

# EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

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## Evangelical Review of Theology

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living.*

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we can have the moral right to challenge the pagan concepts of sex which abound in our society and unrestricted so readily permeate the lives of some professing Christians, as was also the case in the first century. p. 279

## CLARITY AND COURAGE

The Church needs clarity concerning what the will of God is, and concerning the life, purpose and belonging that He offers us in Jesus Christ. We need such a clarity so that we are not prepared to approve for ourselves or for others anything less than God's best.

The Church also needs courage; courage "to speak the truth in love". It is easy to profess a love or a compassion that obscures truth. Love like that is not love at all for it unjustly denies the truth that sets men free. The love of God does not condone sin yet is so great that it brought His Son to die for our sins. His love saves us from death and brings us to life. The love we profess has to be of that quality. This is the love of God we owe to homosexuals and, more urgently, to those who profess to be Christian.

God makes His way clear. May He grant us grace to accept His way in our own lives and courage to point others away from conformity with this world to a transformation by the renewal of their minds, that they with us may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). p. 280

# Counselling the Homosexual

## Students at Talbot Seminary

*Reprinted from The Christian Counsellor's Journal (Winter 1979/80)  
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A wide spectrum of opinions exist concerning the homosexual in our society. In the past a homosexual had basically two choices in which to live. He could hide in a closet and live in loneliness and in fear of rejection and discovery, or he could come out of the closet and join in a gay group. Today, with the liberal attitudes of the late 1960s and 70s and with the popularity of minority groups fighting for rights, the homosexual has come out into the public. With the increasing power of gay activist groups has come increasing acceptance and rights in our society. In some religious circles, homosexuality is no longer considered to be a moral disease.

An important aspect of counselling a homosexual is to understand the view he has of himself. Until recently the homosexual viewed himself as abnormal, different, or less of a human being in comparison to heterosexuals. Today, the trend is toward self-acceptance. The slogan "self-acceptance is the first step to happiness" appeared in a homophile publication a few years ago. The slogan captures the current attempt of not only the acceptance of oneself, but his acceptance in the community. No longer do homosexuals want to remain feeling inferior.

How does a Christian who has a homosexual orientation view himself? A Christian's view will depend greatly on what he believes to be the cause of his homosexuality and on how he interprets Scripture. A person who believes that his homosexuality is genetically

caused, who believes that God made him that way, is left with the only option of accepting himself the way he is. He can remove guilt by rationalising that he does not need to change and, in fact, cannot change. A Christian who accurately understands Scripture and believes that his homosexuality is not God-given but learned (the stance that most research holds) is left with conscious feelings of guilt, but he also has strong motivation to change. Change, however, is not easy. A paragraph of a letter written in the book *The Returns of Love* by Alex Davidson illustrates the frustrations and turmoils of such a person.

*Dear Peter,*

*Can you understand it? This is the impossibility of the situation—what I may have, I don't want, and what I do want, I may not have. I want a friend, but more than a friend, I want a wife. But I don't want a woman ...*

The writer strongly desires to live a godly life but finds himself p. 281 physically attracted to Peter. With God's help, he is able to overcome temptation and not act out his homosexual orientation or inclinations.

A Christian homosexual often goes through periods of despair, loneliness, idleness and self-pity. At these times the mind is free to wander, frustrated at not being able to act out his sexual tendencies, realising that they are wrong. The temptation can lead to sin or to obedience. A person who views his homosexuality as wrong and desires to change, can change not only in behaviour but in orientation as well. Many Christian men, by condition homosexual, who seek means of understanding themselves and their obligations before God undergo a positive change in their sexual orientation. Others find a sense of grace and resolution regarding their condition but without a change in sexual orientation.

## INADEQUATE EXEGESIS

In supporting their own views and feelings, some people have been guilty of inaccurate exegesis of those portions of the Bible which classify homosexuality as sin. A thorough analysis of their interpretation of Scripture passages is presented in order to give the Christian counsellor the Biblical basis for maintaining that homosexual acts are sin.

**Genesis 19 (cf. Judges 19:22):** They attack this passage by observing that the Hebrew verb “to know” in Gen. 19:5 does not usually refer to sexual relations in the Old Testament. The NASB translation, however, uses “have relations” or “have intercourse”. The *Midrash* indicates that this verb means to know for sexual purposes, just as Adam knew his wife and she conceived. Clement of Alexandria, a church father of the second century, condemned sodomy and taught that it was the reason God destroyed Sodom. Some people also argue that the sin of Sodom was homosexual rape. But this does not explain why Lot offered his virgin daughters to the men (Gen. 19:8). Also this view cannot be reconciled with Jude 7.

**Leviticus 18:22, 20:13:** Some people claim that regulations listed here are not for today, since believers in Christ are no longer under the Mosaic Law. They compare these prohibitions to the eating of rabbit, lobster, clams, shrimp, oysters, and rare steak in Lev. Chs. 11 and 17. It is clear that “by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). But the second part shows that the Law reveals the sinfulness of men. In Rom. 7:7 Paul made a clear statement of how the p. 282 Law reveals sin: “... I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ ”

**1 Samuel 18:** Some people use the love between Jonathan and David to argue that God blessed a practicing homosexual. However, there is no statement that any homosexual act

took place between them. The Hebrew word for love in [1 Samuel 18](#) is used for the love between man and woman, but it is also used of the love between a slave and his master and love between neighbours and friends. In discussing the meaning of the word “love” in this passage, Dr. J. A. Thompson attaches political overtones to the word. He writes: “Sensing the certainties of the future, Jonathan was ready even then to acknowledge David’s sovereignty over himself and over the nations.”

**Romans 1:26–27:** Some people believe that Paul was stating that people should not change their sexual orientation. Someone who is born heterosexual should not try to become homosexual, and likewise, someone who is homosexual should not try to become heterosexual. They also teach that this passage condemns just which is sinful regardless of sexual orientation while homosexual love is just as desirable as heterosexual love.

There is no Biblical or biological basis for the concept of a person’s being a homosexual by birth. God made a man, and when it was apparent that no creature was suitable for meeting his needs, God made a woman rather than another man ([Gen. 2:18–25](#)). The concept of the family consisting of husband and wife and children is found throughout the Bible ([Prov. 18:22](#), [31:10–31](#); [1 Cor. 7](#); [Eph. 5:22–6:4](#); [Col. 3:18–21](#); [1 Pet. 3:1–7](#)). The natural sexual function is carried out through the male-female relationship. [Rom. 1:27](#) clearly describes the sin as males leaving the natural use of the female and then desiring other males. The change of sexual orientation is from heterosexual to homosexual.

Some in favour of homosexuality confuse the issue by stating that homosexual love is desirable. Love, in the Bible, is not only desirable but is, in fact, commanded by Christ. However, the Bible does condemn homosexual lust or physical desires which are consummated. The Greek participle “committing” always expresses the bringing to pass or the accomplishment. Homosexual lust (cf. [Matt. 5:28](#)) and its consummation are sin.

**1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10:** Some people or groups teach that these verses do not condemn homosexuality, but they do condemn homosexual perversion. They quote the *Good News Bible* p. 283 which uses the term “homosexual perverts”. Homosexual perversion is just as wrong as heterosexual perversion. When this argument fails, they say that you cannot take this part of the Bible literally. The Greek word *malakoi* ([1 Cor. 6:9](#)) translated “effeminate” in the NASB, refers to “men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually”. The second Greek word is *arsenokoitai* which is a compound word meaning a “male” and a “bed”. According to J. H. Thayer this refers to “one who lies with a male as with a female.” The correct meaning from the Greek is that homosexuality in any form is a perversion. Even a homosexual act done in love is sinful.

While many years of research have contributed to our understanding of homosexuality, its cause or causes remain controversial. However, it can be maintained that there is no justification for a homosexual to claim that he was born a homosexual or that he cannot change his attitudes and behaviour.

## COUNSELLING ATTITUDES

The attitude of the counsellor is especially important when counselling a homosexual. The following list is to help the counsellor to develop the right attitude.

1. Wherever appropriate, the counsellor should *verbally* express *positive* belief that some form of help or change is possible. The counsellee comes with an attitude of hopelessness and it is up to the counsellor to give him hope for his problem.

2. From the outset the counsellor must inform the counsellee that his problem is not solely a sexual one. The counsellee will most often come feeling guilty and that he is just a sexual pervert. The counsellor must tell the counsellee that his problem involves other

aspects besides sex; for example, his relationship with parents and other relatives. This information will help relieve some of the counsellee's guilt.

3. From the outset the counsellor should show support of all efforts the counsellee has made in the past to change. Also, any efforts made by the counsellee which coincide with what the counsellor believes will lead to change should be reinforced at the very time they are made or expressed.

4. Early in counselling, the counsellee should be advised that all homosexual imagery will not disappear and that he should not be discouraged by reappearances of homosexual attractions during counselling and later in life. This will help the counsellee to deal with fantasies and attractions when they come and he won't get discouraged as easily. p. 284

5. The counsellor must treat the counsellee as a unique human being. The counsellor must not force change. Don't expect the counsellee to become "typical man". The homosexual will most likely not become aggressively involved with women or actively involved in sport.

6. The counsellor should treat the counsellee on a man-to-man basis. The counsellor must interpret and discourage the counsellee's attempts at transference and also be vigilant against subtle attempts to shift responsibility to the counsellor.

7. The counsellor should, whenever possible, express belief in the counsellee's capacities for independent, assertive activity. The counsellee will need this encouragement to help him change his effeminate behaviour patterns.

8. The counsellor should not be afraid to express genuine, warm feelings for the counsellee when he has made an effort to master or actually mastered a difficulty. Any non-erotic exchange of warmth can be helpful.

9. The counsellor should support all the counsellee's efforts, past or present, to establish appropriate female contact.

10. The counsellor should support all attempts the counsellee has made, past or present, at avoiding homosexual activity.

How do counsellors help a patient overcome his resistance to change?

1. We must support from the outset the counsellee's desire to change.

2. It is important for the counsellee to understand how he relates to people as he related to his father and mother.

3. The counsellee needs to learn and understand why he withdraws from people who see him as an intact male.

4. People are capable of altering their homosexuality consciously, and the counsellor must reassure the counsellee that he has the freedom to make this change.

5. The counsellor must explore the counsellee's sexual values to better understand how resistant he will be to change.

6. The counsellee's passivity must also be understood and talked about. The more passive, the more resistant to change. Therefore more encouragement is needed.

7. It is also very important, for the counsellor to understand thoroughly any past or present homosexual affairs of the counsellee. These must be discussed so they can be dealt with and understood by the counsellee to better understand how he reacts homosexually. p. 285

8. Any ambivalent feelings of the counsellee must be dealt with. Homosexual change is difficult and takes 100 per cent determination and commitment.

Once we have overcome resistance in the counsellee and he has changed, how do we sustain change?

1. The counsellee must become consciously aware of the degree and the amount of time and energy wasted on homosexual fantasies, impulses and acts.

2. The most important way a counsellor can help to sustain change is to make the counsellee aware of the things which trigger his homosexuality.

3. All homosexual attractions, fantasies, or practices, whether masturbatory or overt contacts, must be traced back to their inception each day. A detailed inspection of each homosexual attraction, fantasy, or impulse that leads to an overt homosexual act results in a counsellee's better understanding of the one or many mechanisms that trigger his homosexuality.

4. The counsellee must constantly be on the alert for methods of short-circuiting attractions to people and situations which trigger his homosexuality.

5. The counsellee must be made to consciously recall and identify trigger mechanisms and to think about them.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS OF HOMOSEXUALS**

1. More frequently the homosexual child is the mother's favourite child.
2. The mother demanded to be the centre of the homosexual's attention.
3. The mother was domineering.
4. The mother spent a greater-than-average amount of time with the child.
5. She did not encourage masculine activities and attitudes.
6. She discouraged masculine activities and attitudes.
7. She encouraged feminine activities and attitudes.
8. She took the son's side against her husband.
9. She often openly preferred her son to her husband.
10. She was unduly concerned with protecting her son from physical injury.
11. In childhood, the son was excessively dependent on his mother for advice and direction. [p. 286](#)

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHERS OF HOMOSEXUALS**

1. Another child was favoured over the subject.
2. The counsellee was the least favoured child.
3. The father spent very little time with the child.
4. The counsellee did not feel accepted by the father.
5. The father failed to encourage masculine attitudes.
6. The counsellee often knowingly hated and feared his father.
7. The counsellee had little respect for his father and did not accept him.
8. The father did not express affection for the counsellee.
9. The father had less respect for the counsellee than other male relatives.
10. The counsellee did not side with the father in parental arguments.
11. The counsellee found it more difficult to cope with his father than with his mother.
12. The counsellee feared his assertiveness would hurt or anger his father.
13. The counsellee felt that his father did not consider his needs.
14. The counsellee did not feel respected by his father.
15. The counsellee did not regard the father as admirable.

These characteristics are not presented as an excuse for a child who has become homosexual, but they are to be of use in working toward a prevention of homosexuality by both the individual family and the Church. These common causes of homosexuality must be known by the counsellor in helping the counsellee know what type of pressures he will still feel if he is involved with his parents while trying to overcome this temptation.



Some further arguments for the cause of homosexuality and how they affect the homosexual are presented by Clyde Narramore:

*Glandular disturbances.* This occurs when the sex hormones, estrogen and androgen, are out of balance. Not all homosexuals have this imbalance. Many people who have this imbalance are not homosexuals. Also, individuals who have this imbalance have changed from homosexual to heterosexual.

*Genetic causes.* Personality factors which lead to homosexuality occur subtly in childhood. This leads to the erroneous conclusion that they were born this way.

*Dominant mother.* She stifles and belittles her son's masculinity. The child then loses respect for his own sex.

*Weak father.* The son loses respect for his father and his own sex. p.287 For a daughter, she loses respect for men in general.

*Over-indulgent mother.* The child develops a strong attachment to his mother which cannot be broken as he grows older. No woman or girl can match his mother, so he does not develop normal heterosexual friendships.

*Cruel parents.* This may cause the child to develop ill feelings toward others of the same sex as the cruel parent.

*Poor parental marriage relationship.* One of the most common causes. The child grows up with the attitude that marriage is an unhappy and frustrating institution. Avoiding marriage, he turns to homosexual activity to obtain needed sexual gratification.

*A too close relationship with a parent of the same sex.* The child is unable to develop healthy heterosexual attitudes. Since the child's early experiences have been almost totally with the parent of the same sex, he is unable to relate to those of the opposite sex.

*Lack of sex education.* When parents treat sex as a taboo, the child often develops poor sexual attitudes.

These causes are presented to show what factors influence the mental attitude of the homosexual. These factors cause him to find his sexual identity in a homosexual act or rôle. Most children go through a period of "curiosity seeking" where many actions might be called homosexual. But usually these do not carry on past puberty. If they do carry on past puberty, then there is a high chance of homosexual identity being formed.

## STEPS IN COUNSELLING

The best method for counselling a homosexual seems to be through the framework of Reality Therapy. The following are steps utilising principles:

1. Become involved! One of the homosexual's problems is that people who can help him won't listen to him.

(a) Do not over-react when he tells you he's "gay".

(b) Honour the trust that the person has placed in you.

(c) Separate the individual from the act.

(d) Be genuinely concerned for the individual and show hope in his ability to change.

*He can change.*

2. Evaluate the present behaviour. Help him see and evaluate.

(a) Recognise that homosexuality is a sin. That's God's opinion, not just yours.

(b) Condemn the act, not the person. p.288

(c) Stress the positive aspects of living according to God's standards.

(d) Stress the negative aspects of living as a homosexual.

(e) Show the homosexual that Christ holds the answer to sin. *He can change!*

3. Plan. Let him make the plan.

(a) Show the homosexual that homosexuality is a total way of life and that if he really desires to change, he must learn a completely new way of life.

(b) Emphasize the importance of breaking off past associations.

(e) Pray with him for the Holy Spirit's guidance in re-structuring his life so as to avoid his old ways and cut ties in order to discourage returning ("If it doesn't work out, I can always go back.").

(f) Do not allow the person to isolate himself, but encourage participation in mixed group activities.

(g) Encourage Scripture memorisation.

4. Alternatives. Let him make the alternatives.

5. Commitments. Do not accept excuses!

(a) Part of the homosexual pattern is lying.

(b) Beware of lies and excuses.

A counsellor needs to encourage the counsellee to change his sexual identity from homosexual to heterosexual. To do this, the counsellor must provide motivation for the counsellee by helping him plan for meeting his needs in a correct manner. The counsellor must really spend time in prayer and in reliance upon the leading of the Holy Spirit for himself and for the counsellee.

Counselling homosexuals is one of the hardest tasks in counselling. The acceptability of homosexual activity and attitudes of society today makes the job especially difficult. A counsellor cannot expect quick change, but must be ready for a long-term process back to correct living.

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This article was adapted from a paper compiled by David Antisdale, Jerry Hamilton, Roger Johnson, Robert Krauss and William Reeves, students at Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, California, USA. p. 289

## Asian Christian Communicators Lead the Way

Peggy Bee-Tin Yeo

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