

The Gay Dilemma and Your Church

Reaching Out to Those
Who Struggle

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“I don’t care—let them all go to hell.” I had been explaining to a church leader the essence of our ministry and how we help people who contact us. His verbal response startled me, to say the least. The anger and vehemence in his statement took me aback.

A conversation with another church leader—this time about whether Christians could be gay and adopt both that label and identity—produced another response that startled me. He looked directly at me and said unwaveringly, “Gay Christians? What’s wrong with Christians being gay?” It was not a question; it was a comment.

Like it or not, the church can no longer avoid responding to homosexuality. Almost everyone today knows someone who is gay or lesbian or otherwise impacted by homosexuality. In a real sense, homosexuality has embraced the culture, and the culture (and some churches) has embraced homosexuality. This makes a growing dilemma for many in the Christian community who are personally impacted by these issues, however much we might like to pretend otherwise.

The two leaders above represent two polarized responses toward homosexuality within the Christian community. Are our only two options to either turn our backs on homosexuals or embrace their lifestyle? How should God’s people, his church, respond to those who struggle with homosexuality in our churches? How should we respond to those who have embraced homosexuality as a lifestyle? Like all areas of life, the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ have much to say about homosexuality. The gospel points us to a better

response than either rejection or wholesale acceptance. There is God's way of mercy and truth for those who struggle with same-sex attraction (SSA) and for those who would seek to reach out to them.

Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?

Most people reading this would probably agree that homosexual practice is wrong—that is, sinful. God's Word condemns homosexuality as a practice of heart, mind, and body in every place and in all instances. In fact, the Bible condemns all sexual acts outside what God institutes in Genesis 1:27–28, where the pattern for biblical sexual expression is defined in the context of marriage of one man and one woman. However, if we stop at just labeling homosexuality as sinful, we fall far short of presenting a redemptive and Christlike response to a growing dilemma for the household of faith. Many of us are dealing with these deeply heart-wrenching struggles in our own lives and in the lives of those we love.

As Christians we must take responsibility for some of the theological and ideological “mess” in which we find ourselves. Historically, we've either ignored this major human dilemma for many people, or we've separated or detached it from other types of sexual sin. We've expected some type of magical, spontaneous resolution about serious questions of identity and sin issues to emerge from afar, rather than encouraging our people to be honest about these embarrassing, shame-ridden, and very real problems. We haven't assigned the issues the same significance God has—that this is, and