

What God Says About Same-Sex Marriage: Questions Answered (Part 6)

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I. Introduction

Some believe that homosexuals are born that way. Are there other possible explanations for homosexuality? Is it possible that environment has something to do with it? Could the way a child develops, especially in relation to their mother and father, affect their sexual orientation? Or could it be that some people are born with certain traits that make them more susceptible to homosexuality? Or is it possible that it may be a combination of environment and inborn traits? And what does Scripture say about all this?

II. Are There Other Possible Causes for Homosexuality Besides Being Born Gay?

What leads to homosexuality, are people born that way or is something else involved?¹

Some say that the inborn theory explains in part or in whole the cause of homosexuality. Are there other possible causes? If so, what are they, should we take them seriously? And what does God say about these other theories?

What Other Theories are there for Explaining Homosexuality?

The Developmental Theory, in essence this idea says that something prevented normal sexual development in the individual struggling with homosexuality. Some of the reasons given for this are: profound fear or resentment, a phobic response to the opposite sex, a narcissistic object choice, and an inverted Oedipus complex. Freud was one proponent of this theory but many others followed his lead, as pointed out by Ronald Bayer in his 1981 book *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* and Kenneth Lewes in his 1988 book *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality*. They show how the developmental theory was the dominant view among psychiatrists and analysts for decades after Freud.

One primary reason given for the failure of normal sexual development is something that came to be known as the *triangular system*. This was first described by Irving Bieber in his 1962 book *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals*. The book details a project that began in the 1950s involving 77 psychiatrists who treated 106 homosexuals and 100 heterosexuals. Their family histories were taken and 69% of the homosexual patients reported having mothers who exhibited "restrictive and binding" behavior, as opposed to 32% of the heterosexual patients. Likewise, the majority of homosexual patients described their relationship with their fathers as marked by "profound interpersonal disturbance," as opposed to the majority of heterosexual patients, whose father-son relations were generally "far more wholesome." To date this idea of too close to mom; too far from dad (in males and vice versa for females) seems to be present in the family histories of many homosexual men and women. Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, founder of the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), adopted the *triangular system*. It was Nicolosi's approach to both the origins and treatment of homosexuality that came to be known as *reparative therapy*.

¹ The data in this outline comes from *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality: A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction* by Joe Dallas (Editor) and Nancy Heche (Editor), 197–216.

But aren't there many heterosexuals who don't properly bond/identify with the parent of the same sex (and opposite sex), yet never become gay? So how can this lead to homosexuality?

The failure to properly bond with the same sex parent leaves an emotional need that is unmet.

This emotional need is eventually converted involuntarily and unconsciously into a sexual desire.

Dr. July Harren Hamilton describes a boy's sexualization of same-sex needs as follows, "To this child, it feels very natural that he longs for male love. In fact, he typically thinks that he was born that way, having craved male love for as long as he can remember. Indeed, he has craved this love most of his life. However, initially it was not a sexual craving. Instead, it was an emotional craving, a legitimate need for non-sexual love, an emotional need that has become sexualized."

Therapist Mary Beth Patton acknowledges something similar when addressing female homosexuality, "This longing often transforms into emotional dependency with another woman and is generally the defining feature of female homosexuality. Rather than finding the feminine in herself, she looks to another female to give her the identification and connection she is missing."

And Dr. Nicolosi said, "The [homosexual] person is attempting to 'repair' unmet same-sex affective needs (attention, affection and approval) as well as gender-identification deficits through homoerotic behavior."

Is the Developmental Theory legitimate; does Scripture agree/disagree with it? Though there are many qualified individuals who specialize in this field and vouch for the theory's effectiveness, the theory is hard to prove. Thus, opponents who criticize its subjective nature and challenge its assumptions should not be dismissed. The theory is subjective in that it's based on a patient's childhood memories which cannot be proven. However, most of us know our own childhood and through counseling may discover how those experiences shaped us. There's another caution here: just because *many* homosexuals had a parent bonding issue, doesn't mean that *all* homosexuals have this negative parent-child history. In fact, there are many homosexuals who say that they had/have an excellent relationship with both parents. Further cautions should be acknowledged regarding the sexualized part of the theory: just because *many* homosexuals sexualized an unmet emotional need, doesn't mean that *all* will. There may be more to this like inborn characteristics that make some more susceptible to the sexualization of unmet emotional needs. And this may explain why not all who have an unhealthy parent-child dynamic experience involuntary sexualization. So, is the Developmental Theory legitimate? It's often effective, has precedence, history, and widespread support, but one must remember that it's hard to prove. Is it biblical? Though Scripture doesn't say that homosexuality stems from developmental factors, there's nothing in the theory that contradicts Scripture. In fact, one might argue that Scripture supports the parent/child bonding part of the theory with the picture it paints of parenting, first and foremost with God's parenting of His Son: God bonds with His Son completely as He loves, guides, and supports Him, Matthew 3:16-4:11. Jesus' own words show how thoroughly the Father bonded/identified with the Son, John 5:19-21; 14:8-11. This is the model God gives of parenting as He turns to us and says, "Parent your kids like that." This undergirds every command God gives mothers and fathers.

The Spiritual Theory, this theory assumes that demonic forces are behind homosexuality and other sexual perversions. Though this theory is not talked about much, there are many around the world who believe in it. At its heart is the idea that Satan, who hates humanity and wants to destroy it, influences people through suggestion, seduction, or possession to do things contrary to what is right or decent. Its adherents see life through a spiritual prism; they believe in the power of prayer, exorcism, the laying on of hands for healing, the binding/rebuking of dark spiritual forces, etc. Some believe that people open themselves up to demonic forces which then lead to homosexuality or other sexual perversions—which may also lead to homosexuality. Others see homosexuality as a *route* to demonic possession rather than a *symptom* of it. How someone is possessed is rarely explained perhaps because Scripture has no step-by-step formula on how one is possessed.

Is the Spiritual Theory legitimate; is it biblical? Adherents would say that demons are real and responsible for many human problems. Critics would say that “the devil made me do it” is an age-old cop-out and deliverance attempts are unbiblical, unnecessary, and silly. Who’s right? There seems to be some contradictions within the theory: homosexuality *causes* demon possession; homosexuality is *caused by* demon possession. Demons possess the homosexual from *within*; demons oppress the homosexual from *without*. Some believe that spiritual deliverance alone is the answer while others believe that deliverance needs to be followed up with counseling. The vagueness in the theory may stem from the intuitive, subjective process by which demonic activity is discerned and rebuked. The theory also seems to contradict Scripture in that both Jesus and the apostle Paul place the blame of sexual sin on us and not on demons, Mark 7:20-23; Galatians 5:19. They also both place the ability to overcome sexual sin on us instead of something like exorcism: Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery, “Go and sin no more,” John 8:11. Some may think that the apostle Paul is referring to some spiritual deliverance like exorcism when he says to the Corinthians who’ve been delivered from homosexuality, “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,” 1 Corinthians 6:11. However, if we continue in the passage we see that the ability to overcome sexual sin is within us as we repent and walk by means of Christ’s Spirit who has indeed washed us, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. This doesn’t mean, however, that someone’s homosexuality may not be influenced by demonic forces, after all, Satan, his demons, and their power to influence is real, Ephesians 6:10-18.

The Interactive Theory, this theory sees both the inborn (present at birth) and developmental theories contributing to the development of homosexuality. This theory is not new. Late in the nineteenth century Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, author of the renowned *Psychopathia Sexualis*, adhered to it when he explained that homosexuality was both environmental and hereditary in nature. Many experts today agree with him. Neuroscientist Dr. Dennis McFadden of the University of Texas said, “Any human behavior is going to be the result of complex intermingling of genetics and environment. It would be astonishing if it were not true for homosexuality.” Dr. J. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University and his associates admit that “although both male and female sexual orientations appear to be at least somewhat heritable, environment also must be of considerable importance in their origins.” And after reviewing all major biological explanations and studies on homosexuality, authors and researchers Byne and Parsons proposed “an interactional model in which genes or hormones do not specify sexual orientation per se, but instead bias particular personality traits and thereby influence the manner in which an individual and his or her environment interact as sexual orientation and other personality characteristics unfold developmentally.”

Is the Interactive Theory legitimate; is it biblical? The theory takes into account the fact that we are both physical and emotional beings, which is as Scripture describes us. It is possible that we have some physical components within us that affect how we develop. After all, the perfect physical state that we had in the Garden of Eden is no longer with us. Our physical being was diminished and causes us suffering and pain. Likewise, our emotional make up is no longer a complete blessing. Our emotions now get the best of us and at times prevent us from properly discerning the events around us. Thus, both our physical and emotional make up affects our development and plays a role in our responses and behaviors. But doesn’t the Interactive Theory agree with inborn theorists who suggest that genes/biology influence us? Yes, it does, but it also prevents the conclusion that inborn influences are the *only* causes for homosexuality.

Causes Chronicled by Mastering Life Ministries, Dr. David Kyle Foster, a former homosexual himself, founded Mastering Life Ministries in 1987. Mastering Life does not believe that people are born gay; they believe that homosexuality is developmental. In their almost 30 years' experience in working with homosexuals they have found these causes:

In Males

- Emotionally detached father
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Absent father
- Angry/abusive/scary father
- Defensive detachment
- Strong feminizing influences
- Lack of healthy masculine affirmation/modeling
- Rejection/ridicule by same-sex peers
- Name-calling, teasing
- Authority figure influences
- Early same-gender sexual experimentation
- Experiences that instill fear of opposite sex
- Confusion of emotion-based needs with sexual needs
- Sensitive temperament
- Misperceptions of events or the actions of others
- Absence of "troop bonding"
- Failure to emotionally bond with father or father-figure
- Envy/idolatry
- Incorrect self-labeling
- Other possible factors, whether mentioned or not

In Females

- Failure to emotionally bond with mother or mother-figure
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Lack of affection/affirmation
- Envy of perceived male advantage or superiority
- Strong male formative influences
- Separation anxiety (i.e., infant incubation)
- Rejection by peers
- Early sexual experimentation with same gender
- Demonic spirits and/or soul ties
- Emotional enmeshment/dependency
- Envy/idolatry
- Other possible factors, whether mentioned or not

Critics might say that these causes are also subjective in that they rely on the person's childhood memories and Mastering Life's preconceived assumptions about homosexuality. But on the other hand Mastering Life did not come up with these causes on their own. They saw these issues present in the lives of countless homosexuals who were delivered from their homosexuality during their nearly 30 years' experience.

And notice how many of the causes are connected to proper/improper gender development. That is, why do some little boys drift towards femininity and eventually become gay? And why do some little girls drift towards masculinity and eventually become lesbian? Could it be that they failed to learn how to be masculine or feminine respectively from their mother and father?

It may be that a person is likely not born gay (though we must be open to the possibility as more research is done) but instead is born with a set of traits that make them more susceptible to homosexuality later in life if certain developmental variables are also present. This may explain why one person becomes gay and another doesn't. That is, if either the inborn or developmental factor is missing, then the person will never develop a homosexual orientation. So if a man is born with traits that make him susceptible to homosexuality, but he's missing the developmental factors (like failing to emotionally bond with their father or a father-figure), then his sexual orientation will remain heterosexual. Likewise, if a woman has the developmental issues present (like strong male formative influences) but is missing the genetic/biological traits that make her susceptible to homosexuality, then she too will remain heterosexual.

Dallas and Heche's comments may well sum up where we stand (at the present time) after one examines all the secular and spiritual/religious information available on the subject:

"Ultimately, though, we're left admitting there's much we don't understand about the origins of same-sex attraction. We may hold primarily to an inborn, developmental, or interactive theory, while admitting none of them fully explain this phenomenon. So thankfully, complete understanding is not required of us when we approach an issue. In fact, we can freely admit what we do not know while holding fast to what we do. And from that position—holding to and obeying truth as it's been revealed in Scripture; considering new information as it arises; considering new data in light of biblical absolutes; and maintaining due humility and teachableness—we can continue to approach this subject intelligently, responsibly, and redemptively."²

One final note, whether one or more of the causes listed above for homosexuality is present, it does not mean that your child will turn out gay or that you failed as a parent—notice that one of the causes listed by Mastering Life concerning males is "misperceptions of events or the actions of others," i.e., a child may perceive certain things from their mother/father which may not be true at all. But there is one thing that is absolutely certain, however the child comes to be homosexual, God can free him/her from it, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

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... 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.

² *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality*, Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche (Editors), 213.