

## What God Says About Same-Sex Marriage: Questions Answered (Part 4)

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### I. Introduction

Many believe that someone who is gay cannot change their sexual orientation, likely because they believe that they were born that way. Is it truly possible for someone to change their sexual orientation or should any attempts by the church to turn someone straight be seen as quackery, after all haven't Christians and the church done much more harm than good to many homosexuals who've cried out for help?

### II. Can God Free Homosexuals from Their Sin? Yes, But You Have to be Patient and Loving

#### **Can God really deliver someone out of homosexuality, after all, you can't pray it away?**

More and more people, including Christians, believe that gay people are born that way. So it seems impossible to them that someone who's been gay all their life could somehow be cured of their homosexuality. In fact, the methods used by the church to turn someone straight are considered quackery by many. And from the looks of what some in the church have done in their attempts to turn gay people straight, no wonder some call it quackery. But can God truly change a homosexual's orientation?

*The church answers "yes," but fails to help those struggling with homosexuality*, the church has not had a good track record in helping those struggling with homosexuality. It offered things like "pray the gay away" or things often referred to as "Conversion" or "Reparative Therapy," which left many worse off than when they began the therapy. On April 14, 2015 California congresswoman Jackie Speier introduced a non-binding resolution to ban Conversion Therapy for minors nationwide. The resolution was titled SHOK (Stop Harming Our Kids). In her interview with CNN reporter Don Lemon, Speier said that the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have said for more than 40yrs that this is junk science, "there is no science that supports this conversion therapy or reparative therapy." When she unveiled her resolution, she had several gay individuals who told their stories of their experience with the church and conversion/reparative therapy. They were told things like, "you're sick," "you have to be fixed," "snap yourself with a rubber band every time you have a same sex attraction," and "the reason for your problem is because of your close relationship with your mother [whom the individual said, "who'd always been loving and supportive of me"—this individual was diagnosed with clinical depression after starting his therapy]." Speier noted that one young man was stripped naked and told to hold his genitalia until he was comfortable with it. The CNN reporter playing devil's advocate asked congresswoman Speier what she would say to people who say it worked for them. She replied, "They should look at the science first and foremost....being gay, or a lesbian, or a transgender, is not a mental illness that can be treated or a disease that can be cured....for those who suggest that they have a therapy to do that is just wrong...it has such a harmful effect on these young people who then go into depression and suffer serious complications."

The church did a great disservice and caused more damage and pain to individuals who cried out to it for help. Instead of introducing them to Christ's love and His power to redeem, the church gave them useless phrases like "pray the gay away." And worse, things like stripping someone naked and telling them to hold their genitals in order to make them more masculine. Needless to say, instead of finding hope and healing in the church, many homosexuals found more pain.

Can God truly deliver someone struggling with homosexuality? If homosexuality is a sin (and it is, Romans 1:26-27) and the Bible says that God can deliver us from sin (which it does and He can, Romans 6), then the answer must be “yes.” But do we actually have examples in Scripture of homosexuals being delivered from this lifestyle? Yes, we do. The city of Corinth was known for its depravity including its sexual depravity. Thus, the church of Corinth was made up of individuals who had a long history and struggle with sexual immorality. In fact, one of the reasons Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 6 is because the Corinthians were drifting back into sexual immorality (6:12-20), there was even a guy having sex with his step-mom, 5:1-5.

But after stating the types of individuals who will not inherit the Kingdom of God, which included homosexuals, the apostle Paul says this, “And such **were** some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God,” 6:11. Some of the Corinthians **were** homosexuals, but God had delivered them from this lifestyle. He had washed and sanctified them of this sin. Therefore, God can indeed free someone from homosexuality. This is exactly why He came, to deliver us from the eternal condemnation of sin (hell), John 5:24-29; Revelation 20:11-15, but also from its power over us right now, Romans 6.

Someone might say, “That was 2,000 years ago, do you have any examples of people being delivered from homosexuality today?” Yes: Dr. David Kyle Foster was a pastor’s son. He became obsessed with sexual thoughts and behaviors from a very young age. By age nine, he was in bondage to fantasy, masturbation, and pornography. As a teen, heterosexual promiscuity slowly drifted into homosexual thoughts and behaviors. By the time he finished college, he’d become a male prostitute, a lifestyle he continued for seven years. His addiction to porn was so bad that he rented his house to porn film companies. Eventually he became suicidal and would put himself in dangerous situations hoping someone would kill him. During his time as a prostitute, he also led a second life as a successful film and TV actor. This Hollywood lifestyle filled with money, sex, power, and fame only worsened his out of control sexual obsessions.

In July of 1980 Dr. Foster was looking for redemption and he found himself in Israel. As he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord spoke to him of His love for David and Dr. Foster responded by forsaking his past life. During the next nine years God took him through the hard lessons of deliverance and transformation. Through intimate moments spent with God in worship, prayer, and in the fellowship of the saints, God kept communicating to David His love and grace. Thus David began to know God as a Loving Father who would keep him from falling. In 1989, God called David to begin teaching sexually bound and broken people. In a small church in Chicago David gave his testimony and for the first time included his secret and embarrassing sexual past. Instead of being rejected by the crowd, the Holy Spirit moved the people to come forward and confess sins never before told. David began teaching seminars on how God can deliver anyone from sexual sin. He turned his seminar notes into a book, *Sexual Healing: A Biblical Guide to Finding Freedom from Sexual Sin and Brokenness*, which became a standard text in the field. Eventually, he along with others started Mastering Life Ministries, which began as a radio program, but now includes television. God was calling David to train the friends and family of those bound by sexual sin so that they could help their loved ones escape their sexual bondage and they too could experience God’s love and grace as David did. Mastering Life Ministries reaches many worldwide. They produced a DVD titled, *Such Were Some of You*, which contains the personal testimonies of many gay and lesbian individuals who struggled with homosexuality all their lives until God freed them, as He did the Corinthians. God can indeed free people from homosexuality; there are many who’ve experienced this freedom.

**Addendum: Can a Christian attend a same-sex wedding?** There's another argument used by some who think it's OK to attend, "If you won't attend because you think it's sin, then do you check for sin when you buy groceries, go to the dentist, or the bank? If the criterion to do business or fellowship with others is whether or not they're sinning, then we need to check everyone's sin status." This is a legitimate point because if I say that I won't go because the people involved are sinning, how can I justify doing business or socializing with any other sinner? My reply would be, "But there's a difference here. Your attendance at a same-sex wedding directly supports the sin. That cannot be said of depositing money in a bank, going to the dentist, or buying groceries." ....however, there may be a situation where you can attend a same-sex wedding. What?!

When we addressed this question before, I said that attending a same-sex wedding is to celebrate and support sin. I also said that both sides have a point, that is, those who say it's OK to attend and those who don't. Regarding the "yes" side of this argument, there may be a time when it might be OK to attend. Think of the following scenario: your daughter has been in a lesbian relationship for years and is now getting married. You and she have a great relationship and she understands that you fully disagree with not only her homosexuality but her decision to marry her partner. Knowing all this, she invites you anyway. Why? Because she loves you deeply and wants you there for one of the most important days of her life. You say "yes," not because you approve of this sin, but because you love your daughter very much and you're showing her how love dies. That is, you want to show her that despite your complete disagreement, you love her enough to die unto yourself and go. In other words, you're giving her—and anyone who knows you—a vivid picture of what true love does, it dies, as Christ showed us when He hung on the Cross, "...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8.

What dilemma might this cause? Those who don't know the father might perceive his attendance as endorsing not only his daughter's homosexuality but her marriage. Is this a problem? Potentially, but it can also be used by God to proclaim the truth of God's love for mankind. And in one sense, you're in good company: they not only thought Jesus approved of sin, but they thought that He joined in because He regularly kept company with sinners, Matthew 11:19.

Am I saying that it's OK to attend a same-sex wedding? No, my point in saying all this is simple: I believe God is merciful and what matters to Him most of all is your heart, why you do what you do. You can make all the religious gestures in the world, but it means nothing to Him if your motive is wrong, 1 Samuel 15. If you attend because of your dying-love for the person who invited you, God may use it to draw them to Christ. I would suggest, however, that before you make your decision that you ask God directly whether or not you should go....then listen for His answer.

**How long should we allow a gay Christian to stay gay?** If you've gotten the impression, as we've covered this subject, that I'm OK with a gay Christian remaining gay within the church, then I've miscommunicated. Every gay Christian should be fighting tooth and nail alongside the Lord to free themselves from their homosexuality. However, you should not put a time limit on it. As long as they're making progress, keep encouraging and supporting them.

*First, homosexuality is a deep-seated issue and it's a symptom of something else,* behind the homosexuality will be a host of issues that the individual will have to work through with the Lord's help and yours. It's likely worse than addiction and like addiction it is not fixed by telling someone the equivalent of, "Stop doing it." You have to find out why they're addicted, get rid of that cancer, and then the addiction will go away. So it is with homosexuality. The focus should be on redeeming the sinner instead of the sin.

Second, be patient and ready to accept certain behaviors, can God free someone from homosexuality with a simple prayer? Yes, but by and large this is not the way God has chosen to deliver people from homosexuality. Therefore, be prepared for a long battle. The individual will need your patience, love, and support and the support of everyone else in the church. What should we do if they bring their partner to church and start holding hands? This is a real concern and should be addressed. But think for a moment what kind of people and behaviors your church currently allows. How many people in your church have on-going sin in their lives? Of those that people are aware of, how many have been banned from church? Probably none. For example, the church has a 50% divorce rate, so about half of the married couples in our churches have some kind of marital issue that is not being addressed and will eventually lead to divorce precisely because the church is doing nothing about it. Someone might say, "Well, we can't see some of these things. So we don't know who to ban." First, why aren't we aware of the struggles going in in our churches? Second, what about the issues we are aware of, do we do anything about them? Have you ever seen two people in your church who don't get along and this relationship is allowed to go on for months or years?

Keep all this in mind when addressing homosexuals in your church. Show them the same deference you would any other sinner. Am I saying that we should let them act out their homosexual tendencies? No, but you're going to have to allow for certain failures as they keep seeking the Lord's help. As long as they keep advancing in their relationship with the Lord which means that they're continuing to repent and allow Him to free them from their homosexuality, then give them the space to grow in the Lord. So in the beginning of their journey, expect that they may hold hands with their partner. Should we allow other signs of affection? Propriety is a rule that they and everyone else should follow. Just as you wouldn't allow two heterosexuals to have a make out session, neither will they be allowed to. Basically, if you both approach this battle with love and conviction, then they will respect the church and the church will respect and support them.

I've worked with addicts of many shapes and sizes. And without exception, every one of them continued their addiction while the Lord was freeing them. In fact, one addict still has his addiction 5 years later. What?! That's right, but in those 5 years he's been able to move out on his own, get a job and a car, things that were IMPOSSIBLE in his mind 5 years ago. Is he still doing his addiction? Yes, but he's continuing to grow in the Lord and because of it, the Lord continues to free him. Now, should I have banned him from the church? If I did that, then the Lord would not have been able to free him. It takes love, patience, support, and conviction on both your parts in order for Christ to free them. You have to love them enough to hang in there even though they keep sinning...just as the Lord keeps taking you back every time you sin.

Am I saying that a gay Christian can stay gay for 5 years or more and God will be OK with it? No. If a gay Christian is unwilling to repent and follow Jesus when they're lovingly challenged by their brothers and sisters in Christ, then they are rebelling against God's plan for their life. But at the same time, we have to be patient and loving towards those struggling with sin. As long as they're willing to repent and seek after God's plan for them, no matter how small the progress, we have to keep showing them the mercy that God is showing them. God's main focus is not the sin, but the sinner; He wants to redeem the sinner from his/her sin.

### III. Conclusion

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such **were** some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*