

Same Love

Macklemore begins his song “Same Love” with this line: “When I was in third grade I thought that I was gay, ‘cause I could draw, my uncle was, and I kept my room straight.” Later in the song he offers his description of our culture saying, “A world so hateful some would rather die than be who they are.” This line hits on the fundamental problem of our day. And while many in our world are hateful, that is not the real problem highlighted by this lyric. Our culture and even Christians have simply accepted a social construct that has no basis in actual fact. We have bought the lie that being “gay” is something people are rather than something they do.

Sex is an action. It is not an identity. But sadly, too many Christians have been sucked into this trap as we have even identified ourselves. We are heterosexual. They are homosexual. We are straight. They are queer. It was easy to get caught up in this trap. After all, for a time, we were able to revel in the correctness of our identity. There was a normal identity and an abnormal one. There was a right identity and a wrong one. We were comfortable because we were normal and right. Society agreed with us.

But then society shifted. Entertainment normalized homosexual behavior. Politics blessed it. And now we have states seriously considering legalizing same gender marriage. Why? Because people just can’t help being who they are. It is their identity. Those who believe in God bring Him into the picture claiming if this is the way people are, it is the way God made them. Surely, He wouldn’t stand in the way of someone being who He made them to be.

The real mess in this is that we rarely even see where the great mistake was made in this process. We think the great mistake was when society began to accept same gender sexual behavior as permissible, even sanctioned by God. Not so. The great mistake was allowing behavior to be viewed as identity. Sadly, we have been complicit in this great mistake. After all, too many of us were happy to revel in our legitimate identity as we could look down our noses at those “bad people” with bad identities. And now we are witnessing our society pay the price for our laziness and perhaps our arrogance.

Many of us have read the multiple Bible passages that rebuke and condemn same gender sexual activity as sinful. Consider just two. **Leviticus 18:22** says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (ESV). **Romans 1:26-27** says, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error” (ESV). We are surprised that some claim to believe the Bible, but read these passages and say same gender sexual activity is lawful with God.

Their defense hinges on this idea of identity. One of the paths of argumentation is to claim that the Bible wasn’t referring to people whose identity is gay or lesbian. After all, God wouldn’t condemn people for simply living their identity. The Bible authors, we are told, simply didn’t think in terms of someone whose sexual identity is homosexuality, they just thought of people going against their heterosexual nature. But we moderns are enlightened. We have discovered that some people are actually born to be gay or lesbian. Paul didn’t understand that. Moses didn’t understand that.

That is an intriguing argument until we grasp exactly what it admits. The Bible authors didn’t talk about people whose identity was gay because they didn’t talk about people’s sexual identities at all. The Bible does not present people as homosexual or heterosexual. It simply views people as people who are tempted to commit a whole host of sins because sin is in the world and so people are tempted. Some people are tempted by opposite gender sexual activities, some by same gender sexual activities. As uncomfortable as it is to admit, the Bible even demonstrates in **Leviticus 18:23** that some people are tempted by differing species sexual activities. But people are not identified by the sins they are tempted to commit. The Bible does not identify us sexually as homosexual, heterosexual, or even speciessexual. We are simply people who are told not to commit certain sexual actions.

Recognizing this helps avoid the sexual identity crisis so many have. Consider Macklemore, the hip hop artist with whom we started this article. In third grade, that is eight years old, he was afraid he was gay. His mom disabused him of this notion pointing out “you’ve loved girls since before pre-k.” Sadly, to us, that seems like a satisfying answer. But it is the wrong answer. Ben Haggerty (Macklemore) did not need to be afraid that he was gay, because gay is not an identity. It is not something one is; it is something one does. We need to come to grips with the fact that as boys and girls grow into young men and women, their changing bodies and flooding hormones produce all kinds of different emotions and experiences. Sometimes, they even, very naturally, have some sexual thoughts and temptations directed toward the same gender. That doesn’t make them gay, it makes them people in a fallen world,

tempted to commit sin. We need to explain this to our children. They don't need to fear that a stray thought, or even an overpowering one, identifies them sexually. It simply identifies them as another tempted human being in a fallen world. They don't have to be afraid that somehow they are something because of this temptation. We just need to teach them that through Jesus Christ we can gain victory over temptation and sin.

Certainly, there are all kinds of influential factors that play into temptation. There are genetic factors and there are environmental factors. There are weak temptations and there are strong temptations. But a temptation does not equal an identity. We don't say that someone strongly tempted to rape was born a "violentsexual" or someone strongly tempted to look at pornography was born a "voyeursexual." Why would we say that someone tempted to participate in same gender sexual activity was born a homosexual or that someone who is tempted by opposite gender sexual activity was born a heterosexual?

If you are tempted to engage in same gender sexual activity, perhaps even strongly, it doesn't mean you are weird or worse than everyone else. We are all strongly tempted to commit sins, though not all of us the same sins. We have all surrendered to temptation and become slaves to our sins (**Romans 6:16**). But that doesn't mean our sin was justified or lawful just because the temptation is so strong it feels like we were born to commit it. Everyone's path is different. Some people turn to Jesus and their temptations change. Some don't. But as you sow to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will give you the strength to overcome your temptations.

Can we help you face and overcome your temptations by the strength of God through His empowering Holy Spirit (cf. **Ephesians 3:14-16**)? If so, let us know how.

—Edwin L. Crozier