

## What does God's Word say about homosexuality? A personal prologue.



This is the story of a blood bought (redeemed) child of God, husband, father, son, Baptist pastor, friend, by the name of Pastor Michael Goeke, as told by him.

"Homosexuality is often described as an 'issue,' but for me, as an adolescent Christian in a strong conservative Lutheran congregation, it wasn't an issue. Same-sex attraction seemed to be tied to

the core of who I was and gained increasing control of my life and emotions.

"I was well aware of what the Bible said, but absent some acknowledgement of the reality of the deeply rooted feelings I was experiencing, I began to view myself, and not just my behavior, as an abomination to God.

"When you believe that you are disgusting to God, it is difficult to convince yourself to run to Him for love and care and strength in the midst of struggle. I desperately wanted to be 'ok' with God and, when faced with scary feelings that I knew were not in line with God's Word, I began to perform for God rather than build a transformative relationship with Him. My church was founded on grace, but my life was characterized by an increasing effort to earn God's approval and affection through my 'good' behavior.

"I often look back and wonder what might have happened in my life had the church sought to do more than proclaim the sin of homosexuality and had, in addition to that, sought to understand and help those of us struggling with deep, dark secret attractions.

"Perhaps I would not have sunk deeper and deeper into myself, full of shame and fear of what God thought of me. Perhaps I would not have lived a surface, legalistic, perfectionistic, and ultimately lonely and self-defeating life. Perhaps I would not

have married, carrying my secret, and perhaps I would not have felt the need to seek out false theology to somehow try to medicate my depression and shame over the feelings I battled. And perhaps I would not have left my wife to pursue, fueled by ear-tickling theology, the same-sex attractions I had held at bay for so long.

"After my wife and I reconciled and I began my journey out of homosexuality, I began to pray that the church — the church that held THE answer to those of us struggling with same-sex attraction — would begin to be a part of the solution and not just a proclaimer of the problem with regard to homosexuality. I began to pray that the church would learn what it means to be 100 percent truth and 100 percent grace — not beating struggling people up with the truth and not using grace as a license for behavior that God calls sinful and destructive.

"The Gospel sets people free — not always from struggles and temptation, but always from the bondage of being controlled by struggles and temptations. We need to talk about homosexuality. The world is talking about it — our kids are talking about it — false prophets and teachers are talking about it — and God talks about it. God's truth is designed to shine a light on the realities of our lives.

"Homosexuality has impacted many families both in and out of the church. If we don't talk about it, those families will find their information somewhere else. God bless you as you allow His Word to illuminate an issue that has caused much pain and hurt — in culture and in the church. The darkness is defeated at the intrusion of the light. Be ready to see!"

# What does God's Word say about

# homosexuality?

A three-part Bible study  
by Rev. John Heckmann

## Part 1a

### Opening Hymn

"The Law of God Is Good and Wise" (LSB #579; LW #329; TLH #295)

### Introduction

We will start with what many, even in the Christian church, will see as a very blunt, uncaring, biased, unenlightened, intolerant statement. I ask that you allow me to make the statement and that you permit me also to ask that you please continue with me to study and discuss this topic, praying that God would open your mind to what His inspired, inerrant, infallible Word has to say about this highly charged discussion.

I pray, as we are bold enough to undertake this study and to evaluate our ideas and opinions in the Light of God's Word, that we learn together how we can best be used by God — wherever and whenever He has need of us — especially in regard to speaking the truth in love regarding homosexuality, living homosexually, and same-sex attraction. I pray, too, that we reach out in Christian love and form relationships so that we can share with others the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is critically important that we allow God's Word to inform all that we say and do, especially when the topic is highly charged, like this one, and there are many people wanting to form and inform what it is that we believe. The bottom line in this study, as in everything we do as the children of God, is that God's Word has to be the final authority.

### Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father, we come to You at the beginning of this study, thanking You for giving us the opportunity to study together what You have to say, not only about homosexuality and sexual sins in general, but also about all sin, from the "smallest of white lies" to adultery and murder and other sins. Bless this time You give us together. Bless our discussion. Give us patience and love for one another as we discuss this very timely issue, since our ideas and opinions on this highly controversial subject will surely differ. Allow us to learn from Your Word how we can best respond, not only to those dealing with homosexuality, but also to each and every sin which so easily entangles. It is in the precious, forgiving name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we are bold to ask these things of You. Amen!

***Before we get to the statement that is oftentimes misconstrued, may I stress the importance of building relationships based on God's love.***

Just as is true with any issue with which we deal, it is beneficial in any situation in which we find ourselves to be in a relationship with people where they know of our love and deep concern for them. It is imperative that we not just rush in, condemn their sin, and rush right out

before anything happens. The conversations and topics we are going to deal with in this Bible study are ones that can work best (and possibly only work) when we are in a loving relationship with the other person. Much damage is done when we rush into the life of a person with whom we have no relationship, drop the proverbial bomb on them, and then hightail it out of there to let the pieces fall where they may. It is then that we receive the labels: uncaring, unchristian, unconcerned, biased, out-of-touch, and many other descriptive words. This is the case with any sin or situation we deal with. It is only as people know that we care enough to love them, to help them, to confront them, that any progress can be made. The same is true with each of us as others love us enough to point out our sins, call us to repentance, offer to us God's Word of forgiveness, and stand by us and work with us while we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to change our sinful lives.

The statement that is so often misunderstood is this: God's Word declares very clearly that acting on a person's homosexual orientation — even though that may feel natural and they may feel that was the way they were born or that God created them — is a sin, and like every other sin, is in direct opposition to God's perfect will and intention when He created man and woman in His own image.

### Important Note

It is the acting upon the temptation that is sin, just like in our dealings with any other temptation and sin that Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh place before us. The message of God's condemnation of all sin, and His offer of full and complete forgiveness to the repentant sinner, is the message we are called upon to share both with those who are openly unrepentant, "living homosexually," or "accepting their gay identity and acting upon it," along with those who are repentant, struggling with "same-sex attraction" and struggling with their sexuality or sexual identity. In short, it is the acting through thought, word, or deed on the homosexual temptations and desires that is sin.

## What does God's Word say about homosexuality? Part 1a continued

Read **Genesis 1:26–31**. What was (and still is since He is unchangeable) God's intention for man and woman as He created them?

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Another source that teaches us about the marriage relationship is the Liturgy of Holy Matrimony (*LSB* page 275). Even though it is not the inspired Word of God, these teachings are drawn from and express very clearly the teachings of God's Holy Word. We read in these words of God's intention for marriage when He created and blessed His creation with this gift, from the first marriage there in the Garden of Eden between one man and one woman until death parts them, to this very day. "In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the church."

We go on to say in the service: "The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

"Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another."

"God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear [respect, reverence] and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise."

What is God's intention for man and woman now according to **Hebrews 13:8**? \_\_\_\_\_

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What was Jesus' reply to the Pharisees as they asked Him questions about marriage and divorce in **Matthew 19:3–9**? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is God's teaching on this same subject through the apostle Paul in **Ephesians 5:31**? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is God's plan for marriage and for His gift of sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for Your gift of sexuality and the biblical bonds and bounds of marriage that You have given to us in which to enjoy that most precious gift. When we fail to treat this gift as You intended through our thoughts, words, and deeds, forgive us and restore us. Use us to be Your loving messengers to call others to repentance just as we would have them call us to repentance over our sins. Let us be Your spokespeople to a world that does not understand Your will and plan for marriage, sharing with them Your love and Your desire for their lives. We pray this in the name of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

### Closing Hymn

"O Love, How Deep" (*LSB* #544; *LW* #275) speaks of our Triune God's incredible love for us, a love that we are called upon to share with others.