



Homosexuality

A Christian Response

The Christian response to homosexuality is based on the clear teachings of Scripture, rooted in the proper application of Law and Gospel, and inspired by the love and compassion of Christ Himself.

God created man and woman as sexual beings.

In the beginning, the Scriptures say, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). According to the Bible, both God and our neighbor are honored when we rejoice in our individual identities as male and female and when we see in our creation as sexual beings an indication of the fellowship which God created us to enjoy. Although not everyone need marry, marriage (the lifelong union of one man and one woman) has been ordained by the Creator Himself for the good and happiness of men and women and for the blessing of humankind as a whole. Whether married or unmarried, Christians glorify God and find fulfillment by joyfully acknowledging and embracing what His Word says about how we are to live out our sexual identity in accordance with His good and gracious will.

In His Word, our heavenly Father lovingly warns us against harmful sexual desires, actions and attitudes.

In His great love for us, God in His Word clearly identifies sexual attitudes and actions which are contrary to His good and gracious will for humanity and which hold potential for harm rather than blessing for human beings and human relationships. The Scriptures soberly warn those redeemed by Christ's blood against all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, sexual activity outside of marriage, and homosexual behavior (see 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-20). In Romans 1, St. Paul lists homosexual behavior among a great number of other sins which illustrate the failure of human beings to honor God as the all-wise Creator of everything that exists (Rom. 1:24-32). No matter what the causes of homosexual orientation may be (e.g., environmental or genetic), it is clear from Scripture that, like all sinful human beings, the homosexual is held accountable to God for homosexual behavior—all thoughts, words, and deeds that fall short of God's holy will.

The Gospel of Christ offers forgiveness and new life to everyone.

The central message of Scripture is the life-giving, life-changing Good News that God's love and forgiveness in Christ are available to all who acknowledge their sin and trust in His forgiving grace. "If we claim to be without sin," says John, "we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:8-9). Christians must be on guard constantly against responses to homosexuality which involve self-righteousness, a lack of compassion, and a refusal to love and forgive as Christ has first loved and forgiven (1 Jn. 4:10, 19). At the same time, it would be neither faithful to God's Word nor helpful to fallen humanity to attempt to justify homosexual behavior or to ignore or make light of this departure from His will. God's Law must be spoken compassionately yet clearly in order that His Gospel may be joyously proclaimed and believed.

The church calls all sinners to repentance and faith and seeks to embrace them with Christ's love.

In view of the above, the truly loving Christian response to homosexuality includes urging the homosexual to heed God's call to repentance and to trust in God's promise of forgiveness and deliverance from sin (Ps. 50:15). Those striving to overcome homosexual desires also need to be assured constantly of the love and acceptance of Christ and His church, and the church must be willing and ready to help such persons in their efforts to order their lives in accordance with the Creator's intent as they rely on Christ's love and power. The church also needs to minister to the families of homosexuals as they bear the burdens and face the challenges which go hand-in-hand with applying God's Law and Gospel patiently, persistently and compassionately to a loved one who is engaged in or struggling against homosexual behavior.

Through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit enables God's children to resist the desires of the sinful nature and to walk in Spirit-led freedom and holiness.

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious," says Paul: "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like....But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:19-25).

Without seeking to minimize in any way the great burden experienced by the person struggling to say "no" to homosexual inclinations, we dare also not minimize the power of God's Spirit to help Christians resist and overcome sinful thoughts, desires and behavior. Through Baptism, says the apostle, "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Our baptism into Christ, together with our regular and faithful use of God's Word and participation in Christ's Supper, enables us to put to death daily the sins and evil desires of the old Adam (including sins of hatred or disdain toward homosexuals themselves), and to live instead as "new creatures" before God in righteousness, love and purity.

Christ calls His church to challenge and to resist the sexual idolatry of modern society.

Finally, in view of the fact that many voices in our society today are expressing the view that homosexuality (as well as other forms of sexual immorality) should be regarded as acceptable "alternative lifestyles," the church now more than ever must stand ready to challenge and resist the sexual idolatry of our society, and to proclaim boldly the Good News of Christ's redeeming love to all who so desperately need to hear and believe it. "You are the salt of the earth," says Jesus. "But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?" "You are the light of the world. ... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16).

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Response to Homosexuality

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognizes the sinfulness of homosexual behavior as well as the urgent need to declare that the redeeming love of Christ is available to all through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (see 1973 Res. 2-04 and 1992 Res. 3-12A). The Synod has begun the process of developing a Law/Gospel ministry plan for congregations and other institutions seeking to minister to individuals and families. Included among the goals to be pursued by such a plan are the following:

1. to offer to our world biblically acceptable ways of developing and expressing deep friendships between persons of the same sex which do not involve genital sexual activity;
2. to "speak the truth in love" to homosexuals regarding their sinfulness, and to call them (together with all sinners) to repentance;
3. to help homosexuals recognize the power of God available to them through Word and Sacrament as they struggle against homosexual inclinations and actions;
4. to assure repentant homosexuals of forgiveness in Christ and of the love and acceptance of Christ's church;
5. to help homosexuals to rely on Christ's love and strength to abstain from homosexual behavior;
6. to help homosexuals to bear their burden without fear of recrimination and rejection by their sisters and brothers in Christ;
7. to find ways of ministering to families that include persons of homosexual orientation;
8. to do all this patiently, persistently and compassionately in the love and Spirit of Christ, who says, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

In 1981, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations issued *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, which was distributed throughout the church and was commended by the Synod for study and guidance (see 1983 Res. 3-14). In 1991, the Synod's Council of Presidents adopted "Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Supervisors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Addressing Instances of Homosexuality in the Lives of Professional Church Workers."

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