

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE CHURCH

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Introduction: Three stories (Seth, Alana, and Randy)

A. Initial Considerations

1. Definitions:
 - a. Sex: Physical sexual activity leading to orgasm, either by oneself, or with another
 - b. Sexuality: The manner in which one uses his or her sexual desire to attract and engage with the sexual or emotional desire of another in order to achieve or heighten sexual arousal
 - c. Gender: The gendered identity of one of God's image-bearers, which is consistent with that individual's birth sex. One's gender is either male or female, in accord with Scripture (Genesis 1:27).
2. The sin nature and its effects
 - a. Everything is corrupted by the effects of sin.
 - 1) The heart and mind: Ephesians 4:17–18
 - 2) The will: John 8:34
 - 3) The body: Romans 8:10
 - 4) Our desires: Romans 3:10–12
 - b. Our experiences of sex, sexuality, and gender have also been corrupted by the effects of sin.
 - 1) Our own sinful acts
 - 2) The ways in which we cultivate sinful worldviews
 - 3) The sin of others against us
 - 4) The progressively corrosive effect of living in a fallen world

B. The Church Needs to Talk About Sex, Sexuality, and Gender

1. The Church needs to be reactive to the sin and sinful attitudes among her members.
 - a. Sexual sin is nothing new for the Church.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 5–7
 - 3) Alarming statistics

- 4) The awareness of sexual and gender-related sin already present in the Church is an opportunity to call believing men, women, and children to repentance, hope and healing in Christ.
2. The Church needs to be proactive in teaching her members about these areas of temptation and struggle for so many in her midst.
 - a. Help your members develop biblical worldviews about sex, sexuality and gender.
 - 1) Teach God’s design for sex, sexuality and gender vs. worldly views.
 - 2) Talk about typical ways in which God’s people struggle.
 - 3) Talk about grace-based repentance.
 - 4) Cultivate and offer gracious accountability.

C. Common Obstacles to Sexual and Gender Strugglers in the Church

1. Shame and guilt
2. Fear of exposure and judgment
3. Culture of deception and self-deception
4. “I’m the only one. No other Christian struggles with this.”
5. “Real Christians don’t struggle with this.”
6. Prior, unsuccessful attempts at change
7. Misunderstanding of the real problem

D. The Real Problem

1. The “sin behind the sin:” idolatry
 - a. Matthew 15:18–20
 - b. Luke 6:43–45



2. Sexual sin (or any sin pattern) becomes a counterfeit resolution to any of the desires identified above. It can provide the momentary appearance of what the heart desires...but in the end, it only leaves the sinner emptier and more desperate.
3. The tempting people and influences one encounters only offer a pleasing means to satisfy the desires of one's heart.
 - James 1:13–15: *Each person when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.*

E. The Biblical Answer to Idolatry: Repentance

1. Genuine repentance is different from behavioral modification.
2. Genuine repentance has a twofold focus.
 - a. Fear the Lord
 - b. Flee from sin
3. Genuine repentance must include both concepts, or it isn't genuine repentance.
4. Genuine repentance is lifelong (also known as sanctification).
5. Genuine repentance may include temporary falls back into sin.
6. Genuine repentance requires authentic community within the Church.
 - a. Ephesians 4:11–16
 - b. Galatians 6:1–2
7. Genuine repentance requires a thorough understanding of grace.
 - Titus 3:4–7

F. Steps toward Helping Believers Walk in Increasing Faith and Repentance

1. Help them develop a theological understanding of grace through preaching, teaching, and counseling.
 - Grace is given only to sinners—Hebrews 10:14–25.
2. Help them develop a practical understanding of grace through preaching, teaching and counseling.
 - Grace is meant to deepen our affection for God and our obedience to his will—Ephesians 2:4–10.

3. Help them through discipleship.
 - a. The difference between head-level discipleship and heart-level discipleship
 - b. Help them answer this question: “What difference does the Person and work of Jesus Christ make for me in the particular ways in which I struggle with unbelief and idolatry?”
 - c. Create a framework for authentic, heart-level discipleship in your church.
4. Help them through modeling and expecting transparency.
 - Living openly and in the light of community, not attempting to deceive others in any way
5. Help them through modeling and expecting proactive accountability.
 - a. Being honest not only about what I have done, but what I want to do.
 - 1) What are the idols that are controlling my heart, and my thoughts and desires today?
 - 2) In which particular ways am I making room in my life for sin today?
 - 3) In which particular ways do I need to be severe in cutting off the means to sin in my life today?
 - 4) In which particular ways am I consciously denying the sovereignty of God today?
 - 5) In which particular ways am I refusing to submit myself to the ordinary means of grace for help in my struggle against sin today?

G. Steps toward Engaging LGBTQ+ Unbelievers and Their Allies

1. Speak the truth in love.
2. Build relationship: let your relationship be a canvas on which the Spirit will communicate the Gospel.
3. Demonstrate mercy and compassion.
4. Let the Spirit lead them to wonder: “What kind of a God does this person serve, who leads them to love me so well?”

H. Conclusion

1. This is not a simple or risk-free ministry.
2. The Lord will change your own heart, as well.
3. Prayerfully prepare a place for Seth, Alana, and Randy.

I. Recommended Resources

Geiger, Tim, *Your Child Says, "I'm Gay"* (Greensboro: New Growth, 2013).

White, David, *Can You Change If You're Gay?* (Greensboro: New Growth, 2013).

Pinson, Cooper, *Helping Students with Same-Sex Attraction* (Greensboro: New Growth, 2013).

Allberry, Sam, *Is God Anti-gay?* (The Good Book Company, 2015).

Andreades, Sam, *enGendered* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2015).

Welch, Edward T., *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).

Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant, 2014).

Wilson, Todd, *Mere Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

Powlison, David, *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).

Tripp, Paul David, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002).