



## THE WIN

The group member will reflect on their own belief in the authority of Scripture and determine appropriate responses to relevant issues present in American culture by responding to case studies and choosing responses that reflect the love of Christ.

3-5  
minutes

### SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The message this week addressed many issues within the homosexuality conversation currently alive in American culture. The Scriptures are clear that homosexual relationships/lifestyle is against God's design for humankind. An examination of Genesis 1:27-28 reveals specific instructions to man and woman. God tasked them to fill the earth together and steward the earth together. Man and woman formed a relationship that would carry out God's desire for the world he created.

3-5  
minutes

## WARM UP

### ASK THIS:

- Is participating in the homosexual conversation easy or difficult for you? Why?
- What is your greatest hope for the homosexual conversation in culture today? Your greatest fear? Why? What will happen if it were to come true?

35-40  
minutes

### THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

### Which statement(s) do you believe best describes your LifeGroup:

- In our group we function best with others who are like-minded. Those with different worldviews or beliefs would not feel comfortable here.
- In our group we accept people as they are and then walk with them towards Jesus because none of us have the Christian life figured out yet. We do not allow perfect people at our LifeGroup.

- In our group we're accepting and caring but if you are living outside of what the Bible teaches, we'll have issues with you.
- In our group we have no specific Biblical values we seek to preserve, anyone is welcome and whatever they believe will be accepted and respected.

**SAY THIS:**

Since the earliest times of church history, the Bible was viewed as the chief authority of all matters. The early church father, Augustine, wrote "truth is to be discovered both by reason and authority of holy Scripture...not by human judgment, but by authority of divine Scripture."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the middle ages the church's position on all cultural/moral matters were entrenched in the supreme authority of Scripture. During the reformation era the church had been corrupted by politics and greed. A group of people broke free from the institutional church (Catholic church) and set out for reform and protested (Protestants) the church's position on various matters, including the authority of Scripture. This group of reformers, led by Martin Luther, believed firmly that "the Word of God is to reign supreme, alone determining doctrine and practice..."<sup>2</sup> In modern society, evangelicals affirm Scripture's authority stating "scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience..."<sup>3</sup> and "the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried"<sup>4</sup>

**ASK THIS:**

- In the cultural conversation of homosexuality, how much value do you think is placed on the church's historical-modern position on homosexuality? If none, why do you think culture has cast aside this position?
- How a person decides to live their life romantically is at the forefront of the cultural conversation today. In your view, what is the root issue of the homosexual conversation?

*Leader Tip: Press the group for an answer and encourage them to dig deep within themselves. You might hear responses like "freedom" "equality" "acceptance" "love" "social progress." These are surface responses that are already active in culture. Dig deeper, for example; if a group member says 'acceptance' perhaps your response could be "What does acceptance look like?" "Who determined that acceptance should be a universal right?" "Who decided what is fair and what is not?" "What would happen to morality if accepting all life choices was a value in culture?" "Surely acceptance cannot be the root issue here."*

*Leader Tip: What we're after here is the group member reflecting on what/who is the deciding factor in moral issues. A suggested answer might be: 'I believe the root issue is 'I decide what is right and wrong.' 'If my body desires a romantic relationship with the same gender then my acting to satisfy that desire is in line with my biology. How can that be wrong.' So, the ultimate authority of right and wrong is me.*

- How does what you perceive to be the root issue of the homosexual conversation fit with the teaching of Scripture? Is there tension? If so, who yields? Is there alignment?

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Of Holy Virginty*, 19, 21, in Nicene-and Post-Nicene Fathers, 3:423.

<sup>2</sup> Greg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) 88.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article II (1978).

<sup>4</sup> Baptist Faith and Message, Scriptures (1963).

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**SAY THIS:**

As we learned in the message this week, Scripture is clear on homosexuality, as is our response. What is not as clear is how to engage those who struggle with homosexuality. There are many who use passages of Scripture such as Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 as reason not to engage with homosexuals or if they are friends with homosexuals-not talk about it.

The line of thought is as follows: *As long as my life is not affected and I am not in a position to interact with the merits of homosexuality, I'm okay. I believe homosexual relationships are wrong because the Bible declares they are wrong. Even if I have a friend who is a homosexual, as long as we don't talk about it, I am at peace with the whole homosexual conversation. After all, who am I to interfere with the choices they have made?*

**DO THIS:**

Take 30 seconds and take turns sharing with the group how you believe the church should interact with practicing homosexuals who are open to God? What about those who are not practicing homosexuals but struggle with same-sex attraction?

**SAY THIS:**

There are many in the homosexual community who love God and want to follow Him but struggle daily. There are also many views on how the Church should engage the homosexual community? Let's take a look at a church from the 1<sup>st</sup> century that had a myriad of problems; Corinth.

**READ THIS:**

1 Corinthians 5:9-12

**ASK THIS:**

- In this passage, Paul is correcting Corinth because they have misunderstood Paul's teaching from a previous letter. What was their misunderstanding?
- Why would Paul want the Corinthians to associate with the 'immoral people of this world'?
- What do you think 'associate' means? (hint: look at v.11b-do life with)
- In the broader context of the passage, Paul is addressing immorality within the church body, and then specifically addresses their misunderstanding. Paul could have not addressed their misunderstanding and simply addressed the immorality within the church. But he didn't. How is the gospel implied in this passage?

**REREAD THIS:**

1 Corinthians 5:11 (for context read 1 Cor. 5:1-5)

- What is Paul teaching against in this verse?
- In verse 11 Paul is exhorting the Corinthian church to serious action. Who is this action aimed at (hint: those supposedly who call themselves Christians)?

**LOOK UP: (HAVE SOMEONE LOOK UP WITH SMARTPHONE)**

Covetous  
Idolater  
Reviler  
Drunkard  
Swindler  
Arrogant

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**SAY THIS:**

These are descriptors Paul uses to describe the people to look out for **IN** the church. Once found we are to disassociate with them in a manner consistent with Scripture.

*Leader Tip: For a helpful chart describing appropriate methods of Christian discipline visit \_\_\_\_\_*

**SAY THIS:**

This is a great discovery for the student of Scripture.  
Paul is teaching against conventional wisdom. See the visual below:

Immoral outsiders >>>>> Associate with the for the purpose of the Gospel (see Matt 28:18-20)  
Immoral insiders >>>>> Do not associate with for the purpose pursuing righteousness (Dt.13:5,1Cor. 5:2)

**ASK THIS:**

- How does Paul's teaching challenge your view on engaging those who are 'immoral'? (for a brief list of what Paul considers immoral see Romans 1:24-32)
- In your past, how have you seen the tags listed above affect the church?

**SAY THIS:**

No matter if we struggle with same-sex attraction, are practicing homosexuals or heterosexual we all struggle with sin (Romans 3:23). Some of us are liars, adulterers, and idolaters, while others of us are murderers, drunkards, and gluttons. We all need grace found in Jesus Christ and while the homosexual conversation in culture today may polarize us on one side of the conversation, our response to those who struggle with this sin is critical. Just as Christ accepted His followers as they were, so the Church is to accept homosexuals as they are. But the Church cannot stop there! The Church must walk with homosexuals along the path of faith towards Christlikeness.

**DO THIS: (Have three people read these three case studies)**

Have the group discuss what their response would be.

**Case Study #1**

Hello there. I want to get something off my chest. I'm not upset but rather I'm wanting my voice to be heard. I am a proud homosexual Christian. I grew up in a Christian home and when I entered my 20s I became increasingly attracted to the same sex. I found tremendous happiness in the warm embrace of the homosexual community! I'm also a devout Christ-follower. I've been walking with Jesus for some time now and know the theological argument. How can I follow Jesus fully if I'm 'living in sin'? Well, to respond, how can you follow Jesus fully if you 'live in sin' but of a different stripe? I may be 'living in sin' because I enjoy the full benefits of homosexual relationships but I've seen heterosexual Christians at restaurants daily held captive by the sin of gluttony. I've seen them succumb to the crushing weight of greed and the debilitating effects of lust at sports events, bars, and the workplace. When in the boardroom listening to presentations at my job I've seen Christians routinely stretch the lie in order to give the appearance of strong performance. On Friday nights I go out with friends and see Christians I know personally (many on a weekly basis) unwind by humiliating themselves and their families by having too much to drink. Now, are these Christians not 'living in sin'? I guess I just want a level playing field theologically. We are not called to follow Jesus *when we want*, we are called to follow Jesus *in everything*. Now, I'm still a work in progress and will yield to the Spirit as He refines me into the image of Jesus. But as long as I see heterosexual Christians 'living in sin' the correction they send my way will fall on deaf ears. Now that I've sent this message I wonder if anything will change?

-Gay with a good argument

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### Case Study #2

Hi. I have a confession to make. I'm gay. Now, I'm not some new person who is searching for a church home and wondering if this church is right for my family. No, you see I have been attending here for many years. I attend every Sunday like clockwork. I attribute the upward mobility in my spiritual walk to the teaching I've listened to and experienced at this church and the great Pastors here. I'm gay and I am sitting next to you each and every week wanting to grow in my walk with God, just like you. I guess I should be ashamed that I've kept this secret from you for so long but it's hard for me. You see, the Christians that I have known in my adult life are great people! But I've been around them (its mostly the guys) when they have talked about gay people. I've sat and listened to Christians poke fun of how SOME gay people talk and dress. At first I was in shock, but as time went on I have grown used to the derogatory nature of their conversation. So, can you blame me for not telling you I'm gay? I hear the Pastor encourage the church to join a small group because we can't reach our full spiritual potential without the help of other people. I truly believe spiritual growth is a team sport. I want to reach my full spiritual more than anything, but I'm scared. I'm not sure that I will be encouraged and supported once you know who I am. There is a sadness that grips my heart when I think that I am a new creation in Christ, part of a new family, and a child of the King but cannot experience the blessings of community. Can I? Will you accept me?

-Scared sheep wanting go further

### Case Study #3

Hey there. Let me just come right out and say it, I'm gay and I'm upset. I'm sorry to be abrupt but I cannot control the misunderstanding most Christians have about homosexuality. Here's my problem. The Christians I know are bull-headed, irrational, religious zealots because every time I try to share with them what I'm about to share with you I get shut down and ignored. It's hard for me to have any interest in their god, I'm mean why would I want to join their club and act like they do? I don't want to be out of touch with culture, prudish, and at times bigoted! Every time I muster the strength to reason with one of my Christian friends it's the same result, conflict. What I wish they would be willing to do is put a piece of tape over their mouth and listen to my heart. And my heart says homosexuality is not as easy an issue as they think. I'm gay and believe I was born attracted to the same sex. If they would just be quiet and listen to my past they would hear the stories of my being bullied in junior high because I wouldn't shower with the others, they would hear of the hazing through high school because of the way I wore my hair. They would hear the voices of Christians inviting my entire class to the church overnight arcade party but leaving me out because I'm 'different.' The abuse I have endured through school did, at times, drive me to almost end my life. As I got older, the Christians would hear my parents try every tactic they could think to convince me that I wasn't gay because I can simply choose not to be. I am not on speaking terms with my parents nowadays. It hurts me deep in my soul but that is a separate issue. How can you look at me with a straight face and tell me my body is lying to me? My question to my Christian 'friends' is this: Look at my past! Why would I ever choose to be gay if I knew that my upbringing would be a living hell and it would cause me to lose the love and acceptance of my parents? So, I'm left with the conclusion that I was born gay. In closing, the Christians I know won't stop talking about this Jesus guy who came to die for me. If he came to die for me, I wonder if he would listen to me? My Christian friends sure don't.

-Angry yet sad wanting to be heard

## CLOSING THOUGHT

We grow through relationship, as we all learn to offer our very selves to God to obey his Spirit's leading. Acceptance of people is not the same as agreement with their choices, beliefs, or behaviors. People will misunderstand acceptance as agreement. But it's still worth the risk. If God is willing to take that risk, shouldn't we be willing?

John Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed* (pgs. 100-101)