

Can You Change If You're Gay?

David White



www.newgrowthpress.com

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404

www.newgrowthpress.com

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Cover Design: Faceout books, faceout.com

Typesetting: Lisa Parnell, lparnell.com

ISBN-10: 1-939946-07-7

ISBN-13: 978-1-939946-07-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

White, David, 1970–

Can you change if you're gay? / author David White.

pages cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-939946-07-2 (alk. paper)

1. Homosexuality—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BR115.H6W445 2013

261.8'35766—dc23

2013023728

Printed in Canada

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13

1 2 3 4 5

Dedicated to my brothers and sisters living in self-denial because they believe the promises and know He is better. The world is not worthy of you. Your sacrificial obedience is an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Press on!

“I love children. I’ve always wanted a family. I just can’t imagine myself ever getting married. I mean, how would sex even *work*?!” Exhaling through pursed lips, Frank wipes the corner of his eye. “I don’t think this is working.”

A Christian in his early thirties, wrestling with same-sex attraction (SSA), he has been beaten down by the relentlessness of his temptation and his seeming inability to *change*. Like most people struggling with SSA, Frank hoped counseling and participation in a biblical support group would translate into deliverance from homosexual desires. For him, defeating SSA meant eradicating ongoing homosexual temptation and becoming heterosexual. This defines “change” for many people, and anything falling short feels like a “bait and switch.”

“Women are tender and compassionate. They want to know me and actually care about the details of my life.” With a bitter smile, Sue explains that she has never been physically attracted to men. Even worse, her experience as a survivor of sexual abuse means men feel radically unsafe. Relationships with women are so different. Compared to her horrific experience of male lust, intimacy with a woman feels nurturing and safe. “I have no desire to marry. A relationship with a man has zero appeal for me. Why can’t I experience love the way I want?”

Unlike Frank, Sue doesn't really care about changing her sexual orientation. These days she has lots of support. Many (most?) people today believe that sexual orientation is inborn and unchangeable. They want freedom to follow their desires without expectation to conform to traditional understandings of love, relationships, and community.

Others believe that changing your sexual orientation is as simple as changing your circumstances. "I thought marriage would make a difference. I assumed a 'God-approved' outlet for sexual release would just, you know, change the wiring." Shaking his head and throwing up his hands in exasperation, George lamented, "The temptations have never gone away. Physical intimacy is challenging. I never knew this would be so *hard*." Some people place false hope in solutions that seem to promise change. Often they are spurred on by well-meaning people who don't understand the depth of these issues and a biblical definition of change.

The ongoing, persistent nature of SSA is extremely difficult for those who want to uphold God's design for sexuality. There is a reason so many prominent Christians "come out" or depart from biblical standards when a loved one discloses their struggle. For the vast majority, SSA will be a lifelong experience in this fallen world. It is a unique and, at times, excruciating burden to bear, but it is not a hopeless journey. If this is your struggle, be assured that God wants to meet you. He often brings us to desolate, wilderness places to "allure" us, speak tenderly to us, reveal the depth of his love, and draw us closer as his beloved people (see Hosea 1–3, especially 2:14–23).