

Sexuality, Gender and Jesus

LGBTQ, Part 3: A Compassionate Response

February 3, 2013

The Big Idea:

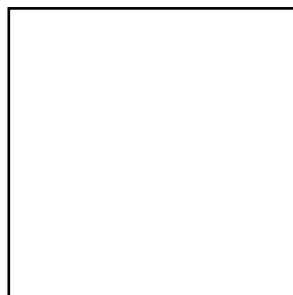
Homosexuality and GID is an intensely personal and complex struggle; therefore, discussion of cause and solution requires compassion, wisdom, and a willingness to listen to a person's story.

Introduction

"Human sexuality must be understood in light of a variety of influences, including biological, sociological, psychological, theological, as well as gender, emotions, behaviors, attitudes and values... Authentic human sexuality has to do with human beings seeking to live as sexual beings according to God's design and purpose."¹

Natal Sex: Physical & biological features at birth that determine whether the baby is male or female.

Gender Role: One's gender identity as defined by a particular culture.



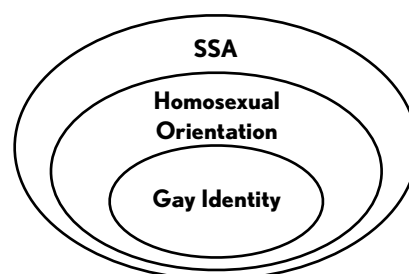
Sexual Identity: A person's sexual self concept, the view one has of oneself as a sexual person.

Sexual Orientation: The direction of one's erotic attraction.

Review ~ SSA and GID Key Terms & Ideas

On Choosing: "People do not choose to experience same-sex attraction; it is something they find themselves experiencing."²

A Three-Tier Distinction: A person experiences varying levels of homosexual attraction and desire: same-sex attraction (SSA), homosexual orientation; these may lead to a gay identity. speaks to a person's experiences without reference to behavior.



Gender Identity Disorder: Described as strong and persistent cross-gender identification accompanied by persistent discomfort with one's assigned sex. A person can express a struggle with gender identity disorder (GID) and report either hetero- or homosexual attraction.³

¹ Judith K. Balswick and Jack O. Balswick, *Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 13-14.

² Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010), 80.

³ Mark A. Yarhouse, Richard E. Butman, and Barrett W. McRay, *Modern Psychopathologies: a Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 314-315.

Learning Task #7: A Loving and Compassionate Response

7A: Listen to the following quote from Henri Nouwen. As it is read, circle or underline anything that strikes you. Then, as a large group, answer the following question: “When you have received spiritual hospitality, how did that change you, or make you feel?”

Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings... Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even dare to be silent with you. [Henri Nouwen]

Notes:

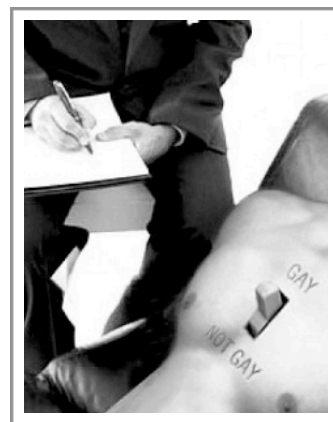
Change: Key Terms and Ideas: *We'll use this info in Task 7C.*

The Beginning of Change: Identity 'In Christ'

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
[Galatians 2:20]

The Process of Change: Not a Switch, a Dimmer

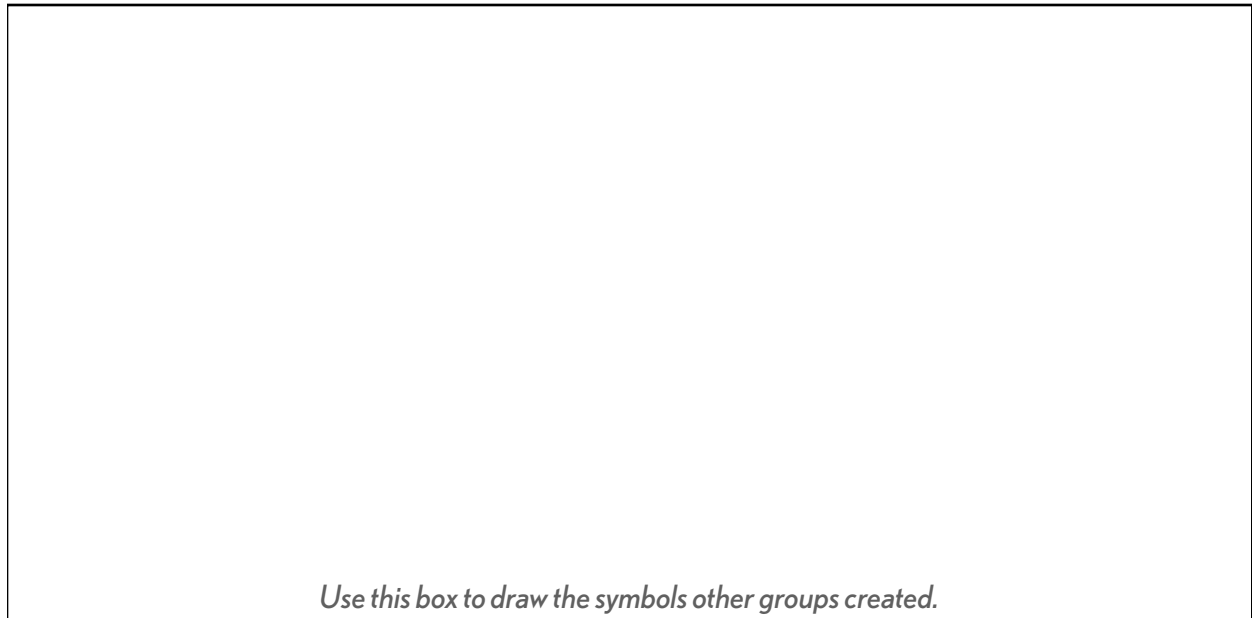
“It appears that most people will not change their orientation, if by that we mean moving from ‘completely gay’ to ‘completely straight.’ But change can occur along a continuum. Sometimes same-sex attraction does diminish, and in one of the most recent studies of attempted change through Christian programs, many participants who continued in their change effort reported a decrease in attraction to the same sex so that chastity was not the burden it had been before. A smaller number of participants also reported an increase in attraction to the opposite sex or to their spouse.”⁴



Notes:

⁴ Yarhouse, 94.

7B: Examine the following passages of Scripture: Proverbs 18:21, James 1:19, and Colossians 3:12. At your table, **draw** a symbol that represents your assigned verse(s) and **post** it at the front of the room. See the example of Ephesians 4:15 for a clue! *We'll use these symbols in Task 7C and 8.*



Use this box to draw the symbols other groups created.

7C: Using some key texts from previous sessions (summaries are at the front of the room) and the symbols from this week's session (7B), and your understanding of what change looks like in the life of a person experiencing SSA (7A), **respond** to the following case study.

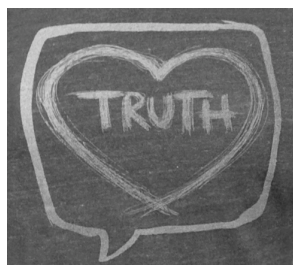
Last week, your small group met for the first time after the Holidays. As usual, John and Barbara, good friends of your family, stay after the group has left to chat and help clean up the kitchen. While you are chatting, John and Barbara tell you that their son Daniel, their youngest away at college, came out to them over break. He confessed to them that he's been struggling with same-sex attraction, and has been going to counseling at school to deal with it. He is sure that he doesn't want to act on these attractions, and that his identity as a Christian is more important than his experiences, but that he's struggling to reconcile his faith and his attractions.

John and Barbara have fallen to pieces; they are angry at Daniel for staining their reputation, and they feel like he's blaming them for his struggle. John tells you that he instructed Daniel to pray that God would take this away, and Barbara wants him to stop choosing to feel this way. They both feel that Daniel is sinning grievously, and John proudly tells you about the reaming he gave Daniel for being "a gay."

As you listen, you feel conflicted: John and Barbara obviously want you to praise them for how they spoke to Daniel, yet you know that this was not a compassionate response, much less a biblical one. Looking at John and Barbara, you engage them in a discussion of what they're missing with this issue.

Notes:

A Closing Word: Speaking the Truth in Love



Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.
[Ephesians 4:14-15 NLT]

7D: At your tables, **name** one way the Village Church could become a safer place for people struggling with SSA or GID.

Notes:

Learning Task #8: Carpe Eruditio (Seize the Learning)

8A: Name a day this week that you'll Seize the Learning: _____.

8B: **Review** your notes and **reflect** on a point of discussion or a Scripture that particularly struck you. Then, take a few minutes to **read** the attached blog post, "I Hugged a Man in His Underwear. And I am Proud."

8C: **Write** a response to at least one of these questions:

- The author suggests that Jesus would have hugged this underwear-clad man, too. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- What makes this is a biblically faithful and authentically human expression of compassion?
- Does this story make you uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?

8D: After you've reflected one these questions, **e-mail** Kyle an insight or response to one of these questions at kyle.h.tennant@gmail.com.

For Further Reading

Mark Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*
Christopher Yuan, *Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God, A Broken Mother's Search for Hope*.
Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*
Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are*

A Note on The Learning

For this semester's Hot Topics series, Kyle and Stephanie will be utilizing the principles and practices of **Dialogue Education** to learn with you. Pioneered by Jane Vella, a Catholic missionary, nun, and educator, dialogue education believes that the teacher should never do for the learner what she can do her herself. In that sense, there is no teacher: there are only learners of whom the teacher is one.

Jane Vella has written, "The end is learning, the means is dialogue and the purpose is peace." By asking open ended question and engaging in learning tasks each of us participates in the learning by being attentive to one another and to Christ who is the *dia-logos*, the Word among us. Jesus is who, the how, and the why of our learning.

Our hope is that as we learn together you are able to take your learning to your life in order to be conformed to Christ. This is our hope, and prayer: that through our time together Christ would be formed in you (Galatians 4:19).

In light of this, we commit to come to class each week prepared, with the necessary materials for our learning in-tow, so that meaningful, Christ-centered learning can take place. We invite you to come to each session ready to learn: to engage in learning tasks, to answer questions, and to experience the joy of learning together. Remember: joy is the measure.

Our Coming Sessions

Dates and Topics Subject to Change

Session 1: Sexuality, Gender, and Jesus 2.3 ~ LGBTQ, Part III - A Compassionate Response 2.10 ~ Pornography 2.17 ~ Modest or Sexy? Session 2: Hot Topics, Etc. 2.24 ~ Global Outreach Conference 3.3 ~ Politics: To Vote or Not to Vote? 3.10 ~ Politics: Was Jesus a Socialist? 3.17 ~ Entertainment, Culture, and Discernment 3.24 ~ Unfriend Yourself	3.31 ~ No Class - He is Risen! 4.7 ~ Depression, Despair, and Doubt' Session 3: Family Matters 4.14 ~ How Low Can You Go? Living within Your Means 4.21 ~ The Role of the Church in the Family 4.28 ~ No Class - Congregational Meeting 5.5 ~ Parenting for Healthy Adulthood 5.12 ~ No Class - Happy Mother's Day! 5.19 ~ Bullying 5.26 ~ Loving Families with Developmental Disabilities
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I Hugged a Man in His Underwear. And I am Proud.

by Nathan Albert⁵

I hugged a man in his underwear. I think Jesus would have too.

I spent the day at Chicago's Pride Parade. Some friends and I, with [The Marin Foundation](#), wore shirts with "I'm Sorry" written on it. We had signs that said, "I'm sorry that Christians judge you," "I'm sorry the way churches have treated you," "I used to be a bible-banging homophobe, sorry." We wanted to be an alternative Christian voice from the protestors that were there speaking hate into megaphones.

What I loved most about the day is when people "got it." I loved watching people's faces as they saw our shirts, read the signs, and looked back at us. Responses were incredible. Some people blew us kisses, some hugged us, some screamed thank you. A couple ladies walked up and said we were the best thing they had seen all day. I wish I had counted how many people hugged me. One guy in particular softly said, "Well, I forgive you."

Watching people recognize our apology brought me to tears many times. It was reconciliation personified.

My favorite though was a gentleman who was dancing on a float. He was dressed solely in white underwear and had a pack of abs like no one else. As he was dancing on the float, he noticed us and jokingly yelled, "What are you sorry for? It's pride!" I pointed to our signs and watched him read them.

Then it clicked.

Then he got it.

He stopped dancing. He looked at all of us standing there. A look of utter seriousness came across his face. And as the float passed us he jumped off of it and ran towards us. In all his sweaty beautiful abs of steal, he hugged me and whispered, "thank you."

Before I had even let go, another guy ran up to me, kissed me on the cheek, and gave me the biggest bear hug ever. I almost had the wind knocked out of me; it was one of those hugs.

This is why I do what I do. This is why I will continue to do what I do. Reconciliation was personified.

I think a lot of people would stop at the whole "man in his underwear dancing" part. That seems to be the most controversial. It's what makes the evening news. It's the stereotype most people have in their minds about Pride.

Sadly, most Christians want to run from such a sight rather than engage it. Most Christian won't even learn if that person dancing in his underwear has a name. Well, he does. His name is Tristan.

⁵ <http://naytinalbert.blogspot.com/2010/06/i-hugged-man-in-his-underwear-and-i-am.html>

However, I think Jesus would have hugged him too. It's exactly what I read throughout scripture: Jesus hanging out with people that religious people would flee from. Correlation between then and now? I think so.

Acceptance is one thing. Reconciliation is another. Sure at Pride, everyone is accepted (except perhaps the protestors). There are churches that say they accept all. There are business that say they accept everyone. But acceptance isn't enough. Reconciliation is.

But there isn't always reconciliation. And when there isn't reconciliation, there isn't full acceptance. Reconciliation is more painful; it's more difficult. Reconciliation forces one to remember the wrongs committed and relive constant pain. Yet it's more powerful and transformational because two parties that should not be together and have every right to hate one another come together for the good of one another, for forgiveness, reconciliation, unity.

What I saw and experienced at Pride 2010 was the beginning of reconciliation. It was in the shocked faces of gay men and women who did not ever think Christians would apologize to them.

What I saw and experienced at Pride 2010 was the personification of reconciliation. It was in the hugs and kisses I received, in the "thank you's" and waves, in the smiles and kisses blown.

I hugged a man in his underwear. I hugged him tightly. And I am proud.