



THE  
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# SEXUAL ATTRACTION: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON SAME-SEX DESIRES



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A CHRISTIAN  
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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
PART I: WHO AM I? .....	5
PART II: SIN AND TEMPTATION .....	11
PART III: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE .....	15
PART IV: SANCTIFICATION.....	20
PART V: COMMUNITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.....	24

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION



# INTRODUCTION

For many Christians, conversations around same sex attraction begin and end with the Bible's clear prohibition against all forms of homosexual activity. Yet this often leaves a deeper question unanswered: does Scripture have anything on offer for the Christian who experiences same-sex desires? If you are struggling with same sex attraction, are you left to wrestle alone with attractions that feel deeply ingrained, perhaps even the way you were born? Are you somehow different, or 'other than', the rest of Christ's people?

This life skill guide aims to show that the Bible speaks far more richly to these questions than is often assumed. Scripture has much to say about the daily life of the Christian who experiences same-sex desires. This is not because this struggle is unique, but because it fits squarely within the human condition. You are not strange, uniquely broken, or fundamentally different from other Christians. You, like every Christian, are a fallen human being in need of grace, forgiveness, and transformation.

The goal of this booklet is to serve as a practical guide for thinking biblically about how to deal with same sex attraction in the life of a Christian. We will walk through foundational categories of identity, sin, temptation, confession, repentance, and sanctification. As we go, we will consider how God graciously meets us in our struggle, how real change is possible, and how growth in holiness is possible over time. Finally, we will draw these truths together by considering the community God has gifted for them to be lived out: the local church.

# 1

## WHO AM I?

“Who am I?” is the question of our age. Identity has captured the world’s imagination, from debates over artificial intelligence, to conversations on race or ethnicity, to theories of posthuman immortality.

### ***What the World is Telling You***

The Western world’s message is that personal identity is defined from within. To discover yourself, you look inward. The pinnacle of personal existence is to live as your ‘true self.’ Just ‘be yourself.’ This is most evident in discussions of sexuality and what is sexual attraction, where the pattern of sexual desires a person experiences is seen as a core component of their identity.

The notion of sexual desire being equated with personal identity is a relatively new invention. It was popularized by Sigmund Freud who argued that if happiness is the desired goal of human beings via the pleasure principle, and if sexual love affords humans the greatest experience of pleasure and satisfaction, then sexual gratification should be central to what it means to be a person. John Money, psychologist and ‘sexologist’ at Johns Hopkins University in the 1950s, built off Freud to argue that sexual preference should be categorized as an orientation rather than a same sex attraction disorder. This was further developed to assert that sexual orientations are both innate and fixed.

Today, many theories on what causes same sex attraction lean heavily on this idea, sometimes framing it as a form of genetic sexual attraction or biological determinism. Sexual desires are viewed as a core component of who we are, essential to our identity. As a result, to disagree on issues of sexuality is like asking someone to deny who they really are.

The problem is that this modern view of identity is fundamentally unstable. Defining who you are either from your internal, subjective sense, or from

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

what others tell you, does not provide a concrete grounding. Feelings and self-perceptions change. Cultural views and assumptions change. Who we are, our fundamental identity, requires something unchanging. We remain a fixed *someone* even through a range of changes throughout life. That's where the Bible comes in. When we turn to Scripture, we see that who we are is rooted in God's good design and intention.

### ***What the Bible Tells You***

Scripture teaches that you were created by God, and yet, because of sin, you are broken. If you are a Christian, however, your brokenness has been redeemed.

### **You are Created**

Scripture begins with God speaking things into existence, declaring them 'good' (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Creation culminates with God deliberating, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (Gen. 1:26). We are both like the rest of creation, created and sustained by God, and yet we are unlike the rest of creation. We are made in the image of God. This image is not found in one particular part of us over another. Rather, the whole person *is* the image of the triune God. The image of God is essential to human nature. And God declares our design to be 'very good' (Gen. 1:31). Being the image of God gives every person inherent dignity and value as we reflect God Himself.

This dignity and value is reflected in the fact that God created humans personally. Just as God breathed the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2:7) so too God forms each person in their mother's womb. We are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' as God knits us and gives us life (Ps. 139:13-14). Life is a gift that we receive. Being the image of God is also a gift, an identity that is given to us. We do not choose it; we are created as it.

Man, as originally created, was righteous and holy in nature. This moral perfection was essential to human nature itself. Anything less would imply a defect in God's creation. Man was created in relation to God and able to acknowledge, love, and worship Him. From the very beginning, God relates personally with humanity (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-18). We are personally known by a personal God and He relates to us based on how he has created us.

## FIELD GUIDE

From the beginning, God created humanity in his image as male and female (Gen. 1:27). Sexual difference is a created, God-given reality. This differentiation is foundational to who we are as image-bearers. While each person is fully the image of God, we more fully image God *together*. Humanity images God more fully as two, interdependent sexes than as one in isolation. The different sexes are complimentary. We need one another.

One of the most obvious ways the sexes need each other is the act of procreation. God invented sex as a gift with purpose. The first purpose for sex that we see in the Bible is to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen. 1:28). Human sexuality is ordered towards procreating. This is how God intended human beings to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ (Gen. 1:28), representing God as they rule under Him. The second purpose for sex that we see in the Bible is to create ‘one flesh’ within marriage (Gen. 2:24). Human sexuality is ordered towards uniting two as one. Sex pictures and produces this union. Through this mutual, self-giving act, a husband and wife are physically, psychologically, and spiritually bound together. Throughout the Bible, sex is the one-flesh union of a man and a woman within the boundaries of marriage. This framework is crucial for understanding same sex attraction in the Bible—not merely as a set of prohibitions, but as a deviation from this positive, created order.

### **You are Broken**

While creation was originally good, the entrance of sin marred and corrupted it. The Fall affected the entirety of creation. Human nature was radically damaged. Not only was righteousness lost, but man became spiritually dead (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1). In our fallen state, we are naturally inclined toward evil. We are all born in rebellion against God, as His enemies (Rom. 5:10). We are ‘children of wrath’ (Eph. 2:3). Throughout Scripture, we see there is no ‘neutral’ human nature—man is either holy or fallen, regenerate or dead in sin (Matt. 6:24, 7:13-14, 12:30; Rom. 3:23). This means that something seeming ‘natural’ does not necessarily mean ‘good.’

The relationship between the sexes was also affected by the Fall. Desire for things contrary to God’s will, which started with Eve’s sinful desire for the fruit (Gen. 3:6), extends to sexuality. God’s perfect design for sex

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

between a man and a woman united in marriage was corrupted. Sexual complementarity is distorted and abused, with the woman's desire being for her husband and him ruling over her (Gen. 3:16). The marriage covenant is twisted to include multiple wives (Gen. 4:19). And, by Genesis 19, sexual immorality is widespread with sex increasingly distorted from its original design and intention. Desires are warped as people pursue and worship the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

Disordered sexuality—that is, desire for sex contrary to God's good design—is a result of the Fall. This helps answer the difficult question of what causes same sex attraction from a theological perspective. God created human nature good, but the particular distortions of our desires are products of sin. When God creates us, He creates us in Adam, not as a blank slate. Once humanity fell in Adam, all subsequent humans are born into his fallen state. God creating you is not Him freshly deciding to make you sinful. Rather, He is creating you as a participant in already-fallen humanity.

To argue, therefore, that our disordered sexuality is God-given and thus inherently good is like arguing that any other part of our sin nature is good. We would never claim this about our angry nature, or lying nature, or adulterous nature. We should expect to see those who are struggling with same sex attraction as a Christian facing just one of many effects of the Fall. What is important is how they respond to it. Our fallen sexuality, like every other aspect of our fallen nature, exists under God's providence in order to magnify His grace through salvation and sanctification. Through each of us, God displays His glory as He saves sinners and changes them by the power of His Spirit.

### **You are Redeemed**

And so we are not without hope. This is the core of same sex attraction Gospel topics: if you have turned from your sin and placed your faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross, you have been made new. Through the Gospel, you are forgiven and reconciled to God. Children of wrath become children of God (Rom 8:16; 1 Pet 1:14, 1 John 3:1-2). You have been given a new nature, one that has been made spiritually alive (Tit. 3:5; Eph. 2:5). Knowledge, righteousness and holiness are regained in union with Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). And so, we are called to put off the old

## FIELD GUIDE

self (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 6:6) and put on the new self (Eph. 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17). We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, becoming more like Christ (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). Our identity is rooted in what Christ has done. We are in Christ, secured by God's grace.

Although sin remains in the believer, God graciously chooses to forgive it for the sake of Christ. The presence of sin remains, but the power of sin is broken. We are no longer slaves to sin but have been set free from it (Rom. 6:6-7). A struggle continues between the sinful desires of the old nature and the new nature in Christ. Christians are called to a life of fighting sin and putting it to death (what is called 'mortifying' sin). But there is true freedom.

If you experience same-sex desires in your life, the Bible's teaching about who you are is profoundly hopeful. It offers genuine Christian guidance for same sex attraction by placing your experience within a grand story that is far larger than your desires and attractions. You are not defined by your desires, nor are you uniquely broken. Like every other human being, you are personally created as an image-bearer, with dignity, worth, and purpose. At the same time, you are broken by sin just like everyone else and in need of redemption. Our hearts are naturally inclined to sin, away from God. Same-sex desires do not place you outside of the human story; they reflect the reality of our shared brokenness and our need for a Savior.

Understanding God's design and intention for sex helps us make sense of God's prohibitions against homosexuality. Scripture's consistent teaching is that sexual intimacy is reserved for the one-flesh union of a man and a woman within marriage, and that sexual activity between two people of the same sex falls outside that design and is therefore sin.

The wonderful news is that in His great mercy, God sent His Son to die for our sins and reconcile us to God. Through Christ's death and resurrection, forgiveness is offered freely to all who repent and believe. If you are a Christian, you have been given a new nature and new desires. You have a new identity in Christ. While old desires may remain, they no longer define you or rule over you. Empowered by the Spirit, you and I are able to flee from sin and grow in righteousness and holiness. This is the path of

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

learning how to overcome same sex attraction—not by your own strength, but by walking in the newness of life.

### ***Reflection Question:***

1. How does the world's message that identity is discovered by looking inward differ from the Bible's teaching that identity is received from God?
2. How should being made in the image of God affect your self-understanding? How should it affect your view of others, including those who are struggling with same sex attraction or different sins and desires than you?
3. How does the reality of the fall affect how we understand our desires, even if they seem 'natural'?
4. How does being redeemed in Christ with a new nature redefine our self-understanding?
5. How does the promise of new creation, being fully free from sin in the resurrection, shape the way you endure present struggles? This is a vital question for Christian faith and same sex attraction

## 2

# SIN AND TEMPTATION

We have already mentioned sin, but what is it exactly? To the world around us, the term feels archaic, even oppressive. It doesn't tend to feature in public discussions. Because of how alien the concept feels today, it is important to clarify what we are talking about.

### ***What Is Sin?***

Simply put, sin is any failure to conform to God's law. God is perfectly holy and perfectly good (Is. 6:3; Rev 4:8; Lev. 19:2; 1 Jn. 1:5). He is the source and standard of goodness, and he makes this standard clear through His law. God requires us to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16). Anything that falls short of God's standard is *imperfect* and *unholy*—it is sin. 1 John 3:4 makes this clear, declaring that “sin is lawlessness.” Sin, therefore, includes anything done contrary to the Lord's commandments, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Lev. 5:15, 17-19).

Sin is more than merely positive actions against God. It is also anything we leave undone that God's law requires us to do (Jas. 4:17). In all of this, we see that it is God who decides what is sin, not us.

At the fall, humanity lost the righteousness we were originally created with. Alongside this, we became spiritually dead with a corrupt nature, prone to evil. These two things comprise what is commonly referred to as 'original sin.' Original sin, a universal feature of all humans, is the loss of original righteousness and a corrupted nature. It is *original* not because it was originally part of our created nature, but because it is the origin and source of all other sins. There is a difference, then, between the first sin and original sin. The first human sin was Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, by which sin entered the world and human nature was

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

corrupted. Scripture is clear that Adam is responsible for the entrance of sin into the world, as the parent and beginning of a unified human race (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 45). Adam stood as the representative, or 'head,' of humanity. Because Adam broke God's law, we are born in sin. We all inherit his guilt (Rom. 5:19). This is then wonderfully contrasted with Jesus Christ. Christ assumed human nature and is the head and beginning of a new humanity—a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rom. 5:15-17; 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:14-16). Jesus stands as the representative and so all who repent and believe inherit His righteousness (Jn. 3:3; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5-14). Adam sinned and all of us received sin and judgment. Christ redeemed and all who believe receive righteousness and mercy.

As we think about sin, it is important to also understand the doorway through which sin often enters our lives: temptation. What is temptation?

### ***What Is Temptation?***

Temptation in its most basic form is an enticement to sin. It is a draw away from God and His law and towards things contrary to God. God cannot be tempted with evil and does not tempt anyone (Jas. 1:13). He cannot be tempted with evil, as this would be a contradiction of his perfect nature. He cannot tempt anyone, as this would make him evil. Instead, our temptations arise either from within or from without. From the outside, a person or the devil (Jas. 4:7) seeks to lure you to sin (Prov. 1:10; 7:21; Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). Although this is most definitely sin from the person luring you, it is not sin for you until you give into the temptation. Giving into the temptation could be through an action that is sinful, or it could be internally through a sinful desire.

From within, disordered desires arise from our corrupted nature, wanting things contrary to God's law. These desires are us tempting ourselves with evil, as we 'lure and entice' ourselves (Jas. 1:13-14). This means these desires are both sin (evil) and a temptation to further sin. Desires that are contrary to God's law are sin because they are by definition lawlessness, a 'failure to conform to God's law.' From this we see that sin begets sin. From the very moment sinful thoughts are conceived, they are sin and have the potential to give birth to sinful actions.

## FIELD GUIDE

If you desire something sinful and yet do not act upon it, praise God! You did not let a sinful desire grow further, leading to more sin. You put that sin to death, but sin was present hence it required being killed. We are to confess sinful desires as actual instances of desiring to break God's law. We are to turn from them in repentance, yet as we do, we should thank the Lord for empowering us through His Spirit to resist and flee from further sin.

Let me be clear, unnatural desires are sinful. This often raises the question: what is sexual attraction in the eyes of God versus the eyes of the world?

Understanding our inner, disordered desires as sin gives us an accurate understanding of ourselves. We are depraved sinners who crave sin. Even after we are born again with new hearts, we continue to wrestle with the lust of the flesh. Each of us struggle with a wide range of disordered (and therefore sinful) desires. Anger, greed, sexual immorality, deceit—our hearts are little idol-factories. It is amazing how many ways we can desire sin.

As we think about sexuality, any desire for sex with anyone outside a spouse within marriage is sin. If you are married, it is sin to desire sex with someone other than your spouse. If you are not married, it is sin to desire sex with any person of the opposite sex, whether you are single or dating. It is sin to desire sex with someone of the same sex. All disordered sexual desires are sin. While sexual desire for the opposite sex is 'natural' in that it reflects the fixed order of creation (not that it necessarily feels natural to us), sexual desire for the same sex is inherently 'unnatural' in that it is contrary to the fixed order of creation. Sexual desire for the opposite sex is sinful when it falls outside God's design and intention. Sexual desire for the same sex is always sinful as it always falls outside of God's design and intention.

Same-sex desire is therefore not 'the same as being left-handed' akin to genetic sexual attraction or something we are born with, often labeled as a fixed same sex attraction disorder by secular standards. This is a false dichotomy, confusing two different moral categories. Same-sex desires are inherently contrary to God's law and thus morally wrong. Being left-

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

handed (or even ambidextrous!) has no relation to God's law and is therefore morally neutral.

Understanding our inner, disordered desires as sin should make us fix our eyes upon Christ and the freedom He has secured. We see our depravity, the constant sinning in our hearts, and we see everything Christ has paid for. Rather than being weighed down with guilt and shame, we should rejoice and laugh with amazement at the amazing, immeasurable grace of God in Christ. We should lean into the overwhelming grace and forgiveness found in Christ. Understanding that internal temptation *is* sin helps us see that we truly are sinners through and through, and this provides the foundation for genuine Christian guidance for same sex attraction. Yet we are new creations. We are no longer dead in our sins but have been made alive and able to fight against the flesh (Rom. 7:15-20). This is the beginning of understanding how to overcome same sex attraction—not by our own power, but by His.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. How does defining sin as “any failure to conform to God’s law” (1 Jn. 3:4) challenge the way you usually think about your own desires and actions? Are there areas in your life where you may have considered desires or thought as ‘neutral,’ but Scripture would call sin?
2. How do you distinguish between temptation and sin in your life? Can you think of a time when you experienced temptation but did not give in? How did the Spirit help you resist?
3. Given Christ has defeated sin and that we are made alive in Him (Rom. 7:15-25), how does your awareness of your depravity and ongoing battle with sin deepen your appreciation for His grace?
4. How are you motivated to rely on the Spirit in your daily fight against sin?

# 3

## CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

A common response to the previous chapter, particularly in conversations on same-sex desire and attraction, is that viewing disordered desires as sin unnecessarily heaps condemnation and guilt upon the believer. If disordered internal desires are sin, surely this results in the need to confess sin constantly and never being fully 'right with God'?

While this objection is well-intentioned, often motivated by a desire to care for discouraged Christians, it misunderstands sin, God's grace, our fallen nature, confession and repentance (and the distinctions between them). It is ultimately inconsistent.

If unconfessed sin leaves us never fully 'right with God,' then logically, confession of sin must be part of what makes us right with Him. This is to claim that unconfessed sin leaves those sins not-quite-fully paid for (otherwise we would be right with God). This would deny both that you are saved through faith in Christ alone (Jn. 3:16; Acts 10:43; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 3:28; 5:1) and the once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice (Jn. 19:30; Heb 7:27; 9:26; 10:10, 14). Confession, as we will see, is an important part of our lives as believers, but it does not save you. In Christ, *all* your sins (past, present, and future) are *fully* forgiven (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13; Heb. 8:12). As Richard Sibbes put so wonderfully, "there is more mercy in Christ than sin in us."

If we do not confess our sin to make ourselves right with God then, why do we confess sin? What is confession? How does this relate to repentance?

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

### ***What Is Confession?***

Confession of sin is the act of recognizing a specific sin, being sorry for it, taking personal responsibility for it, and acknowledging it to God (sometimes also to others).

Confession cultivates a right perspective of sin. We see sin as God sees it, consenting to his judgment against it. We agree that our sin is real, wicked, and must be fought and killed. We do this as we hold the Word of God up to illuminate our hearts, as the accurate measure of all our thoughts and desires, actions and words. Through Scripture we come to see just how ugly our sin is.

As we accurately see sin, confession cultivates humility. We admit that we have done wrong and do not attempt to save face, either by minimizing the wrong or seeking to pass blame. It is more than a mere 'I am sorry.' We confess specific, concrete sins as we take ownership and acknowledge to God what we have done. Sin thrives in the darkness where it can fester and grow (Prov. 28:13a). Confession brings sin out into the open where it can be seen as it really is (Jn. 1:8; 3:19-21; Eph. 5:13; Ps. 32:5). This is the best way to fight sin in your life and a crucial step in learning how to deal with same sex attraction. Do you want sin to grow to rule over you? Keep it hidden. Do you want to put it to death? Humbly confess your sin to God and others (Jas. 5:16).

The desire to bring sin into the light comes only as a gift from God. Confession is enabled by the Holy Spirit. As children of God, we should be marked by a hatred of sin as God hates sin, and a desire to kill it in our lives. We will often fail at this. We experience a conflict between our sinful desire and our desire for the things of God (Rom. 7:15-25). However, if we are redeemed by Christ, we have a new, spiritually alive nature that desires the things of God. Because our life is hidden with Christ in God, we are therefore to put to death the sin in us (Col. 3:3, 5).

Most importantly, confession reminds us of the glorious salvation we have in Christ. When we confess our sins, God promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9; Prov. 28:13b). Confession does not cause forgiveness but rather flows from it. It shows we are truly in Christ as we acknowledge sin that has already been forgiven. It boldly

## FIELD GUIDE

declares the forgiveness found in Christ's atoning blood. The reality of our sin would crush us under its weight, but confession reminds us of how much greater our salvation in Christ is. It reminds us that we are terrible sinners and yet Christ has redeemed us from sin (1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 3:23-24; 2 Cor. 5:21).

In all this, through confession, we return to God having erred and strayed like a lost sheep. Confession of sin restores the communion with God which we broke. It restores the feeling of fellowship in our hearts even as God's acceptance never changes. In confession, we return to Christ, the Great Physician, who heals us and restores us (Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). In this way, confession forms a core part of repentance.

### ***What Is Repentance?***

Repentance is the act of seeing our sin, being grieved by it, confessing it, and turning from it to God. While confession is a crucial component of repentance, repentance itself is broader. Confession flows from seeing sin and being grieved by it, preceding turning. Repentance is the full process of turning 180 degrees from our sin and to God.

Repentance involves seeing our sin. We cannot repent for that which we do not see. Our hearts are deceitful (Jer. 17:9) and it is easy to fool ourselves into excusing sin. We want to avoid accountability and responsibility. So, the necessary first step of repentance is accurately seeing our sin for what it is.

Having seen our sin, repentance involves being grieved by our sin. It does no good to merely recognize wrongdoing. True repentance is marked by a godly grief (2 Cor. 7:9-11). Not merely worldly sorry for being caught, or sadness because sin's effects are uncomfortable in your life. Godly grief is a sorrowfulness, a genuine sadness, at the presence of sin. We are, as in the beatitudes, 'poor in spirit' and 'those who mourn.' We feel sin's weight and see its consequences from God's perspective. We are to be heartily sorry as we recognize our sin as treason against a holy God, worthy of condemnation. Grief over sin develops into an earnestness to confess.

Repentance involves confessing our sin. The repentant heart does not seek to defend itself or provide excuses. We cannot repent of sin we hide.

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

Rather, we honestly acknowledge that we have offended our holy and loving Father. We confess our failure, as David did in Psalm 51. Through confession, the despair of our sinfulness gives way to joy in Christ's righteousness. We see that we are blessed, and in the assurance of God's promised forgiveness we rest. As we recognize the loving kindness shown to us in Christ, we are motivated to forsake our sin.

Repentance involves turning from sin to God. A heart that rightly sees sin, grieves over it, and confesses it will also hate it (Rom. 12:9). When we hate sin, we flee from it. Our desire is to obey God and keep His commands, not transgress them. True repentance recognizes that God's law is good. It motivates the believer to put to death anything that is contrary to this good law. Repentance motivates the believer to flee from temptation and to give no opportunity to the devil (Jas. 4:7; Eph. 4:27). If sin is departure from God, repentance is return to God (Acts 3:19; Is. 55:7). True repentance is marked by fruit as we live in keeping with our repentance and faith (Matt. 3:8; Eph. 2:8-10). The culmination of repentance is our return to God with renewed obedience and love. This turning is central for any Christian with same sex attraction, as it aligns the heart with God's will.

Repentance is pictured in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). The son comes to see the bitterness of his sin. He does not seek to diminish it but rather humbly confesses and returns to his father. And the father welcomes his son back into his arms, just as God does with us when we turn back to Him.

Repentance recognizes that we are not just doers of sin but sinners by nature. It involves addressing both our specific, concrete sins and our deeper sin nature. It reaches both the root (original sin) and the fruit (actual sins). We confess actual sins individually, repenting of and forsaking them. We repent of our sin nature more broadly as we lament our sin, hate it more over time, and seek to put it to death in our hearts. Repentance deepens as we come to know more of how sinful we really are. Because we never escape indwelling sin until death, we will always need to repent. As we continually repent, we continually magnify the glory of God in Christ. In Him we find true comfort.

## FIELD GUIDE

The life of the Christian is one of continual repentance. If you are a Christian who is struggling with same sex attraction, your life of repentance may have a particular recurring theme. This is no different to any of us. We all tend to struggle more with one sin or another. We all have our areas of sin that we spend most of our lives doing particular battle with. Yet even without knowing you, I can guarantee you also struggle with a host of other sins. Our corrupt nature is sadly predictable like that. Be careful not to be defined by one particular set of sinful desires. You are more than your sin. You are a redeemed sinner, saved by a gracious God. In Christ, you have been set free from your sin. All your sin has been forgiven in Him. Even while our focus may be mostly on the big areas of sin in our lives, we should be repenting of and fighting against all of it.

True repentance is marked by fruit. It involves a new resolve to fight sin and love God. We do not play with our sin. We do not try to get as close to it as possible without physically acting upon it. Sin is something we do and suffer; we should not embrace it as our identity. Sinful desires cannot be 'sublimated' or repurposed to holy means. Sin is sin and can only be sin. We should put our sinful desires to death and run from them as we run to God and seek to grow in holiness. This is the practical outworking of Christian faith and same sex attraction—a daily commitment to turning away from sin and turning toward Christ, learning how to overcome same sex attraction by walking in the Spirit.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. How does the objection that needing to continually confess sin leaves you 'never fully right with God' distort and misunderstand the Gospel?
2. What are ways you are guilty of this same view of sin and confession?
3. Is the idea of repentance being a return to the God who never left you new for you? How might this redefine your understanding of both God and your sin?
4. What does repenting of same-sex desire look like practically? How might the categories of 'seeing sin, being grieved by sin, confessing sin, turning from sin' help answer how to deal with same sex attraction?

# 4

## SANCTIFICATION

In the previous chapter, we talked about the process of turning from sin to God. Our lives should be marked by growth in likeness to Christ as we constantly flee from sin and pursue holiness. This growth in Christlikeness is commonly called sanctification, and it is central to understanding same sex attraction Gospel topics.

### ***What Is Sanctification?***

Sanctification is the process of being set apart (made holy). It is the renewal in us of the image of Christ. Throughout Scripture, we see this talked about in two ways: as both a definitive act and a progressive process.

### **Definitive**

The New Testament often speaks of sanctification as something that has already happened to believers. Paul writes to ordinary Christians, still struggling with sin, and calls them “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and “saints,” meaning, “holy ones” (1 Cor. 1:2; see also Eph. 1:1; 4:12; Phil. 4:21). He reminds them, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified” (1 Cor. 6:11). Hebrews, likewise, says that believers “have been sanctified” through Jesus’s sacrifice “once for all” (Heb. 10:10). This means that at the moment a person puts their faith in Christ, God declares them holy and sets them apart as His own. United to Christ, believers share in the benefits of His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:4-6).

This act changes our nature, such that the believer has died to sin and become a new creation in Christ (Rom. 6:2; 2 Cor. 5:17). It marks a definitive break from the dominion of sin, where sin no longer rules over us despite its continuing presence in this life. God declares us holy, not because of anything in us, but because we belong to Christ and are covered by His finished work. This is different to justification, where God declares the ungodly righteous and removes sin’s guilt (Rom. 4:5). In sanctification, God

## FIELD GUIDE

removes sin's power, changing our nature so that we are constituted as righteous. This once-for-all setting apart at conversion is typically called 'definitive' sanctification and is the foundation for all our growth in holiness throughout the Christian life. This truth is the bedrock of Christian faith and same sex attraction.

### **Progressive**

Being set apart as holy in Christ does not mean that believers are already perfect. There is a tension between what we already are, and what we are yet to be; an 'already-not-yet' to the Christian life. We are sanctified and are being sanctified. We have put off the old self and put on the new self in Christ (Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:9-10), and yet we "must put sin to death" and not let it reign in our bodies (Rom. 6:12). The Christian life is therefore marked by growth as we fight against sin and learn to walk in obedience to Christ (Rom. 6:12; Col. 1:10). This ongoing transformation is called 'progressive' sanctification.

If definitive sanctification answers who you already are in Christ, progressive sanctification addresses how that reality is worked out in everyday life. Progressive sanctification is the lifelong, Spirit-enabled process by which believers are increasingly freed from sin's power and renewed into Christlikeness (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10).

Scripture accurately represents the believer's continued struggle with sin, including those struggling with same sex attraction. Our ongoing battle is not a sign of death but of spiritual life. Besetting sins force us to cling to Christ and rely on Him. They make us long for heaven when sin will be no more. They humble us, bring us to repentance, and force us to depend upon Christ crucified. But we must remember that our sin is ultimately defeated. God provides grace sufficient to endure temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), so that believers are no longer enslaved to sinful desires but empowered to resist and increasingly overcome them. Progressive victory over sin is real: desires can be weakened, put to death, and in some cases overcome altogether as the Spirit renews us inwardly. Daily repentance is central to sanctification. Our new self is renewed and strengthened through the ongoing practice of turning from sin. We are not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:2). What

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

God has begun, He will surely bring to completion as we are sanctified until Christ's return (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23).

The reality of definitive sanctification means that regardless of your current struggles with same-sex attraction, regardless of how you wrestle with sinful desires, you *are* sanctified. God views you as holy, just as Christ is holy. God has not only declared you free from the guilt and condemnation of sin, He has declared you one of his set apart holy ones. This is your fundamental identity.

We should also remember that progressive sanctification is a lifelong journey with ups and downs. This does not excuse our sin but encourages us to pick ourselves back up and keep fighting when we give in to our desires. And homosexual sin is not inescapable. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul describes how “the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God” (v9). This includes “the sexually immoral” and “men who practice homosexuality” (v10). And yet, the very next verse declares “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (v11). This is a key passage regarding same sex attraction in the Bible. What wonderful news! While desires may linger, we have been set free from our sin. If you have come out of an actively gay lifestyle, this no longer defines you. Such were you, but you were washed and sanctified. Praise God for his life-changing grace.

While we are not promised complete victory over any one sin in this life, this does not mean freedom is not possible. While heterosexuality is not the goal for the person struggling with same sex attraction as a Christian, sinful desires are not an unchanging reality. The world may teach this—often framing it as fixed genetic sexual attraction or a permanent same sex attraction disorder—but it is foreign to Scripture. Scripture tells you that in Christ, you are free from the reign of sin, providing real Christian help for same-sex attraction. We can be genuinely transformed with a new nature. This change cannot be coerced or forced, but it really happens. Some do see victory over their desires to the point of being able to get married, having previously been marked by same-sex desire. There are many who do not.

## FIELD GUIDE

Heterosexuality is not the goal of sanctification. While ‘natural’ in their created purpose, heterosexual desires can be equally as disordered. The point of sanctification is to grow in Christlikeness. We may not be free from sin in this life, but we should see some growth over time as we mortify our sin to death in the power of the Spirit. One day we will be free from sin. This offers hope for how to overcome same sex attraction in the ultimate sense.

This should make us ruthless in killing our sin, from its very beginning as desires in our hearts. Sin seeks nothing less than your destruction. As John Owen famously warns, “always be killing sin or it will be killing you.” Sadly, many Christian leaders argue that same-sex desires are not sinful until acted upon. This misleads believers regarding same sex attraction and dampens the Spirit’s convicting work in their hearts. While we should take great care not to bind consciences where God’s Word does not bind, we should equally take great care not to endorse and encourage things that God’s Word clearly denounces as sin.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. How does understanding definitive sanctification shape the way you view yourself in Christ? How do you view ongoing sin or sinful desires in light of this?
2. What specific sins can you currently call ‘put to death’ in light of progressive sanctification?
3. What are some sins you need to mortify that you have focused less on?
4. Looking at the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), where do you see evidence of God’s sanctifying work in your life?
5. How does the promise that God will complete the work He began in you (Phil. 1:6) encourage you to keep fighting sin, even when progress feels slow or uneven? How should this hope shape your response after failure?

# 5

## COMMUNITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Fighting sin was never meant to be done alone. We are not strong enough to fight sin in our own power or wisdom. God has designed the local church to be a committed community of believers who walk together through the Christian life, helping one another resist sin, grow in holiness, and persevere in faith until the end. For a same-sex attracted Christian who struggles with desires, the local church is not a peripheral support.

### ***Polity Matters: A Church That Takes Sin and Love Seriously***

If the church is the God-ordained context for preserving holiness in His people, then how a church is ordered and led matters deeply. A church's structure (its polity) inevitably shapes its culture and how its people live. How a church understands membership, discipline, and authority communicates what it truly believes about sin and salvation. This structure is often the unsung hero for those asking how to deal with same sex attraction within a faithful community.

First, meaningful church membership creates mutual responsibility. Membership is not consumer choice, it is a covenant where believers commit to each other's spiritual growth, including holding each other accountable to God's commands. In membership, an individual commits to the whole church, and the whole church commits to the individual. Church membership means inviting others to speak into your life, even if that speech is uncomfortable (Eph. 4:16-17). Members commit to living transparent lives, speaking truth in love, and loving each other enough to hold one another accountable in their Christian life. Church membership should mean something as we disciple each other, encourage each other,

## FIELD GUIDE

care for each other, and live openly with each other. This kind of vulnerability is essential when addressing same sex attraction.

Second, church discipline takes sin seriously. Church discipline is the process of confronting sin in the life of its members, whether as a private admonition or formal removal from membership, with the goal of restoration. Church discipline reflects and exalts Christ as it guards His name and glory. In a world that minimizes sin and treats personal desires as sacred, biblical church discipline stands as a countercultural witness. Scripture teaches that persistent, unrepentant sin is dangerous, not only for you but for the whole church body (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Even if confronting sin is difficult, it is commanded by God (Matt. 18:15-20). Church discipline is always with the goal of restoring the believer in repentance (1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; Gal. 6:1).

Church discipline follows through with the commitments of meaningful membership. How can we claim to be committed to each other's spiritual wellbeing if we are not willing to follow through and speak hard truth? Through church discipline, we guard one another from the allure of sin. We remind each other of sin's dangers and encourage one another in our fight. For someone struggling with same sex attraction, this safeguard is not an act of hostility, but an act of profound love, preserving them in the Christian faith and same sex attraction struggle by keeping them tethered to Christ.

### ***A Culture of Discipling***

Part of a healthy church is a culture of discipling. Fueled by meaningful membership, discipling is the act of walking alongside fellow Christians as we seek to bring each other to maturity in the faith (Eph. 4:14-16; Col. 1:28; Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:11). Programs and structures cannot create this, nor can mere policy statements about same sex attraction; what is needed is shared life shaped by intentional relationships.

At the heart of discipling is allowing yourself to be truly known. Sin thrives in secrecy. Growth requires bringing it into the light. Scripture repeatedly connects spiritual health with walking in the light together as we confess sin, pray for one another, and bear each other's burdens and sorrows (Jas. 5:16; Gal. 6:2). This means we should have genuine openness with other

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

Christians. It might only be one or two people, or might be many, depending on your personal relational abilities. But Scripture is clear that the Christian faith is not a lone-ranger faith. A discipling culture encourages honest accountability where Christians can be open with each other and humbly admit when we are struggling. A discipling church makes it clear that all Christians are engaged in a battle with sin. Those struggling with same sex attraction do not face a special category that disqualifies someone from fellowship; their desires are a particular manifestation of the human struggle with sin.

Discipling involves encouragement and strengthening. Nobody thrives and grows on rebuke alone. We need reminders of the Gospel: the grace we have received, our sins forgiven by God; hope of resurrection. A robust discipling culture keeps our eyes trained on what is yet to come, as we long for Christ's return and sin to be no more. In church community, we can learn from more mature saints who have learnt through decades of obedience, suffering, repentance, and joy. They encourage us to continue fighting and are evidence of the power of the Spirit in overcoming sin.

Discipling also requires friendship. In a world obsessed with eroticism and romantic love, a vision of Christian friendship must be regained. Friendship is shown in Scripture as a profound good, capable of bearing immense spiritual and emotional weight. For Christians called to costly obedience, especially lifelong singleness—a reality for many same sex attraction Christian believers—friendship is not a consolation prize. It is a God-given means of love, joy, and belonging. A church culture of discipling should be intentional in cultivating friendships that are real, sacrificial, and permanent. In this, we provide a preview of heaven where we will not be given in marriage but will be united to the Lamb as His bride, the church (Rev. 19:6-9).

### ***Compelling Community***

Church community is not just formative, it is evangelistic. Jesus taught that love among Christians would be a witness to the watching world (Jn. 13:34-35). A community marked by truth, grace, and sacrificial love is profoundly compelling in a culture that is increasingly fractured. In a world filled with loneliness and empty searching, the genuine community of the church stands out. A church grounded in God's design gives stability to a world

## FIELD GUIDE

full of identity confusion and offers a unique hope not found elsewhere. Love is not mere affirmation. It is a willing commitment to a person's good and the church's combination of conviction and compassion displays this clearly. When unbelievers witness Christians loving others unlike themselves, united in evidently supernatural ways as they bear each other's burdens, provide for each other, forgive one another, and persevere together in obedience, they see living evidence for the truth of the Gospel.

The desire within each of us to belong and to be loved is not inherently sexual. It is fundamentally human, as we are created with a deep desire to be known and loved by God. Our deepest need is not met through sexual fulfilment but through reconciliation to God. The church must be careful not to reinforce the cultural assumption that sexual intimacy is the primary form of human connection. Same-sex desires cannot be 'sublimated' into abstract spiritual activity and 'chosen people' are not a sinless loophole for same-sex partnerships. This perspective is one of the most important same sex attraction Gospel topics: belonging is not dependent upon sexual expression. It is grounded in union with Christ. Those who forgo sexual relationships for the sake of Christ are not condemned to a lesser life. As they deny themselves and take up their cross, they find life in its fullest (Matt. 16:24-27). You are not losing out on love, you are committed to a far deeper, infinitely longer lasting form of it.

The local church is meant to be a living demonstration of the Gospel as repentance and forgiveness are lived out. Its life together should testify that Christ is better than sin and obedience, while costly, is worth every penny. The church is not perfect in this life, but it is a place where imperfect people are welcomed, sinners are changed, and saints are formed for glory. In church community, you will never walk alone, finding the ultimate form of same sex attraction Christian help.

## SEXUAL ATTRACTION

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. Why is fighting sin not something God intends for us to do alone? What are some ways you have positively or negatively experienced Christian community in your fight for holiness?
2. What makes it hard for you to be genuinely known by other Christians? Is there anything you can share with a discipler that could help them minister to you better?
3. How can you strive to build genuine, godly friendships in the church?



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