



Grace Church Articles Homosexuality & The Gospel

In his book *Love into Light: The Gospel, the Homosexual and the Church*, pastor Peter Hubbard opens a powerful dialogue about homosexuality and same-sex attraction (SSA) in the church today. Sharing from his experiences over two decades of shepherding people who struggle with SSA and seeing the church's response, Hubbard points out the striking absence of the church's voice on the topic of homosexuality. He lays out four possible reasons for the church's silence on homosexuality and same-sex attraction, then uses the gospel to combat the lies Christians are tempted to believe about brothers and sisters facing these struggles.

Four Possibilities for Our Silence

Possibility #1 - Homosexuals are not like us: they are “abnormal”

When we take a look at the lives of those around us, it's easy for us to attach a label to the sins we see. Some are considered “normal” — lust, greed, and alcoholism to name a few — but homosexuality tends to be lumped into a category of its own. Many view homosexuality as an “abnormal” or “elite” sin, unlike any other. This view leads homosexuals in the church to adopt the assumption that on some level they don't belong and can't take part in what the church offers others.

Addicts, racists, and hypocrites might be able to publicly proclaim their desire for a new and transformed life through Jesus, but frequently those struggling with SSA don't enjoy the same freedom. The stigma of homosexuality hangs so heavy over the church that even those who are willing to confess their struggles with SSA find themselves bracing for harsh reactions from the very people who are called to love them most.

Possibility #2 - Homosexuals have turned aside: their sin is “unnatural”

“Sure, homosexuals can be forgiven, but will they be embraced by the family of faith?”¹ The question is: how well is the church embracing those struggling with SSA? Though Jesus calls his disciples to love all with the same love He showed us,² the church often functions as if there is an unspoken clause which puts homosexuals as an exception to Jesus' commandment. There are many who hold to the idea that homosexuality is “sexual sin on steroids,” an insidious sin that threatens all we hold dear. This leads many to recoil at the thought of homosexuals' presence in the church, which severely hampers the church's ability to lovingly hold out hope for those who need it.

Possibility #3 - Homosexuals have a particular identity

Sexuality runs so deeply to our core that it may seem like a legitimate way to define ourselves. As one man explained to Hubbard, “Homosexuality strikes to the core of who I am.”³ Someone who experiences same-sex attraction can struggle to make sense of their identity apart from their sexuality, not knowing where exactly they fit in, feeling disoriented and out of place. All can identify with the distorting effect sin has on our sense of identity, but those with SSA often face this challenge without any prospect of relief.

Possibility #4 - Homosexuals are who they are: they will not change

The ways the church has typically responded to SSA have given the impression that it is simply an unredeemable situation. As Peter Hubbard writes, the church holds out hope “for the angry and the greedy, but not for the homosexual.” Testimonies of men and women redeemed from a lifestyle of SSA are exceedingly rare, and the church's silence on the issue causes many to wrongfully assume that it is a struggle that very few people face. Our voice (or lack thereof) on homosexuality speaks volumes about our view of the gospel. As Hubbard puts it, “could the way we speak or don't speak about SSA be an

Homosexuality & The Gospel

indicator of a deficient understanding of the gospel of Jesus?... The absence of hope-filled words spoken to those struggling with SSA in our church exposed our lack of love, and our lovelessness is not cured by simply trying to be more friendly. Plastic smiles and patronizing handshakes cannot cover up cold hearts.”⁴

In bringing the gospel to bear on these thoughts, we can begin to see things in light of the redemptive story God has been weaving throughout history, bringing us to a place where we can gain clarity, truth, and power on discussion and movement around the topic of homosexuality.

The Gospel Story

History of Salvation	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
Misunderstandings of homosexuality	they are not like us	their sin is not like ours	they are defined by their sin	they don't change
Truth in Jesus	we are all created in God's image	we all have turned aside	we get a new identity in Jesus	we hope in future grace

Four Gospel Realities

Reality #1 - Homosexuals are like us: we are all marred image-bearers

“If we are true followers of Jesus, we cannot move toward someone struggling with SSA in mercy and compassion — as Jesus would — while still viewing them as ‘abnormal’ or unclean.”⁵ To call another human “abnormal” is to dehumanize and distance them from their true nature as image-bearer of God. It is also self-exalting, serving to deify and puff up the one who considers himself “normal.” Rather than viewing homosexuals as uniquely “abnormal”, we must recognize that outside of Christ all are marred image-bearers in desperate need of God’s cleansing, regardless of sexual orientation.

Reality #2 - Homosexuals have turned aside: all sin is twisted

When the Apostle Paul described the sin of homosexuality as “contrary to nature”⁶ it is important to note that his primary emphasis was that homosexuality is a physical illustration of our inward spiritual condition. The sinful nature within us flows outward and finds its expression in our mortal bodies.

Our greatest problem is not our sexual identity, but our sinful identity. Romans 3 tells us that all have turned aside from God and fall short of His righteousness. Though we are made in His image, we are all idolaters who “carry out the desires of the body and the mind.”⁷ We must fight our tendency to view homosexuality as a “10” on the sin scale and recognize that we are all made of the same sinful stuff that tears us away from God.

Reality #3 - Homosexuals can find a new identity

“The gospel of Jesus is not an invitation to do better or try harder; it is a death certificate that unfolds into a new birth certificate, providing us with a renewed identity!”⁸ Those who place their faith in Jesus have been crucified with Christ and share in his resurrection to a new life, a new identity. Quite simply, our old, sinful nature does not dictate who we are or what we do any longer, for we are slaves not to sin but to righteousness.⁹ Homosexuals and heterosexuals alike can rejoice in the truth of the gospel of Jesus, which offers a new name to all who would believe and follow His voice as He calls us to live holy lives that are pleasing unto the Father. “The gospel penetrates to the root of the heterosexual and homosexual dilemma: *Who am I? Whose am I?*”¹⁰

Homosexuality & The Gospel

REALITY #4 - Homosexuals and heterosexuals hope in grace together

“New identity in Jesus is not simply individual, but communal. In Jesus, we who were enemies are now brothers and sisters... We stand together in grace.” Together, those who have been called to live lives holy and pleasing unto God must work together to follow hard after Jesus and kill sin in their lives. Every believer stands in the freedom that is found in Christ, but that doesn’t mean the old temptations of besetting sins will never come calling again.

Knowing that individually we grow and mature as we battle and fight the temptations of the flesh, how much more ought we to “exhort one another every day”¹¹ and set out “hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”¹² It is important for those who have battled or are battling SSA to share their stories in the church, and it is equally important for the church to respond as those who believe and rejoice in the power of Jesus to transform lives.

Conclusion

As a community, we must ask God to grant us a rich view of God’s grace and a deepening understanding of our own sin so that we can rejoice in all that He has done in our midst. “A church characterized by a small experience of forgiveness will be characterized by a small expression of love.”¹³ May God’s mercy grow in us a rich view of grace and a healthy understanding of our own sin as we commit ourselves to following His voice, pursuing Him with all we’ve got, and bringing the light of His love to shine in a world that lies in darkness.

Note: *This article is adapted from Peter Hubbard’s book Love Into Light: The Gospel, the Homosexual and the Church (Ambassador International, 2013). For further resources related to the book, please visit www.loveintolight.com.*

¹ Peter Hubbard, *Love into Light: The Gospel, the Homosexual and the Church* (Ambassador International, 2013), 20.

² John 13:34-35

³ Hubbard, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Rom. 1:26

⁷ Eph. 2:3

⁸ Hubbard, 26.

⁹ Rom. 6:15-23

¹⁰ Hubbard, 27.

¹¹ Heb. 3:13

¹² 1 Pet. 1:13

¹³ Hubbard, 28-29.