

Introduction

This morning, I'm going to preach about something that is what we call a "hot potato." The Father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, once said: **"If you preach the Gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the Gospel at all."** He was right. Suppose you were given this assignment. Study all the news lines of all the newspapers, magazines, and television news shows in 2010. Then list the five most publicly discussed and passionately debated issues in America today. One of those would surely be homosexuality. It's one of the hottest of all hot potatoes and what I'm going to preach about today.

The Nature of Homosexuality

I start with what I would call the nature of homosexuality. Is it normal and right or abnormal and wrong?

Almost all homosexual organizations and their mainstream media supporters argue that a so-called "gay gene" transmits it genetically. Oprah, for instance, has devoted several slanted shows to that very topic. The argument is that since it's hereditary, it must also be normal. Americans are being propagandized about that and it's working. According to one Harris poll, 35% of Americans now believe that homosexuality is a genetically caused condition.

But there's no scientific evidence that it is. There are no respected geneticists today who claim to have found a "gay gene." There's evidence to the contrary in fact. That evidence shows that homosexuality isn't inherited and normal. Clinical psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolisi is perhaps the world's foremost authority on the prevention and treatment of it. In his book *Preventing Homosexuality*, he explains what he believes is its cause. Boys and girls go through a critical process of gender identification in the first 1-5 years of life. It's this process gone awry, he says, that causes homosexuality. In his book *Bringing Up Boys*,

James Dobson agrees. He, like Nicolisi, views it as a gender identification problem. The bottom line is this. Homosexuality isn't inherited and normal. It's a psychological disorder and abnormal instead.

But it isn't just a disorder. It's a sin as well.

The Bible addresses this issue in five different texts. In Leviticus 18:22, God calls homosexuality "**an abomination.**" In Leviticus 20:13, He calls it "**a detestable act**" and criminalizes it. In Romans 1:26-27, Paul describes it as a perversion. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, he asserts that it excludes people from "**inheriting the kingdom of God.**" And in 1 Timothy 1:10, he declares it unsound. Christians and non-Christians alike try to explain these texts away.

Tony Campolo, for instance, argues that the two Leviticus texts are part of the purity or ceremonial laws that the New Testament abrogated or did away with. But he doesn't know what he's talking about. They are part of the moral and judicial laws instead that are still binding on us. Anglican Bishop John Spong and author John Boswell address the New Testament texts. They point out that male prostitutes were part of Greek and Roman religion. And that's what Paul is condemning – not homosexuality per se but homosexuality as an act of worship. Or, they contend that he wasn't condemning people with homosexual orientation practicing it. He was condemning people with heterosexual orientation practicing it to get sexual thrills.

But these texts aren't about that. Nothing even hints that they encompass the narrow set of circumstances that Spong and Boswell claim they do. Their interpretations are brought to the texts not taken from them. Charles Colson summarizes it simply and well: "**Though gay groups and liberal clerics have tried to find ways to justify it (like claiming Paul was gay), the Bible condemns homosexuality.**"

That then is the nature of homosexuality. It isn't normal and good. It's abnormal and wrong instead.

What Homosexuals Should Do

Now, that nature makes clear what homosexuals should do. It's one of two things.

The best thing they can do is to change orientation. That raises a passionately debated issue. Can a truly homosexual person develop a heterosexual orientation? The gay community answers, "**No.**" It argues that being homosexual is as predetermined as one's race and that nothing can be done about it. But psychologist George Rekers disagrees. He points out that there is considerable evidence that change of sexual orientation is possible - with or without psychiatric intervention.

Mansell and Myrna Pattison concur. In an article published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, they wrote: "**The data provide a substantial body of evidence for the plausibility of change from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality.**"

The testimonies of many former homosexuals substantiate that. Alan Medinger is one of those. Medinger was a practicing homosexual for 17 years. But he is today a Christian and founder of *Regeneration*, a ministry to homosexuals. His orientation actually changed and he is helping others have the same experience.

But sometimes, attempts to change don't work. Sometimes homosexuals seek but do not achieve it. They are still attracted to the same gender just like they were before. When that is the case, and orientation can't be changed, then behavior must be controlled.

There's something we need to understand in that regard. The Bible doesn't condemn homosexual orientation. It condemns homosexual practice. Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer wrote a letter to a Swiss pastor, answering questions he had about homosexuality. Listen to an excerpt from that letter: "**The opposite mistake is the one that orthodox people have made. That is, that homophile tendencies are sin in themselves, even if there is no homosexual practice. Therefore the homophile tends to be pushed out of human life and especially orthodox life even if he does not practice**

homosexuality. Schaeffer was right. Homosexual practice is sin, but homosexual orientation is not.

If the orientation doesn't change, therefore, behavior must be controlled. Homosexuals must make and carry out the decision not to be sexually active. They're like heterosexual single people in that regard. James Dobson explains it this way. Almost all males have inherited a lust for women. Consequently, if males did what they were genetically programmed to do, most would be sexually promiscuous by the age of 14. But single Christian males aren't. Knowing what God commands, they control their passions and refrain from having sex. It's the same way with homosexuals. If their orientation doesn't change, their behavior must be controlled. They must control their passions and refrain from being sexually active.

Homosexuals face the same challenge that single heterosexuals do. It's to address their needs but to be sexually pure before God as they do. Quaker author Richard Foster wrote a book titled *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life* that helps them do just that. His book is about money, sex, and power. In it, he presents the best theological and practical treatise on sex that I've ever read. He explains in the course of doing so how homosexuals and single heterosexuals should live out their sexual lives as followers of Jesus. It's must reading for both groups.

So that's what homosexuals should do. Change their orientation. If they can't do that, control their behavior.

What Christians Should Do

Now let's examine what Christians should do. A well-worn but instructive old maxim tells us. Hate the sin but love the sinner.

We hate the sin by resisting the normalizing of homosexuality. That is the primary agenda of homosexual organizations today. Mainstream it into the everyday fabric of American life. They want it presented, viewed, and accepted as a valid lifestyle choice. But as Charles Colson says it,

"The further homosexual behavior is normalized, the more clearly those with eyes to see will recognize that our destruction is upon us." He's right. So we refuse to be sucked in by our culture's normalizing of homosexuality. We think, speak, and act as if it's abnormal and sinful - even when we're charged with bigotry and homophobia if we do. A pastor's gay brother asked him to perform a wedding ceremony for his partner and him. Believing he'd be publicly endorsing homosexuality if he did, he declined, despite scathing criticism from his family for doing so. Followers of Jesus must hate the sin.

But we must love the sinner. Some professing Christians don't. They hate or abhor homosexuals. The bylaws of one Pennsylvania Church, for instance, prohibit homosexuals from even attending its services. Then there's the elder of a Bible believing church I know who said, **"I hope every homosexual in America goes to hell."**

Followers of Jesus shouldn't be that way. My wife and I had lesbian next door neighbors when we lived in Boardman. We related to them as persons of value and worth. We treated them truthfully and lovingly. There's a reason we did. It's because that's what Jesus would have done if He were we. That is our guiding principle isn't it. Treat homosexuals as Jesus would if He were we - with truth and love.

There's a second thing we should do. The first is hate the sin but love the sinner. The second is hate our own sins.

Listen to another line from the letter Francis Schaeffer wrote to the Swiss pastor, **"Their sins are no greater than our sins."** You and I may not like hearing that. But the least we should do is consider it. Are the sins of homosexuals really any greater than our own sins?

Notice some of the other sins that Paul lumps in with homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. One of those is being covetous. The Greek word translated **"covetous"** refers to being possessed by the desire to have more and more money and things. It's what we would call "materialism." That raises a vital question. As bad as homosexuality is, is it any worse than the materialism that characterizes so much of our culture, churches,

and individual lives? Verses 9-10 imply that it actually isn't. Someone once asked me, "**How upset would you be if one of your sons became a homosexual?**" To which I replied, "**As upset as I'd be if he became a materialist.**" Yes, it's true. The homosexual is excluded from God's kingdom. But according to 1 Corinthians 6:10, so is the materialist. The desire to acquire more and more seems as abhorrent to God as homosexuality is. God's reasons for destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, as Ezekiel 16:48-50 reveal them, confirm that.

It's time that we have the courage to face and deal with our own sins if we have them. I once heard a televangelist, who is a rank materialist, rail against other preachers for not speaking out against homosexuality. They aren't courageous enough, he declared, to do so. But what about him? He's never once spoken out against the materialism that his congregation and he are practicing. It doesn't take courage to speak out against the sins that our people and we aren't committing. It does take a lot of courage to speak out against the ones that we are. But that's exactly what we need to do.

Schaeffer was right. The sins of homosexuals are no greater than some of our sins if we have them. We need to identify our sins, confess them, and repent just as we're asking homosexuals to do. God **will** forgive and bless us, just as He will them, if we do.

Conclusion

I close with an observation. Homosexuality is something that is or will be relevant to us all. I conducted the funeral service of a cousin of mine, for instance. He was a 32 year-old homosexual who died of AIDS. I know that some of you probably don't like the fact that I preached about homosexuality or that I said about it what I did. But please understand that I didn't do it to upset you. I did **it** because, as Luther rightly said, I'd be remiss, unfaithful to the gospel, if I didn't.

Homosexuality is an issue that the Bible addresses and that touches or will touch us all. It's a hot potato, therefore, that all of need to handle, whether we like it or not!