smuggled in with the claim that we are "born this way."

Branch:

Well, I don't know if it's theological. I think it's a worldview because it's really a non-theological worldview. It's biological determinism is what it is. That humans are no more than the sum of their DNA and chemicals of sort of learn to self reflect. Even though Lady Gaga mentions God in her song I rather suspect the god whom she has in mind is some sort of vague, nondescript deistic sort of idea of God.

But really the idea that's driving through our culture is biological determinism. You are the sum of your DNA and we're all doomed by our DNA and biological structures to certain patterns of behavior. It's a very materialistic view of humans which is simply false. Humans are more than the sum of their DNA. Humans are more than just a bunch of chemicals that it learned how to self reflect. So what we're wrestling with at the core is biological determinism which is closely related to a very nontheistic materialistic view of the universe.

Zaspel:

Right, and yet some will say, "born this way" is tantamount to "God made me this way." But then whoever that God is, I suppose, right?

Branch:

Right, and so what we're dealing with there is... The most gracious thing I can say about Lady Gaga's song, *Born This Way*, is that she seems to want to affirm Genesis 1:26-28 that people are made in God's image, but she doesn't want to affirm Genesis 3 that a historic space/time fall has occurred which is messed up all of creation. So we as Christians don't deny that we live in a fallen world where confusing things can happen. I want to make it very clear that I am not unsympathetic to people who struggle with same-sex attraction at an early age. My question is not whether or not that happens. I believe it does. And I believe they are telling us the truth when many of these folks say, I didn't ask for this. I didn't request this. It wasn't something I sought out. It's something I felt. So it is not my point that they are lying to us.

No, I think they're telling us the truth. The question though is when we start looking at the data about how that emerges. Well there's lots of ways that I think in the years to come we are going to figure out that these things emerge. So I rather suspect that years down the road we will be talking about just homosexuality in the singular, but people arriving there at multiple different pathways that lead people to that point. But the idea I can't stress enough again is in our culture when people talk about God they want a god without any boundaries.

Well, love in any ordered relationship always has boundaries. So we are not living in a perfect world, we're living in a fallen world. Sometimes in a fallen world our desires are disordered. This is Paul's main point in Romans chapter 1. We in fact want to do things that God says not to do in the sinful desires feel natural to us. It's not just homosexuality, there's a whole host of these desires. They feel natural, in fact, they are wrong.

And why is that? That's because we're living in a fallen world and we need redemption. Sanctification is the whole process of Christian learning how to fight these desires which are contrary to God's perfect will. I can't stress enough the idea that, yes God designed us and we are fearfully and wonderfully made, but it's also true that we live in a fallen world and our desires get really messed up.

Zaspel:

Are there social or familial factors that may influence same-sex attraction in any way?

Branch:

Right, in fact prior to 1973 when the APA changed its stance on homosexuality the driving theory was that the triad of a mother and a father and a child gets very dysfunctional somehow and typically have this idea of an overbearing mother and a passive father and somehow this can, especially with males, could lead to male homosexuality. Well, that's certainly true for some people, but it's not true for all cases of homosexuality.

There are people in the gay community today that will tell you they grew up in a happy home where the mother and father loved each other and the dad was a good man, was active in their life, and yet they now self-identify as homosexual. So there are some social factors I suppose we

could call them, that seem to affect homosexuality in some people.

But we as Christians need to be very careful and not assume that's true with everyone. Some of the more interesting data revolves around to other issues it's childhood sexual trauma and then childhood gender nonconformity. It is a fact which homosexual activists will admit, that sexual abuse and sexual trauma occurs more frequently among people who self-identify as homosexuals when they are adults.

It doesn't mean the majority, it doesn't mean all, but what it does mean is it happens more frequently than in the general population. And there's enough there that it should cause us some concern. But what seems to be very true is this: the age of someone's sexual debut, the context in which that sexual debut occurred, and the gender of the person within this sexual debut occurred along with that person's age has a very strong formative effect on the person's later sexual identity. Now not everyone who is abused as a child grows up and becomes homosexual but it happens frequently enough that there's something going on there.

But I have to caution – sometimes Christians hear this sort of data and they just assume that that's true of all homosexuals and it's not. But it is true of a significant percentage. The other issue is childhood gender nonconformity. This means children who exhibit attributes or want to act like the other sex when they are a child. This seems very strongly to be correlated with an adult homosexual identity.

So there's something going on there with that. So these are some different social factors, but every person arrives at homosexuality in a different pattern. And so one of my talking points for Christians is to spend time with someone who tells you they are homosexual, if it's your child, your grandchild, or friend of yours, spend time listening to them because they're going to give you a story that may have some common components that I have just described, but it may not. And so just in some time listen and hear where they're coming from but don't assume that everybody has the same journey that gets there.

Zaspel:

How have "born this way" arguments affected young children?

Branch:

Well, it goes back to what I just said. I guess the best way I can answer that is to say I have concerns. In my book, in the final chapter I mentioned Simon LeVay who is very significant neuro-anatomist who has done some major research, that gets quoted quite frequently about a particular area, the hypothalamus, called the interstitial nuclei, the anterior hypothalamus #3, and he claims that he's found something there that correlates with a higher incidence of homosexuality. His data is interesting, it was released in 1991 I think it was, hasn't been replicated since.

But here's the challenge – in his 2012 book about homosexuality and science Simon LeVay mentions the fact that more homosexuals than the average population were abused and in fact abused in a same-sex manner when they were children. So they had a child molester that molested them in a

homosexual way when they were kids.

He's addressing that data and he's wrestling with this fact that, wow, this seems to indicate that at least for some people there's strong kind of social factors that drove them toward the same-sex attraction as opposed to biological factors. So he's trying to wrestle with that and what he lands at, and one can read his own book (and I'm not misquoting him either) he essentially says, well these kids were already gay, they didn't know it and they were sending off signals to adults that they already had this same-sex orientation and they were actually subtly inviting this homosexual abuse. That is horrendous! It is deeply disturbing.

And when LeVay says that he is echoing things that were first introduced by Alfred Kinsey in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1948 and 1953 respectively. This idea that somehow it's only because of children's social norms that are given to them by religious parents that they are afraid of sexual behavior when they're young and this is horrendous. It is deeply disturbing. What you have when you read these were these are very sexually attuned adults trying to read their own sexual appetites back on to children and that's very dangerous for society.

Zaspel:

It's a fascinating story of how the American Psychiatric Association came to change its stance regarding homosexuality in 1973-74, and I think it is a story that deserves to be better known. Can you summarize that for us? How did the psychiatric community perceive homosexuality prior to 1973, what was their stated position afterwards, and how did the change come about?

Branch:

That goes back to political activism. It all starts with the Stonewall riots in the late 1960s up in New York and this got the homosexual community very organized in a very quick way. What I would remind everyone is this change occurred in 1973. This is right at what I suppose we call the sexual revolution of the 60s. If we date the sexual revolution in the summer of 1967, the summer of love at Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and the rapid spread of sex outside of marriage throughout the culture...just a seed change that occurred very quickly.

And in the middle of this you get several things. You have widespread use of oral contraceptives which makes it less likely for people to get pregnant if they're having sex outside of marriage, you have the legalization of abortion on demand by decree of the Supreme Court in January 1973 which is closely tied to the sexual revolution, and in the middle of this you have the Stonewall riots in 1969. This is an era when people are protesting in the streets left and right, the Vietnam War and whatnot.

So if you can get in your mind people protesting the Vietnam War at the Democratic convention in 1968, those are really the sort of tactics that the homosexual community used with the American Psychiatric Association. They burst into their meetings protesting, shouting down people who had a different view of homosexuality and it's this largely politically driven movement to get the

American Psychiatric Association to shift.

Now a lady named Evelyn Hooker who had done some research was quite influential in some of this as well. So there was already some shift going on among some of the psychiatric community but what I would ask people to see this in – they were having a major shift about sex in general so some of it wasn't so much psychiatric, some of it was a shift in morals and ethics. This idea that sex shouldn't be restrained, it's really a playboy view of morality as long as you're not hurting someone else, that sex is for pleasure therefore it is good and homosexuality is just another form of sex.

So it was really these political activists bursting into these meetings of the American Psychiatric Association. It's hard to imagine because when we think of scientific meetings and professional meetings of psychiatrists we think of boring lectures people delivering papers on different forms of treatment in a really kind of staid atmosphere. That is not what was happening. You have activists climbing up on the table and shouting people down and this is what pushed the change in the American Psychiatric Association in 1973.

Zaspel:

What is your sense of just how pervasive this kind of thinking is – that homosexuality is a trait some are born with? Is this widely held? Do we know better but deny it? How do you size up the thinking on this in our society today?

Branch:

Well, this is just my finger in the wind. I don't have any hard data in front of me. I'm just a guy that's talked to a lot of people and observed the culture. My assumption is that especially among teenagers, even in church, the assumption is they just think it's a trait like your skin color or your hair color. The vast majority assume that. And it's pushed off on them in a hundred different ways.

Every time a homosexual is presented in a movie or film or TV program, is always presented favorably, always presented as witty and concerned and a passionate person whom you would like to know. Never a negative word said.

Meanwhile, people who are trying to advocate the position like I am advocating here are presented as always narrow minded, always xenophobic, always probably subtly racist if they would just admit it. The same way that we are racist and also hate homosexuals, that's not an uncommon theme. It just recurs over and over again.

So these kids get this and what is frustrating for me I suppose is the degree to which someone can go and dig into the research and present a plausible coherent representation of the research and yet an 18-year-old at a church while I am preaching will be on Wikipedia reading whatever Wikipedia has to say or looking at someone's blog post and they put more stock and more reference in somebody's blog page or blog post than they do on a reasoned presentation of Scriptures and research. So it's a huge, huge fight that we are engaging in and I don't think it's one to go away anytime soon.

Zaspel:

What response do you have to homosexuals who may say, "I couldn't change if I wanted to!"?

Branch:

I'd say, "Change is hard." The data shows that change is hard. Now the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association are going to say... They lump a lot of things under reparative therapy. A lot of Christians may have heard that term.

Reparative therapy when it's used technically is actually referring to a particular theory about the origin of homosexuality and about how one would help somebody overcome that. But generally out here in the culture it's just to catch word for you want to help people stop behaving in a homosexual way, right?

So what the data shows is that complete change (by complete change I would mean someone no longer experiences same-sex attraction whatsoever) is very rare. However, what is more common, is on a continuum toward managing their same-sex attraction and not engaging in homosexual behavior anymore. What that happens more frequently, but it's hard, it's difficult and it's a challenge.

What I guess is a bit frightening to me is in the current environment anybody who attempts to help someone stop engaging in homosexual behavior is automatically labeled as hateful and someone who you don't want to be around and is engaging in dangerous activity. Which means any future research on helping people manage same-sex attraction in a successful way is going to be squashed, I'm afraid. So it's not really an open marketplace of ideas if you want to know the truth.

So it's difficult, and it's a challenge but it is possible. But that shouldn't surprise us as Christians that it's difficult. If you take Paul's vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, he mentions 10 specific vices that are outside God's will. He says, "such people who participate in these things, these things are outside the kingdom of God." The vice list is bracketed by the phrase, "such will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Well there's 10 vices in that list. He talks about things like drunkenness and adultery and sexual morality in general so I don't know many of us who don't know in our church or small group or fellow family member who came to faith in Christ that participated in those behaviors and they are living for Jesus today. But they'll tell you things like, "Wow, it's been five years since I've had a drink, but there are days when I would just die to have another beer or die to have another glass of whiskey," right?

So it shouldn't surprise us that someone (two of those vices in that vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 deal specifically with homosexuality) it shouldn't surprise us as Christians that someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ the homosexual lifestyle and then says, "You know what, there are times when I'm still strongly tempted to go participate in homosexual behavior, but by God's grace I've had another day of victory and I'm not going to do that." I think sometimes we as Christians have just... If I can say this with some caution: the homosexual community does have at one point I

think a legitimate complaint because we've made it sound easy.

"Well, you just give your life to Jesus and you'll never struggle with this again." Well let me tell you what, I gave my life to Jesus when I was 10 years old (I'm 48 years old now) and in the 38 years since then there's been a lot of sins I've fought, and by God's grace you look for victory. So we want to be very careful what we tell someone in general when they come to faith in Christ and homosexuals in particular.

What I can promise someone that God's grace is sufficient for whatever we're facing, that there's no temptation that's facing you except such as is common to man, but God's grace is sufficient and we find the strength every day to overcome temptation. That does not mean it's always easy, but it does mean victory is possible.

But we're living in a culture that essentially says you feel any attraction that's enduring, persistent, then it must be natural. Don't fight it. And in fact those Christians are telling you the wrong thing by trying to fight this. And I think the church needs to hear that. When we tell people to fight temptation many people say, no, you're telling people the wrong thing. Not just about homosexuality but about any number of sexual temptations.

Zaspel:

Yes, sins of any kind can be addictive and particularly so sexual sins and we shouldn't leave a wrong impression and yet at the same time we do say that the gospel does offer hope.

Branch:

That's right.

Zaspel:

Who is your intended audience?

Branch:

Well my hope is, I'm aiming at Christians, people who love Jesus Christ and want to give and inform response to the culture. There are some chapters which are technical but the argument is there. I'm afraid that the devil is, in fact, in the details in some of these arguments. I want pastors to be informed.

I'm hoping that bright Christian young people in college and they're 19, they're 20, they're 21 and want to live for Jesus, and they want to be kind, and they have friends that say they are homosexual and they like them. I'm hoping that they'll have a reasoned understanding of what the science does and does not say. That's my hope. And if they will at least grasp this basic idea: I like my friend however they wound up at homosexual orientation, I get it, it's not like their skin color or their hair color, it is a different trait.

Zaspel:

Our cultural moment has made it more incumbent upon Christians to be a little more informed on

some things, and this is one of them. This could well be used I think in some even youth group settings or college-age settings to help inform our young people heading out to University and whatnot. We just have to be informed on some things in particular today and this is certainly one of them.

Have you been encouraged thus far with the reception the book has received?

Branch:

Well, the book's only been out about a month and so far, yes, I have been encouraged. I've heard many positive things from fellow people in theological education, the field I run in. I suppose what I would say, as a thought for Christians, is I cannot stress enough the degree to which the Obergefell decision that summer by the United States Supreme Court is changing the nature of moral debate in our nation. My book was not dealing with the American civic side of things but what I want people to understand – I think that Justice Kennedy spent a great deal of time talking about, freedom of belief as opposed to free exercise of religion, should cause us a lot of concern.

I could be wrong, and this could be one of those cases where I would be very happy to be wrong but I think his silence on free exercise of religion is foreboding and ominous. What that means is that you can get inside your church building and you guys can do whatever you want in those four walls, just don't try to live out your faith in public. Which is why I'm deeply concerned.

What that means is that Christians are going to be placed in a position where they may not get the promotion at work, they may not get the job. I was a chaplain in the Army, there may come a time when evangelical chaplains are no longer welcome in the military. So there's a lot of areas where we're going to be pushed and I just want my book to be one part of the Christian's attempt to be an informed Christian and that's what environment. I don't know if the other side's going to listen to us.

You may have a friend that is incredibly animated, angry, and sometimes even unhinged, but it behooves us in response to that kind of attitude, to be kind, to be patient, to listen, let them vent, but at the end of the day when they are done venting, if they are going to listen to us say, "Look, I love you and I care about you and I want to be your friend and I know you disagree with me but I want to tell you why I hold to what I hold. And I want you to understand my beliefs are not just the rants of a loose cannon out here just trying to be xenophobic and hating people who are different from me. No, there are substantive reasons why I hold to the stance that I do hold." I hope my book will be part of the arsenal I suppose you could say of someone trying to state such a position in a kind and gracious way.

Zaspel:

We've been talking to Alan Branch, author of the new and important book, *Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures*. It's a very well informed work, and we encourage you to get a copy and equip yourself for this very contemporary discussion.

Dr. Branch, thanks so much for being with us today.

Branch:

Thank you. God bless you.

Appendix C

Gender, Sexuality and the Bible

Study Questions

- 1 What do we learn about gender in Genesis 1:26-27?
- 2 In what ways do people today attempt to hide their biological gender identity?
- 3 According to Genesis 1:26, 27; 5:2; 9:6; 2 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9; 1 Pet 3:7, what is true of both men and women?
- 4 Describe the argument some use to say that without being recognised as a marriage, same sex unions are unequal?
- 5 Some claim that Old Testament laws and prohibitions are obsolete. How can you counter this argument?
- 6 What do we learn in Romans 2:24-27 about same sex relationships?
- 7 Describe the difference between desire/lust and behaviour that fulfils such desires
- 8 What standard will you set for yourself in the areas of gender, sexuality and relationships?

Some recent books and journal articles addressing these issues

Branch, J. Alan (2016). *Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science and The Scriptures*. Weaver Book Company. 224 pp.

A reviewer notes: Branch has skillfully written a book that navigates complex and sensitive material in a compassionate and respectful way. It is succinct and elegant in its treatment of the major *born this way* arguments without getting bogged down in minutia. Branch is able to demonstrate the weaknesses of the *born this way* research and expose the flaws of the *born this way* argumentation regarding Biblical ethics. Recommended.

Brown, Paul E (ed). (1998, rev. 2007). *Homosexuality, Christian Truth and Love*. Day One Publications. 160 pp.

Cole, Sherwood O. (2000) *Biology, Homosexuality, and the Biblical Doctrine of Sin* in *BSac* 157:627 (Jul 00) pp 349-366

Cole, Sherwood O (1997). *Biology, Homosexuality, and Moral Culpability*, in *BSac* 154:615 (Jul 97) pp 356-367

DeYoung, Kevin (2015). *What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality*. IL Wheaton, Crossway. 158 pp.

Malick, David E. (1993). *The Condemnation of Homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27*, in *BSac* 150:599 (Jul 93) pp 329-339.

Lawrence S. Mayer, Paul R. McHugh. *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences*. The New Atlantis journal. This report presents a careful

summary and an up-to-date explanation of research — from the biological, psychological, and social sciences — related to sexual orientation and gender identity. It is offered in the hope that such an exposition can contribute to our capacity as physicians, scientists, and citizens to address health issues faced by LGBT populations within our society.
<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/introduction-sexuality-and-gender>

Thompson, Mark (ed). *Human Sexuality and the "Same Sex Marriage" Debate*

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