

## **How Christians Can Talk to Homosexuals**

Before you can confidently talk to people who have same-sex attractions and identify as homosexual, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of homosexuality. If you were to go out on the mission field, you would spend time learning the culture of the people you were trying to reach. The same is true in the case of homosexuality. In order to communicate effectively, you have to know something about their lives.

### **Why Some People Develop Homosexual Attractions**

#### **No One is Born Gay**

No one chooses to have homosexual attractions. Today about 60% of the population believes that people are born gay, but that isn't true. None of the studies attempting to prove a genetic or inborn cause for homosexuality has done so. A study done of identical twins showed that 52% of the time when one twin was homosexual, the other was also. But identical twins share the same DNA, so in order for homosexuality to be inborn the incidence of homosexuality in identical twins would have to be 100%. A study done on lesbian women found that sisters of women who identified as lesbian were also lesbian only 6% of the time, whereas daughters of lesbians were also lesbian 33% of the time. A woman is more genetically similar to her sister than to her mother, which indicates strong environmental factors influencing homosexual attractions.

There may be factors that make a boy or girl more susceptible to later homosexuality, like a sensitive nature that is more likely to make someone feel rejected more easily than someone else. But even if that were so it would not inevitably lead someone into homosexuality. It would function more as an influence. For instance, would someone who is tall and coordinated necessarily become a NBA basketball player? No. There are many other factors involved, like a willingness to work hard and learn particular skills.

Even if there were a so-called gay gene found one day that would not change my belief that what the Bible says about homosexuality is true. We are all fallen creatures and every aspect of us is fallen, but Jesus came to redeem us from our fallen nature. Scientists say that there are genes making some people more prone to alcoholism, but does that mean that we applaud that behavior or organize groups in support of drunkenness. Of course not. I read an article last week titled "Are You Hard-Wired for Anxiety" in which scientists were saying that some people's brains may be wired in such a way that makes them more anxious than others. A subsequent article said that anxiety can be overcome by prayer and meditation. No one is going to say, "I'm an anxious person; I guess I'll just live with panic attacks and anxiety disorders."

### **Homosexuality or Same-Sex Attractions (SSA) is Not a Sexual Issue, it is a Relational Issue**

One of the questions I'm frequently asked is, "If a person is not born a homosexual, is it something that a person chooses?" I can assure you that no one wakes up one morning and says, "I'm going to be gay."

I don't have time to go into all the factors that can lead a person to develop same-sex attractions, but I will try to explain some of them.

The way we develop as boys and girls into men and women is not simply the result of physiological changes. We learn how to be men and women by watching other people, mostly our parents, and imitating them – in a safe environment. When we get positive feedback from our parents for our imitations, then we continue to imitate those behaviors. Our parent of the same sex functions as our mirror, and through them we learn how to be men and women. And our opposite-sex parent teaches us how to relate to the opposite sex, and what we can expect from them.

If for some reason a boy or girl does not want to mirror his or her parent of the same sex that is when problems of gender identity can occur. Our gender identity is how we see ourselves as boys or girls. Am I confident as a little boy or as a little girl? Do I feel good about myself in terms of gender? Am I secure in knowing that I am what a boy or girl should be? Do I fit in with other boys or girls? If there is a problem in this area, then that could be a sign of a gender identity deficit.

Usually something interferes with a boy or girl's development that influences them toward homosexuality.

For instance:

90% - broken relationship in family of origin

80% - sexually abused before 12 – sexual abuse as a child more than tripled the likelihood of later homosexuality

70% - labeled for a period of five years

40% - physically abused other than sexual

We have a God-given need for love, affection, acceptance and nurturing. When we don't get it, the need persists and we look to meet that need in inappropriate and sinful ways. The Bible says that to a starving man, any bitter thing is sweet. People do not choose to have homosexual inclinations.

**Same-Sex Parent Deficit** – the homosexual, whether male or female, has suffered from some deficit in relationship with the parent of the same sex; and there is a corresponding drive to correct this deficit through homosexual relationships. The needs normally met through the child's attachment to the parent are left unfulfilled and still requires fulfillment.

When we're elementary school-aged, we mostly have friends who are our own gender. We bond with other boys or girls, and that sense of belonging makes us confident in our gender identity. If this doesn't happen, then when puberty hits, the young teen is still looking for affirmation, approval and love from his own kind. He's not ready to look at the opposite sex yet. Unfortunately, his hormones direct him to other boys, and girls to other girls.

The common development pattern of Same-Sex Attractions:

- A little girl perceives that her mother has rejected her or doesn't love her. It doesn't matter what really happened, but how the little girl perceived it.
- The little girl is hurt. She becomes angry and bitter, and withdraws from her mother.
- As the little girl withdraws from her mother, or her mother withdraws from her, she is cut off from the primary person who can meet her emotional needs, and her hunger grows
- The quest to meet these emotional needs leads her into an emotionally dependent relationship that eventually becomes sexual, or she sexualizes those emotional needs.

**Abandonment** – A parent does not necessarily purposely reject his or her child. It can be a perceived rejection. (Rose is the hospital for a year from age 5-6. Boy more needy than his brothers – his dad's idea of love is working, other kids are fine with this.)

Normally, confusion begins when the boy is unable to emotionally bond with his father or a girl with her mother.

So what happens when a child has been abandoned (real or perceived)?

**Defensive Detachment** – Children detach from the parent they don't trust and refuse to receive the nurture they so desperately need. Boy sent to his aunt's house for a year after his mother died. His father was an emotional wreck and thought it would be best for his son to be with his aunt. When he brought his son back home, the son rejected his father for abandoning him. Boys detach from fathers who reject them for having unmasculine interests. Girls detach from weak or critical mothers. A mother abused by her husband – the girl learns that men cannot be trusted and that to be a woman means being abused.

Most homosexuality involves a defensive detachment from the same-sex love source. This defensive detachment results in an unmet love need which when it re-emerges is known as homosexual. It's more a same-sex ambivalence than a same-sex love.

Here are some typical scenarios:

**Effeminate Boy** – Sensitive, non-aggressive temperament – father Navy Seal

**Kitchen Window Boy** – overprotective mother

**Tom-Boy** – mother chronic migraines

**Dad's Buddy** – spent time in the garage with her father, mom weak and unable to defend herself against father's verbal abuse.

**Momma's Boy** – usually an abusive or distant father causes the boy to hate the masculine and reject it in himself – he models himself after his dominant mother or available mother.

**Mother's Confidante** – girl hates the masculine that is abusive or neglectful – feels that she can be to her mother what her father never was.

In other cases, the child's attempts to identify with what is masculine/feminine are ridiculed or go unrewarded by his family environment (Girl attempting to use make-up – father says, "Who gave you the black eye?")

**Sexual Abuse** – Because children develop their identity in large part based on how people treat them, a child who has been sexually abused will often question his sexual identity. He will wonder if the reason he was molested was because his abuser saw something in him that identified him as homosexual. For a girl, she concludes that she cannot trust men and looks for safer relationships with women. You'll find young women who don't want to look attractive to men and will develop a masculine exterior, or gain a lot of weight, etc. in an attempt to avoid further victimization.

**Peer Rejection** – Boys and girls need affirmation from their peers and a sense of belonging. Boys who are not typically masculine and girls who are not typically feminine tend not to fit in with their peers and may be ridiculed by them. This is very damaging to someone's gender identity formation.

He begins looking for ways to fix himself. To whom does he look? He looks to the prime examples of successful masculine development around him – the athletes, the ladies men, the good-looking guys – and begins a secret examination of what appears to make them successful with the opposite sex. The boy begins to look to the creature, rather than the Creator, making idols out of human beings, envying them (Rm.1). Idolatry and envy quickly degenerate into lust and fantasy.

**Cannibalism.**

### **There are Roughly 4 Types of People with Homosexual Attractions**

**1. Guilty** – These people are ashamed of their homosexuality and try to hide it from others. If they're involved in a homosexual relationship, they won't reveal the name of the person they're involved with and may even refer to that person as "this person" or by using the pronoun of the opposite sex, like saying "her" instead of "him." This is more common than you think.

**2. Moderate** – These people have more of a live-and-let-live attitude. They're fine with you being a Christian and will spend time with you as long as you're fine with them being a homosexual. They may attend pride parades, but they're generally apolitical and just want to live their lives in peace.

**3. Militant** – These are the gay activists who push for same-sex marriage, hate crimes legislation, gay adoption and other laws that would benefit homosexuals. They want people not only to accept but to celebrate their sexuality.

**4. Repentant** – This is the person who has repented and wants to overcome homosexuality.

### **It is Not Your Responsibility to Change Someone; It is Your Responsibility to Till the Soil, and Sow and Water the Seeds**

**Build Friendships/Find Common Ground** – Everyone, homosexual or not, desires friendship, understanding, affirmation, a sense of belonging and acceptance. You may know someone involved in homosexuality who is hard, cynical and standoffish, but

that person's need for love and friendship is just as profound as anyone else's. You can offer that person a trusting friendship. You don't know the power a trusting friendship can have on someone's life – you can make it safe for someone who has been hurt by life to take a closer look at God and to ask questions that can bring him or her closer to God. It is imperative for you to develop a rapport or a friendship with someone before you begin talking about God – unless they bring up the topic. Your friend needs to enjoy your friendship and know that you care about him or her as a person first. No one wants to be a project. If your friend senses that you're just out to "convert" him, that'll be the end of the friendship.

If you look at Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, you can see how important it is to build bridges in relationships. What I find interesting is that Jesus begins his interaction with the Samaritan woman by asking her for a favor, "Will you give me a drink?" John 4:7 By allowing someone to help you, the ground is leveled so you can begin to develop a relationship. A person will feel that she has more value in your eyes after she has done you a favor, and will feel more comfortable engaging in meaningful conversation with you.

It takes time to cultivate relationships. Before you think about presenting to your friend Jesus' plan of salvation, think about what is important to him. Where is his family? What are his interests and activities? What do you have in common with him? What does he do in his free time? What are his favorite foods and restaurants? When is his birthday? If you have no idea how to answer any of these questions, then you need to begin cultivating a friendship.

**Discuss a Variety of Topics** – When I worked with Jeff, we rarely spoke about homosexuality, even after I began to show an interest in learning more about Jesus. We talked about all different aspects of morality and the Bible. We talked about abortion, ethics in the work place, lying, what it means to honor your father and mother – all sorts of things. Jeff understood that it wasn't homosexuality that was keeping me out of Heaven; it was my sin nature. We are all fallen creatures and we all need the redemption that only comes through Jesus Christ. By talking about issues that were not personal to me, Jeff allowed me to glimpses into the heart of God without activating my defenses.

**Prepare to Talk About the Tough Issues** – If a homosexual friend asks you what you think about homosexuality, please don't tell them that you "love the sinner, but hate the sin." While Christian may understand what you're saying, people with same-sex attractions simply do not understand this phrase. To them, homosexuality is their identity. They understand their homosexuality to be who they are at the core of their being. It's within this community that they find a sense of belonging and understanding, sometimes for the first time in their lives. Some people identify as homosexual who have never been involved in a sexual relationship with the same sex. I had a friend Mark who was active in the gay subculture – he lived in West Hollywood, hung out at gay bars and identified as homosexual, but he was terrified of contracting AIDS, so he refused to have any sexual contact with another man. He wouldn't understand a statement like, "I love the sinner, but hate the sin." In his mind that would simply mean that you hate him.

If homosexuality comes up in conversation, and it eventually will, don't be afraid to talk about it. Many homosexuals will expect you to beat them over the head with the Bible, telling them that homosexuality is a sin. This is what I do and what I would recommend. If someone asks you what you think about homosexuality, tell them that Genesis 1 and 2 says that God created them male and female to become one flesh and populate the Earth. Anything outside of this design – sex outside of marriage in any form – is sinful.

If your friend wants to talk about the specific Scriptures that talk about homosexuality, be ready to do so. People need to hear the truth, but truth must be accompanied by grace. When Jeff talked to me about the Scriptures dealing with homosexuality, he spoke honestly and straightforwardly with grace and compassion. He didn't become defensive or apologetic, yet he was respectful and gentle.

Josh in D.C. – 1 Corinthians 5:11

Don't make the focus of any conversation the fact that God can change you from homosexual to heterosexual. For women who have been sexually abused, this is far from good news. I became a Christian because I realized my need for Jesus. I didn't become a Christian in order to become heterosexual. Honestly, that would be like someone telling you that you could become homosexual. Your first reaction would probably be, why on Earth would I want to do that? Exactly. Homosexuals who give their lives to Jesus need to strive for holiness in order to be pleasing to God, just like everyone else. I wanted to do honor and glorify God by living a holy life when I became a Christian.

**Exhibit Unconditional Love and Concern** – This may seem like a no-brainer, but if you think about it for a minute you'll understand how easy it is to walk away from someone who is aggravating and annoying. Many homosexuals have been rejected in various ways. If you befriend someone with same-sex attractions, you can bet that at some point they're going to test your friendship. They expect you to reject them and walk away, so chances are that they'll talk about something or do something to annoy or offend you. Maybe they were vulnerable with you the last time you spoke and revealed something about themselves that they later wished they hadn't. You can expect them to either blow you off, or make a negative comment about Christianity just to put thing back on an even keel. It's at this time that you need to forge ahead and continue to reach out to your friend and invite her to dinner at your house or to go shopping with you or to meet you for coffee ... anything. If you ignore your friend and treat her the way she treated you, you'll confirm her suspicions that you would eventually reject her.

**Always be Humble Toward Others** – Don't be afraid to make mistakes that can paralyze you into inactivity. If you say something thoughtless in anger or out of ignorance, simply apologize. Don't apologize for your beliefs, only for things you've said or done that you shouldn't have. Jeff did that with me all the time. He would be specific about what he was apologizing for if he thought he had offended me, or if he thought he wasn't a good Christian witness. He apologized to me for becoming too

angry when we were talking about Magic Johnson announcing he had HIV. He apologized to me when he came in from his lunch hour 15 minutes late. I was his co-worker, not his boss. I didn't care if he was late or not. But he realized that he was setting a bad example by coming in late. I thought it was silly at the time, but I also thought it was admirable that he valued his integrity so much.

### **When Someone Who Identifies as Homosexual Becomes a Christian, It is Your Responsibility to Offer Them Friendship, Support and Encouragement**

**Spend Time and Set Boundaries** – The best support someone desiring to overcome same-sex attractions can have is within the church. As the body of Christ, I feel that it is our duty to come alongside a member of our own body and support them in their journey – whatever that journey may be. In this case, homosexuality has usually defined someone's identity and world for a long time. Suddenly, you lose your friends and support system. Without something to take its place, that person is likely to go back to their old lifestyle. Not because they want to, but because they're alone and lonely.

You will have to be careful to set boundaries right away so your friend does not consume all of your time. It is most effective to establish boundaries right from the start in order to avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

- Clarify when you will be available, and when you will call your friend – do not over commit.
- Let your friend know exactly what he can expect from you in terms of time spent together.
- Be consistent – do not cancel plans or cut your meetings short unless it is an emergency.
- If your friend complains that you are “abandoning” her, gently explain that you are spending time with her as you said you would.
- Be calm and even-tempered with your friend – do not respond to her with strong emotions such as anger, irritation or frustration

It is very likely that your friend will want to spend more time with you than is healthy. When you hold your boundaries and refrain from spending more time together, she may become angry or resentful. This probably originates from the pain of past broken relationships or relationships in which her trust was violated. Don't feel guilty for maintaining boundaries. It is the healthiest way for both of you to sustain a friendship.

Your friend will feel lonely at times, but God often uses our loneliness to heal the deepest wounds in our soul.

**Model Healthy Relationships** – Don't pretend to be perfect; everyone knows it's not true and you'll end up coming across as fake and insincere. Be open about your weaknesses and struggles. This can be a great opportunity for someone new in the Lord to see how Jesus helps someone deal with and overcome their own issues. It's

wise, of course, to use discernment about what you reveal, especially if you don't know someone very well.

Many people who are overcoming homosexuality have never seen healthy families where the members exhibit mutual love and respect. Many former homosexuals I know talk about married couples in their churches who befriended them and invited them into their homes to eat or to just hang out. They point to these relationships as key in helping them to overcome their homosexuality. Finally, they had the opportunity to see healthy, if flawed, relationships up close.

Just as important is for people overcoming homosexuality to spend time with a variety of friends both single and married.

**Attend Home Groups and Church Services with Them** – The home group and church environment can be like a foreign culture to some new Christians (I know it was for me). It's likely that your friend will feel out of place. New situations can also be intimidating, and your friend may fear rejection.

**Socialize Together** – Do what you would ordinarily do with any of your friends and include your friend who struggles with ssa. Have barbeques, go shopping, go to baseball games, whatever it is you like to do.

**Challenge, Encourage and Listen** – Sometimes we need to be challenged by people who love us and are committed to us. We need to emphasize God's love and concern, but also His holiness. All aspects of God need to be offered. We need the discernment and insight of others that we may not always have for ourselves. I was so deeply involved in an emotionally dependent friendship at church that I needed someone to tell me how unhealthy it really was. Proverbs 27 says, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." We also need to listen. People need to talk about their lives in order to grieve their losses. I didn't need counsel from everyone, but I did need comfort and understanding from my friends.

**Opportunities to Serve** – Just like any other Christian, the person struggling to overcome homosexuality needs to get out of himself and stop dwelling on his own personal problems which only lead to self-pity. Give him or her opportunities to serve, whether it's at a soup kitchen or folding bulletins. As the body of Christ, we're all called to contribute. Our self-worth increases when we know that we have done something to help someone else.

**Pray with and for Them** – We can't forget that the prayers of a righteous man accomplish much. Ceaseless prayer is what we all need, especially those of us who are trying to overcome a life-dominating sin.

### **Pitfalls**

A common fear among Christians is that if they befriend or even mentor someone coming out of homosexuality that person will become attracted to them. This, of course, is a possibility. But if homosexuality is not an issue in your life, then it

shouldn't be a problem. It can actually be a great opportunity for you to model how to have a healthy friendship. Healthy friendships are those in which both parties:

Listen with interest

Are respectful and thoughtful of each other

Want to see the other accomplish her goals and improve herself, even if it limits the amount of time spent together

Have other friends, and are not jealous of other friends

Are not possessive of each other

Do not need to talk to each other every day in order to feel loved and secure

Are secure with the friendship and do not need constant reassurance that the relationship is solid

Enjoy common interests rather than spending their time together "defining" their friendship and expressing their feelings for each other

**Emotional Dependency** – Emotional Dependency is when someone thinks that another person's presence and attention is believed to be necessary for personal security. This nurturing can be in the form of: Attention, Listening, Admiration, Counsel, Affirmation and Time Spent Together.

We all need friends. That's the difficulty in dealing with emotionally dependent, idolatrous relationships. There is a legitimate need for friendships. But emotional dependencies are meeting legitimate needs in illegitimate ways.

The characteristics of an emotionally dependent relationship are:

- Experiences frequent jealousy, possessiveness and a desire for exclusivism, viewing other people as a threat to the relationship.
- Prefers to spend time alone with this friend and becomes frustrated when this doesn't happen.
- Becomes irrationally angry or depressed when this friend withdraws even slightly
- Loses interest in friendships other than this one
- Becomes preoccupied with this person's appearance, personality, problems and interests
- Is unwilling to make short or long-range plans that don't include the other person
- Is unable to see the other's faults realistically
- Becomes defensive about the relationship when asked about it

The difference between a healthy relationship and an emotionally dependent relationship is that a healthy relationship is free and generous. They experience joy when one friend hits it off with another – the more the merrier. In a good friendship, we desire to see our friend reach his or her full potential, developing new interests and skills. A dependent

relationship is ingrown, creating mutual stagnation and limiting personal growth. In healthy relationships, we are affected by things our friends say and do, but our reactions are balanced. When we're emotionally dependent, a casual remark from our friend can send us into the heights of ecstasy or the pits of grief. If a close friend moves away, it is normal for us to feel sorrow and a sense of loss. If one of the partners in a dependent relationship moves, the other is gripped with anguish, panic and desperation. A healthy friendship is joyful, healing and upbuilding; an emotional dependency produces bondage.

Web Sites for Schools Dealing with Homosexuality and Gender Confusion

[www.missionamerica.com](http://www.missionamerica.com)

[www.truthatschool.org](http://www.truthatschool.org)

Web Sites for Political Issues and Marriage in California

[www.protectmarriage.com](http://www.protectmarriage.com)

[www.aclj.org](http://www.aclj.org)

[www.alliancedefensefund.org](http://www.alliancedefensefund.org)

[www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)

Web Sites for Ministries to People Dealing with Homosexuality and Families of Homosexuals

[www.exodus-international.org](http://www.exodus-international.org)

[www.pfox.org](http://www.pfox.org)

[www.narth.com](http://www.narth.com)

Web Sites for People Dealing with Transgenderism

[www.crossover-inc.org](http://www.crossover-inc.org)

[www.tgifhope.org](http://www.tgifhope.org)