
THE BATTLE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Response to a Letter Detailing One Man's Struggle with Homosexuality...

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

This article, or letter Daniel wrote was in response to a young man's many questions about faith and sexual identity. Wrestling with the spiritual confusion of being continually drawn into homosexuality yet knowing Jesus as his Savior, this man lived under an escalating sense of doom and hopelessness. The encouragement Daniel offers here is not only valuable for those who have this particular struggle, but also for those who know someone who struggles with homosexuality.

I was very glad to read your letter, and I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for you to write me in light of the shame you feel, and the understandable fear you have that I would simply tell you more of the same (*read more; pray more; try harder, let God, etc.*).

I do not pretend to have an easy, foolproof solution, but neither do I believe your situation is hopeless. May I offer you some possible ways to look at your grievous situation a bit differently? I hear and believe you when you say you do not want to sin. You sound like the Apostle Paul who was himself, like all of us, trapped in a fleshly body, often doing the very things he decidedly did not want to do (see Romans 7-8). His conclusion, which I find to be a very helpful beginning point of understanding as I try to come to grips with my own struggles, is two-fold:

1. The force and power of sin is unalterably evil, and it is too strong, too conniving, too opportunistic for anyone to battle successfully on their own; I will always be subject to slavery in my flesh; and,
2. Jesus Christ has given me another life—almost as though there are now “*two me's*”—that is not subject to the influence of sin; that “*new me*” remains sinless, regardless of what my *evil twin*, the “*old me*” may do.

Thus, when all is said and done, the new Me, the real Me, the *I'm-going-to-go-to-Heaven-to-live-with-the-Lord-forever-because-I've-been-forgiven-through-the-sacrifice-of-Jesus-Christ* Me is never in jeopardy from what the sinful Me, the *people-have-no-idea-what-goes-on-in-my-mind-and-in-my-heart* Me may do. In my daily struggle, I try to remember that the eternal fight has already been won by Jesus my Advocate and Redeemer.

But now to your particular question about your battle with homosexuality:

1. On the one hand, sin and the temptation to do what we ought not do, will always be a problem. The temptation faced by one man may not be exactly the same as that facing another, but no man can hope to be so rid of sin that he is no longer tempted. Until the years begin to diminish a man's sexual drive, sex—whether illicit or appropriate—will be a constant desire for all except those who have Paul's gift.
2. Secondly, sin is always cumulative in its power. That is, the more steeped I become in lying, the more I end up lying. Ultimately, sin wants to master me—to remove my choice, my will—my very personhood from the equation. Sin consumes us and increasingly enslaves us to do its bidding. For instance, the more I give in to anger, the angrier of a person I become. It is not just that I am more easily provoked to an outburst of anger by frustrating circumstances. Anger, as a character trait, increasingly seeps into my soul, and feels more and more familiar (natural).

This is where the lie comes from that says, "*You are a homosexual; it's who and what you are. So, quit fighting it.*" I suppose, in a way, others could call someone who lies a great deal a liar, but God would never surrender His loving and delightful intention for that person by agreeing with that label. God would not fashion someone as a liar, or as an angry person, or as a covetous person, or as a homosexual. He created us in His image for high purpose and destiny.

Almost all men battle against sexual sin—more or less victoriously at various times. We seek visual and physical stimulation, and we have an incredible drive to bring that stimulation to a climax. While some men at some times will attach their physical drive to an emotional one, say with someone whom they "*love,*" most men are fully capable of enjoying sex—its physical arousal and resolution—without any emotional connection whatsoever. What stimulates one man may not stimulate another; the visual/emotional stimuli—however different—still trigger the same physical drive in either one, and it takes considerable restraint to pull back and to squelch it once it is aroused from slumber.

So, whether it is a picture in a magazine, an imagined scene in the mind, a cute smile, a bouncy hairstyle, a short skirt, a longing to be mothered, a provocative stance, or some peek at a body-

part—any number of internal and external factors can trigger that strong sexual drive in a man (or woman).

What makes the homosexual temptation particularly difficult to resist is, in my opinion, due to several additional factors:

1. The assault it mounts against your essential personhood, lying to you about who you are and how God made you. It is the only sin in our culture that claims to be an issue of identity, not morality. Even though Jesus teaches us to deny ourselves, this sin tries to convince you that it is your destiny—who and what you are; to deny its urges is seemingly to deny your fundamental persona. That is one reason why it feels so huge, and the struggle you have against it gets mixed in with questions of identity and personhood—issues not as connected to heterosexual temptations and failures.
2. The connection it has with some point of wounding, disappointment, violation, or confusion early in your life. Being sexually assaulted by a man; suffering the neglect of a dad; being overburdened by a mother; getting confused during those early games of “doctor;” etc. (and I’m not saying this short list is exhaustive)—but some early-in-life jolt or rattling set up a pathway for emotional/spiritual/verbal/physical streams to run together on a course God never intended. When enough similar thoughts/experiences accumulate, they confirm that “*waterway*,” reinforcing its existence and making it seem legitimate.
3. The feeling that homosexuality is a sin worse than others, increases the shame you feel for having a sin so wickedly strong and the rage you feel because it seems so unfair that something so much a part of you is labeled as so wrong. The human soul cannot for long bear up under the weight of feeling irredeemably bad—as an act of self-preservation it eventually rejects the judgment (and the judges, i.e., God and the church) made against it. So, you will flop back and forth, hating your sin at some times, and resenting God or Christians at other times because they have said this thing in your life that is so hard to resist, is so wrong.
4. The scarcity of people who publicly testify to Jesus’ delivering power in this area—since, homosexuality is seen by so many people as a “*really bad*” sin, probably worse in their minds than almost any other, not many people will confess to having had that sin in their life. Instead of gaining hope and encouragement from other men who once battled what you are fighting, you end up feeling like you are the only one fighting a hopeless battle.
5. An ongoing battle with the kind of hyper-moralism that afflicts much of the church today. Paul lumps most sins together in lists that cannot be separated into degrees of

“bad” and “worst” (see 1 Corinthians 6:10-11; Galatians 5:19-21, etc.), but somehow we think lying or coveting is less ruinous than lust after the same sex. That makes as much sense as thinking one terminal illness is somehow worse than another. Though the symptoms may differ—some being more painful than others—the outcome of death is the same.

6. The unnatural (i.e. ill-fitting) nature of same-gender sex that Paul refers to in Romans 1 is intended to illustrate how sin of any kind will pervert what God designed for us from the beginning. I do not believe he was saying that people who struggle with homosexual temptations are fundamentally more depraved than those who are tempted to lie or to covet.
7. The demonic nature of thought patterns or lifestyles that significantly alter our God-created persona, our soulish make-up. There is more to homosexuality than simple sexual temptation of your flesh. Think of it this way; lying may be a simple, sinful choice that I make, or the compulsion to lie may be the result of not just of my carnal choice, but of the pressuring influence of a lying spirit. I may be plagued and oppressed by a spiritual force, a demonic presence that wants to change me into its image. Like Paul puts it, “*Our struggle is not (only) against flesh and blood...*” (Ephesians 6:12). A lustful spirit exacerbates and heightens the internal sexual tensions, and it drives a person into sin even more than their natural, carnal nature propels them. It is kind of like a gas pedal getting stuck. Whenever a sin enlarges in someone’s life to the point where it significantly shifts their essential personality away from God’s original design, you can almost always count on the fact that some of that sin has received additional impetus and exigency from a demonic spirit.

Well, this is at least a start to what I would share with you. I can also recommend a couple of tape series from CTW: “*Good News for the Afflicted*,” “*Deliverance Series*,” and “*Withstanding Depression*.” If you listen to these series, they will provide more thought for future discussion. Again, thank you for the honor of trusting me enough to tell me about your pain.

Warmly in Jesus,

Daniel