

Homosexual behavior

In recent years much has been printed, broadcast, blogged, taught and even preached on the topics of human sexuality and homosexual behavior. Has our fundamental position on homosexual behavior changed? It has not. However our attitude toward those struggling with homosexuality has indeed changed. We believe we are called to be more sympathetic, affirming and less judgmental.

God's inspired word always has been and always will be our guide, our primary source, our first point of reference whenever we prepare position statements. Every word in scripture is God breathed. Any position we take on sexuality must be based on the Bible, and the Bible has much to say about marriage and sexual relations. The Bible clearly reserves sexual relations for a woman and a man who are married to each other. No other forms of sexual relations are within what God has willed and instructed through His word.

But what are we to say to a Christian brother or sister who is attracted to a person of the same sex while at the same time, with God's help, is willing and able to resist taking action on these impulses? We say that we celebrate with all individuals who are single and practicing a life of chastity and abstinence, and we commend them for their courage and faithfulness to Christ.

In making the above statement we hope to convey the message that although God's word does not condone sexual activity of any kind outside the bounds of a Biblical marriage, we do understand the dilemma some of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ are facing. God's original design prohibits acting out the urges they face. But in this fallen world we all face temptations. Discipleship, mutual support and obedience are keys to victorious Christian living, whether the issue is greed, gluttony, covetousness, stealing, lying or any other action deemed sinful in the pages of God's word. We all have urges. We all need forgiveness on an ongoing basis. "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6: 9-10) God's redemption from homosexuality is no different than from any other sin.

We reject homophobia (hatred or fear toward homosexuals). We love and support those struggling with homosexual desires. We want to create an

environment where people can openly discuss their feelings without shame or fear of rejection.

We reject the notion that homosexual behavior is the worst sin. Christians struggling with issues related to homosexuality as our brothers and sisters in Christ deserve our love and support. Too often the Christian church has acted as if homosexual behavior is an unforgivable sin and, out of fear or loathing, rejected the person struggling with this issue, even as the sinful behavior is rightly rejected. As believers, we are called to put aside anger and malice and to love all people — even those who hate or persecute us (Matthew 5:44). We are also called to obey God’s commandments as an expression of our love for him (1 John 5:3).

Although we do not have conclusive answers to the question of what causes homosexuality, there are indications that genetics, prenatal hormones, early childhood environment and experiences, along with adult choices, can all be considered in the mix of potential causal factors.

In conclusion, we clearly know what God thinks about homosexual *actions* by way of an active, publicly expressed homosexual or lesbian lifestyle — God is against this and all other forms of sin. That said, we’re reminded of one of the best loved, most often quoted passages of the New Testament: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). If you are not a believer, this scripture verse is for you. God loves you, personally. God’s grace is available to you 24/7. If you need help accepting Christ as your personal savior, contact any of our pastors. If you have accepted Christ as your personal savior, you are a sinner saved by grace. You are a member of God’s family. It means someday we’ll share eternal life as a family of forgiven sinners, with an eternity to join together in praising God for his grace and mercy.

Either way, please know you are warmly welcome at Autumn Ridge Church, as are all people. God loves you. We love you too.

We found the following scripture references to be helpful:

Genesis 2: 18 – 24 and Genesis 3
1 Corinthians 6: 9 – 20
Leviticus 20: 13
Romans 1: 24 – 27
John 17: 17

Romans 8: 13-14

For a compassionate, kind, comprehensive perspective on this topic, we recommend *"Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors and Friends,"* by Mark Yarhouse. Bethany House 2010

For another well considered view we recommend *"The Bible and Homosexuality,"* by theologian and seminary professor Wayne Grudem, posted April 6, 2013 and published by World Magazine.

Statement adopted 2004; revised and updated 2013