



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

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One of the most important

topics facing the Church today is human sexuality. The Bible speaks clearly, assuring us God created human beings as male and female. It is He who defines human sexuality and gender. Jesus Himself, pointing back to creation, assures us in Matthew 19:4-6, that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Sadly, however, the world is trying desperately to “squeeze us into its mould” (see Rom. 12:2, Phillips) as it seeks to pressure all to accept new definitions of human sexuality and marriage. Some, even within the church, are attempting to redefine Scripture to justify non-biblical understandings and practice.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have always built our faith and practice on the Bible, and we will continue to do so. Pastor Mark Finley delivered a powerful presentation addressing human sexuality from a biblical foundation. That message has had more than 370,000 views since premiering on YouTube, August 3, 2023. The lead article is a shortened version of his presentation. Also featured is a powerful story of someone who found freedom from a homosexual life.

May you find this issue of the ECN to be of help and encouragement as you serve as leaders in God’s field.

MAURICE VALENTINE,
GC GENERAL VICE
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SEXUALITY TASKFORCE

EDITORIAL



AARON BURDEN/UNSPLASH

WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT LGBTQ+

BY PASTOR MARK FINLEY

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST AUTHOR AND EVANGELIST

Editor’s Note: This article is adapted from a video message given by Pastor Mark Finley on August 4, 2023. You may access the video by capturing the adjacent QR code with your cell phone camera.



*I*n our quest for truth today, we challenge a societal norm. Does the message of the Bible align with the current rise and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community, or does it contradict it? Join me as we open the Word of God and study the Scriptures.

In Ecclesiastes 3:7, we read, “there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak,” and that verse has been echoing in my head. Why have I chosen to speak about this subject now?

First, I’m concerned—concerned about the direction our society is going, and how that direction impacts the church I love. I’m concerned about the next generation, and how young adults are imbibing a message that does not align with Scripture. I’m concerned about children whose minds are being saturated with information regarding the LGBTQ+ community. And so it is out of that concern, care, and love, that I speak today.



Now, there are certain things that have led me to the conclusion that it's time to speak. Here are some examples:

On June 24, 2023, the *New York Post* reported that at the recent New York Drag Queen March, activists chanted, "We're here, we're queer, we're coming for your children."¹ It's shocking, but not surprising. In recent years, such blunt, outrageous rhetoric has become commonplace. Two years ago, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus released a video in which 81 of its members sing a song with the refrain: "We'll convert your children. Happens bit by bit, quietly and subtly, you'll barely notice it."

Have you followed the debates taking place in public schools today, where young children between four and eight years old are exposed to books on LGBTQ+ and sexual fantasies at a very young age? These children's books are intentionally placed in schools to indoctrinate our children in a non-biblical agenda.

Jared Eckert, a researcher at the Heritage Foundation, points out children are being increasingly targeted with sexual content under the guise of comprehensive sex education or inclusivity. Beyond being inappropriate for children, Eckert cites research showing early childhood exposure to sexual content is linked to poor mental health, risky

sexual behavior, and pornography addiction in adulthood.²

OVERHAULING AMERICA

Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill, LGBTQ+ advocates, published "The Overhauling of Straight America," outlining a master strategy for changing attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ lifestyle. Their plan is to influence public conversation by talking about this alternative lifestyle everywhere, with particular focus on media to change the mindset of individuals.

They go on to say, "So far, gay Hollywood has provided our best covert weapon in the battle to desensitize the mainstream. Bit by bit over the past ten years, gay

characters and gay themes have been introduced into TV programs and films. On the whole, the impact has been encouraging.”³

When I looked at how the promoters of this lifestyle were attempting in every way to influence media to have their voice heard, I felt that a voice from the Word of God should speak. I felt we should allow God’s Word to influence our thinking.

THE BIBLE AND SEXUALITY

What does the Bible teach about sexuality? What does it teach about same-sex marriage? Are some people born with same-sex propensities? Are some people physically boys but psychologically girls? Is change possible? What is the Christian response?

First, let me tell you what the Christian response is not. As Christians, we condemn all violence against any human being. Not only is it inappropriate, but it’s a violation of God’s moral law. Romans 5:8 says, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”⁴ Christ died on behalf of all humanity. Everyone has a fallen human nature and propensities toward evil. As Christians, we cannot have any superiority over another person and look at them with hate because of their actions. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that everyone has a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Romans 3:23 states “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” But Christ, in His divine love, grace, and mercy, left the glories of heaven and lived in human flesh,

facing every temptation we would ever face and was victorious over the evil one. So, there is no place for hate. If Jesus loved His enemies, we can reach out in love to all humanity, including those who may not live the lifestyle we as Christians believe is in harmony with God’s Word. We all need God’s grace.

As Christians, we’re saved by grace. We rest in His love, and in the Christian ethic, we respect others’ freedom of choice, even if we do not agree with their lifestyle. So as Christians, while we cannot affirm a lifestyle that’s not in harmony with Scripture, we can accept the fact that people are free to make their own choices. They are free to live the life they choose to live, and that does not mean we condone their lifestyle. It’s important in this discussion to separate our compassion for others from their behavior or actions that are not in harmony with the will of God.

TO TRANSFORM CULTURE

The purpose of the Church is to transform culture, not to be transformed by culture. The purpose of the Church is to change the culture, not to be changed by the culture. The Bible is very clear on the transforming power of the grace of God through believers to transform culture. We find this in Romans 12:2—“do not be conformed to this world.” I like the way the Phillip’s translation puts it: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould,”

but be transformed. How? “By the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Paul invites us to go out and change the culture; to be lights in this world of darkness. In Philippians 2:15 he writes, “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ.”

If we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we walk in the truth of His Word. Remember Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

It’s the word of God that enables us to distinguish between truth and the lies of Satan. Love tells the truth. We can’t say we love another individual and lie to them. According to John 8:44, Satan is the father of lies, and no lie is of the truth. “Love rejoices in the truth,” 1 Corinthians 13:6. So, the most loving thing we can do is share the truth of God’s Word, which presents in all of its beauty human sexuality and warns us clearly against deviation from God’s original plan.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF MARRIAGE

So, let’s pursue what Scripture says about human sexuality. In Genesis 1, we find the basis of understanding all human sexuality.

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God created male and female in His image. It is male and female together in the one flesh experience that reveals the magnificence of God's image, the breadth of His image, the depth of His image, and it reveals His magnificent love.

In verse 26 we read: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . .’” And verse 27 is key: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Continuing in verse 28: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”

God created male and female in His image (vs. 26). It is male and female together in the one flesh experience that reveals the magnificence of God's image, the breadth of His image, the depth of His image, and it reveals His magnificent love. 1 John 4:16 says, “God is love.” That love is most fully manifest when a male and a female created in the image of God enter into the one flesh experience, giving themselves to one another in self-sacrificial love, as Christ did for us. So, the first reason God created male and female, two distinct, separate sexes, is to reveal the image of God in the perfection of the love they have for each other. The second reason is, He says in verse 28, is to “be fruitful and multiply”—to propagate the human race. Male to male and female to female sexual relationships are unnatural, and they are a violation of the divine order God gave in the book of Genesis.

In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus affirms marriage is between one man and one woman: “And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” So again, we find Jesus affirming the creation story of male and female human relationships united in marriage. This is something God has done in His divine sovereignty.

SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

Now, the promoters of same-sex marriage propose something entirely different. They propose union between two men or two women. This denies the clear biological, physiological, and psychological differences between men and women. It denies the reality of husband and wife coming together and from that sacred union of self-sacrificial love, producing children. Genetically, men and women are different.

Throughout the Bible, human deviation from God's plan is pointed out, and contrasting with this is, true

faithfulness between a husband and wife is highlighted. And these two concepts are in collision. For example, in Genesis 19 we find the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Homosexuality played a part in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now, I recognize there are some who say Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they were inhospitable. That's partially true. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because there was rape and incest, and that is also partially true. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, some say, because of injustice. That's true. But they were also destroyed because of homosexuality. You can't leave that out, picking and choosing the reasons. Was Sodom and Gomorrah inhospitable? Yes. Were they filled with secular, godlessness, and materialism? Certainly. Incest and rape? Definitely. But you cannot leave out the idea that they were destroyed because of a deviation from God's plan.

MARTIN LUTHER ON SEX

I like what Martin Luther says. Commenting on Genesis 19 he said, "The vice of the Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy," or it could be said, homosexuality, "craves what is entirely contrary to nature."⁵

When Luther addresses the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he speaks about homosexuality. Male with male, burning with passion, one for the other. In the context of Genesis 19 and throughout the Bible, we have clarity that God created male and female to be in a loving relationship.

LIFE PRINCIPLES

Scripture is clear. There are many people who look to society, to culture, to shape their values, yet the Scripture is clear in shaping our values. In the book of Leviticus, God outlines life principles for His people.

You find in Leviticus 18 what some people call "the purity code." Now, this purity code also deals with moral and ethical standards, not simply the ceremonial law. It speaks of adultery, idolatry, and sexual depravity.

Leviticus 18:20—"Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her." This is the seventh commandment on adultery. I don't think anyone will argue that it's a ceremonial law. Verse 21: "You shall not let any of your descendants pass

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Promoters of same-sex marriage propose union between two men or two women.

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through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God.” What commandment is that? First, second, and third. Then in verse 22, “You shall not lie with male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” Now, was this simply a purity code? We have already seen the commandments mentioned in these verses. So, it couldn’t possibly be simply a purity or holiness code. It includes that, but you have moral and ethical standards there as well.

In a release titled, *Homosexuality, Scripture, and the Church*, Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, a former associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, addresses these Bible verses. Regarding this passage in Leviticus, he writes, “It’s true that in the immediate or larger context we find terms referring to purity, holiness, and idolatry. Still, the question must be asked whether or not these references limit the warning against homosexuality to specific situations only. This restriction is clearly not the case. First, these two texts describe and condemn male homosexual activity. No exceptions are mentioned. Obviously they’re opposed to any homosexual activity. However, it’s very likely that they included lesbianism.”⁶

So, here you have a reputed scholar from the Biblical Research Institute explaining that this prohibition of male with male in Leviticus 18 is far more than simply a holiness code for ancient people in the ceremonial law; it has to do with the moral Ten Commandment law. The holiness code, indeed, is not simply something for ancient people. Its bedrock principles help us define the truth about human sexuality.

BORN GAY?

What about the idea that some people believe they were born with a gay gene? Many say, “This is the way God created us. We are just made this way and we have genetic predispositions toward this. Some people are heterosexual, others are homosexual, some are transgender. It’s how we were made.”

There’s a fascinating article published in the well-respected journal, *Nature*, titled “No ‘gay gene.’” Published in 2019, the article reports on a study carried out by researchers at Harvard and MIT. After studying the genomes of nearly half a million people, the researchers concluded there is no such thing as a single “gay gene.”⁷

There have also been some fascinating studies on identical twins. With identical twins, you would expect them to have the same genetic disposition. But yet, how is it that some identical twins, a very small percentage,

may lean toward LGBTQ+ tendencies and others do not? If they’re genetically the same, you’d expect that they both would. But that’s not what the research indicates.⁸

But let’s assume some people are born with tendencies for male to male or female to female sexual relationships. Does that necessarily make these tendencies God’s will? Let’s suppose a man is born with strong sexual desires for women, and let’s suppose he has a really difficult time controlling those sexual desires. Does that mean his tendencies are God’s will? What about a person born with a propensity toward alcoholism or drugs because of some genetic predisposition? Is that in harmony with God’s will?

David said, “in sin my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5). All of us have brokenness in our lives. All of us have fallen human natures and propensities toward evil. Some propensities in some people occur for a lot of unknown reasons, and we do not understand all of the reasons for LGBTQ+ tendencies—they are complex. There may be some genetic reasons, social reasons, environmental reasons. It’s a very complicated, complex situation. And again, I want to emphasize we reach out in love to all human beings. And while we accept all human beings, as Christians, based on the word of God, we cannot accept their behavior.

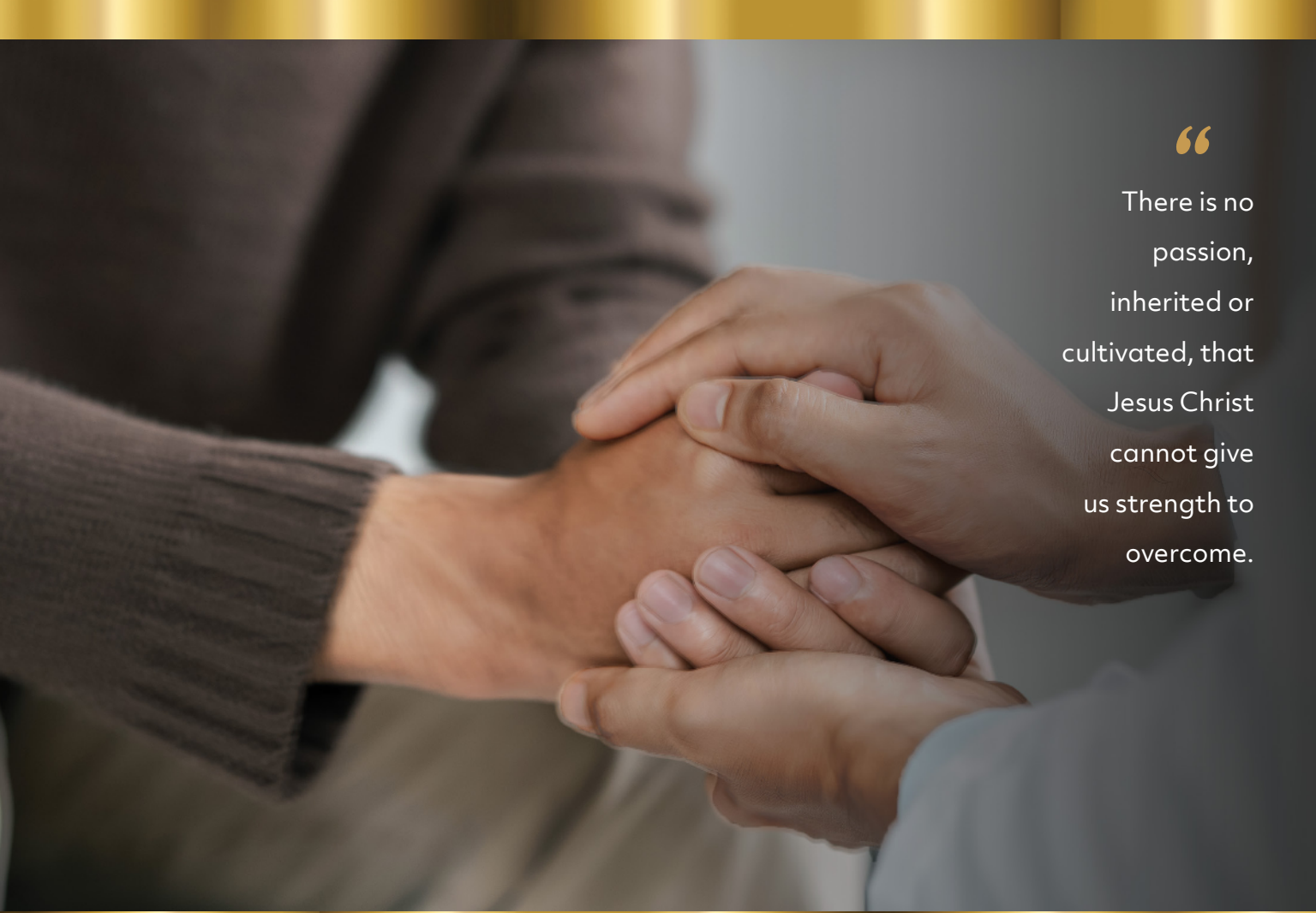
THERE IS HOPE

But there is incredibly good news for every propensity that any human being may have! Second Corinthians 5:17—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

If we’re in Christ, we are new creations. This is the same Jesus who spoke and worlds came into existence, who spoke and earth was carpeted with living green and flowers blossomed, who spoke and created sun, moon, and stars. Jesus’ power can make us new. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20).

There is hope. There’s hope for the young person who has sexual desires and has expressed them outside of marriage, for the man who has committed adultery and has had passions he can’t control. There is hope for individuals who have LGBTQ+ relationships. And that hope is in the power and grace of Jesus Christ. Christ’s grace forgives us when we fall, and His grace enters into our life and changes us. It makes us new creations in Jesus.

The Apostle Paul talks about the incredible power of God’s divine grace in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. First giving



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There is no passion, inherited or cultivated, that Jesus Christ cannot give us strength to overcome.

a warning, he then articulates incredible hope.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators,” those who have sexual relationships outside the sacred bond of marriage, “idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.”

“Such were some of you.” He speaks to the church at Corinth, a church that lived in a godless, immoral society. “But you were washed.” What does that mean? You walked through the water of baptism. You were cleansed by the grace of Christ. You confessed. You repented. God changed you. “You were sanctified.” It means

you’re made holy, set apart for God. “You were sanctified. . .you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (vs. 11)

Here is the incredibly good news—whatever tendencies we have inherited or cultivated because of the brokenness of our lives, whoever we are, straight or gay, the grace of Christ can transform us.

Ellen White makes a marvelous statement in the book *Ministry of Healing* on this very point. “Those who put their trust in Christ are not to be enslaved by any hereditary or cultivated habit or tendency. Instead of being held in bondage to the lower nature, they are to

rule every appetite and passion. God has not left us to battle with evil in our own finite strength. Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart.”⁹

What hope! There is no passion, inherited or cultivated, that Jesus Christ cannot give us strength to overcome. “Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome *all* hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”¹⁰ Here’s another statement. “The converting power of God can transform inherited and cultivated

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The most loving thing we can do is to share the amazing grace of Christ that forgives our past, transforms our present, and gives us hope for the future.



HOLY BIBLE

tendencies; for the religion of Jesus is uplifting.”¹¹

PAUL AND SEXUALITY

The Bible is clear that LGBTQ+ tendencies are not in harmony with God’s will. When Paul goes through the book of Romans, he lists the lostness of humanity early on in Romans. In Romans 1, Paul talks about the fact the Gentiles are lost, and in Romans 2, he talks about the fact the Jews are lost. In Romans 3:23 we read, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” but there is salvation in Christ, justification by faith, as explained in Romans 4-6. In Romans 7, Paul goes through a great struggle, but in Romans 8, he finds there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus, and sin no longer controls him. It no longer controls us because we are not dominated by it any longer. We are free in Jesus in the context of the plan of salvation.

In Romans chapter one, the apostle Paul addresses this whole concept of human sexuality. This is in the context of the book of Romans that is exalting the cross of Christ, justification by faith, and the power of the Gospel to transform life, and Paul must set out to show the supremacy of Christ. He must set out the lostness of humanity. So, in chapter one, he deals with the lostness, vileness, and wickedness of the Gentile world. In Romans 2, he points out that the Jews, although they have the oracles of God, although they have the prophets of God, they’ve disobeyed them. He points out all humanity is lost. He must do that in the early chapters to come to the need for our salvation and justification by faith.

So, in Romans chapter one, Paul is cataloging the sins of the Gentile world. He writes: “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving

in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (vss. 26-27).

Notice Paul talks about men leaving the natural use of women. Where does he get the expression, “the natural use of women?” Referring back to verse 25 and earlier in the chapter, he’s talking about creation. So, “natural use” in the order of creation is a male and a female becoming married. But, he says, they change the natural use of nature, indicating that homosexuality is unnatural. Then, in verse 25, we read: “who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” So, at creation God creates by a divine sovereign act, male and female.

SCHOLARS COMMENT

In the *Andrews Study Bible*, in the comments made by scholars specializing in the Old and New Testament, we read the following on Romans 1:26-27—“These verses condemn homosexual activities. Unnatural sexuality, however, goes beyond homosexual behaviors. The New Testament sanctions only the monogamous relationship between male and female. It condemns all other forms of sexual activity, whether homosexual or heterosexual, as sinful.”¹²

In addition, the new *Andrews Bible Commentary* states the following in regard to Romans 1:

“Same-gender sexual conduct became Paul’s prime evidence of Gentile sinfulness. Unlike many in the Greek and Roman world who condoned and even praised same-gender sexual conduct, Jews with one voice

considered such conduct to be against the natural order in God’s will. Any suggestion that Paul, if writing today, would have tempered his words when confronted with a loving, monogamous, and faithful same-sex couple or with evidence of homosexual orientation as a genetic predisposition is groundless. The Levitical laws against same-gender sexual conduct, with one male taking the role of the female confirmed his position. Paul’s indictment in Romans 1 includes women engaged in unnatural same-gender sexual conduct, which was well known among the Greeks. The focus of Paul’s condemnation is on same gender sexual conduct itself. Such conduct is the result of our sinful nature, which is always subject to temptation, whether momentary or chronic, and is always remedied by reliance on faith in Christ to resist and overcome sin.”¹³

The biblical position on marriage and same-sex relationships is clear. God has created males and females to experience intimacy in a monogamous relationship within the sacred confines of marriage. Any sexual intimacy outside of marriage is a violation of the law of God. Homosexual relations are unnatural, sinful, and out of harmony with the law of creation and the moral law of God.

STRONG BIBLICAL ADVOCATES

The Seventh-day Adventist

Church has long been a strong advocate for positive, loving relationships within the context of marriage. Throughout its history, the Church has been clear that sexual relationships outside of marriage as defined by the Bible, are a violation of God’s will.

Recently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church published a reaffirmation statement, leaving no doubt as to where the Church stands on this issue:

“We reaffirm, without hesitation, our long-standing position as expressed in the Church’s Fundamental Beliefs: ‘Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. God instituted “marriage, a covenant-based union of two genders [male and female] physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as ‘one flesh.’ The monogamous union in marriage of a man and woman is the only morally appropriate focus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. Any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal.”¹⁴

The statement describes how homosexuality is a manifestation of the disturbance and brokenness of human nature: “Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disturbance and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by the entrance of sin into the world. While everyone is subject to fallen human nature, we

also believe that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word.”¹⁵

Then this important aspect of the statement: “We hold that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are loved by God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn or derision, let alone abuse. Still, God’s word transcends time and culture and does not permit a homosexual lifestyle. The Bible’s opposition to same- sex unions/marriage is anchored in God’s plan at creation for marriage in divine legislation and in Jesus’ explicit confirmation of a permanent, monogamous, and heterosexual relationship by God.”¹⁶

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been very clear on this. We should, though, make a distinction between LGBTQ+ orientation and action. Each one of us, because of the brokenness of sin, have certain passions, desires, orientations, but by the grace of God we can choose not to act upon them.

SUMMARY

What are some things we can take away from the biblical principles regarding human sexuality? I think there are at least five things:

- God has created all human beings in His image. Through the fall and brokenness of sin we all have tendencies, propensities toward evil.
- God calls us to love, not hate. The Christian ethic calls us to be compassionate and respectful of one another.
- To love another doesn’t mean we approve a lifestyle out of

harmony with God’s will. The most loving thing we can do is to share the amazing grace of Christ that forgives our past, transforms our present, and gives us hope for the future.

- The LGBTQ+ lifestyle is not in harmony with the Bible and according to Scripture deviates from God’s will and is sin.
- Through the grace of God, all of us can experience new life in Christ through His transforming grace.

Jesus invites us to reach out as brothers and sisters in Christ, sharing the truth of God’s Word in kindness and compassion, recognizing that if any man or woman is in Christ, they are new creatures. Recognizing that the grace of God, the power of God, is greater than any sin. There is no sin that God’s grace cannot deliver us from by His grace and through His power. Let us embrace and love one another enough to share the truth of God’s Word, to pray together, to share the divine truths of Scripture together, and to watch the new creation take place in every single one of our lives.

¹ Patrick Reilly, “Drag marchers spark outrage with ‘we’re coming for your children’ chant at NYC Pride event,” *New York Post*, June 24, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/06/24/drag-marchers-spark-outrage-with-chant-at-nyc-pride-event-were-here-were-queer-and-were-coming-for-your-children/>.

² Jared Eckert, quoted in Virginia Allen, “Are These 7 LGBT ‘Kids’ Books in Your Child’s Classroom or School Library?” *The Daily Signal*, August 09, 2021, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2021/08/09/are-these-7-lgbt-kids-books-in-your-childs-classroom-or-school-library/>.

³ Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill, “The

Overhauling of Straight America,” *Guide Magazine* (Denver, CO), November 1987. <https://bit.ly/OverhaulingStraightAmerica>

⁴ Unless indicated otherwise, all texts are from the New King James Version.
⁵ Ewald Martin Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, Volume 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 134.

⁶ Ekkehardt Mueller, *Homosexuality, Scripture, and the Church*, Biblical Research Institute, Release 6 (Silver Spring: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), p. 14. adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/BRI-Release-6-2.pdf.

⁷ Jonathan Lambert, “No ‘gay gene’: study looks at genetic basis of sexuality,” *Nature*, vol. 573 (5 September 2019): pp. 14-15, cited in Bennett McIntosh, “There’s (Still) No Gay Gene,” *Harvard Magazine*, 29 August 2019, harvardmagazine.com/2019/08/there-s-still-no-gay-gene.

⁸ Michael Balter, “Gay Is Not All in the Genes,” *Science*, 30 June 2008, science.org/content/article/gay-not-all-genes.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), p. 175.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 671.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), p. 206.

¹² *Andrews Study Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), p. 1469.

¹³ *Andrews Bible Commentary* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), p. 1565, 1566.

¹⁴ “Same-sex Unions,” Official document, Seventh-day Adventist Church, voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, October 17, 2012, adventist.org/documents/same-sex-unions/.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

“A CAUSE FOR ALARM”

There is cause for alarm in the condition of the religious world today. God’s mercy has been trifled with. The multitudes make void the law of Jehovah, ‘teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ Matthew 15:9. Infidelity prevails in many of the churches in our land; not infidelity in its broadest sense—an open denial of the Bible—but an infidelity that is robed in the garb of Christianity, while it is undermining faith in the Bible as a revelation from God. Fervent devotion and vital piety have given place to hollow formalism. As the result, apostasy and sensualism prevail. Christ declared, ‘As it was in the days of Lot, . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.’ Luke 17:28, 30. The daily record of passing events testifies to the fulfillment of His words. The world is fast becoming ripe for destruction. Soon the judgments of God are to be poured out, and sin and sinners are to be consumed. . . .

“Before the destruction of Sodom, God sent a message to Lot, ‘Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.’ The same voice of warning was heard by the disciples of Christ before the destruction of Jerusalem: ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the

from their possessions, but must make the most of the opportunity to escape.

“There was a coming out, a decided separation from the wicked, an escape for life. So it was in the days of Noah; so with Lot; so with the disciples prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; and so it will be in the last days. Again the voice of God is heard in a message of warning, bidding His people separate themselves from the prevailing iniquity. . . .

“When Lot entered Sodom he fully intended to keep himself free from iniquity and to command his household after him. But he signally failed. The corrupting influences about him had an effect upon his own faith, and his children’s connection with the inhabitants of Sodom bound up his interest in a measure with theirs. The result is before us (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp.

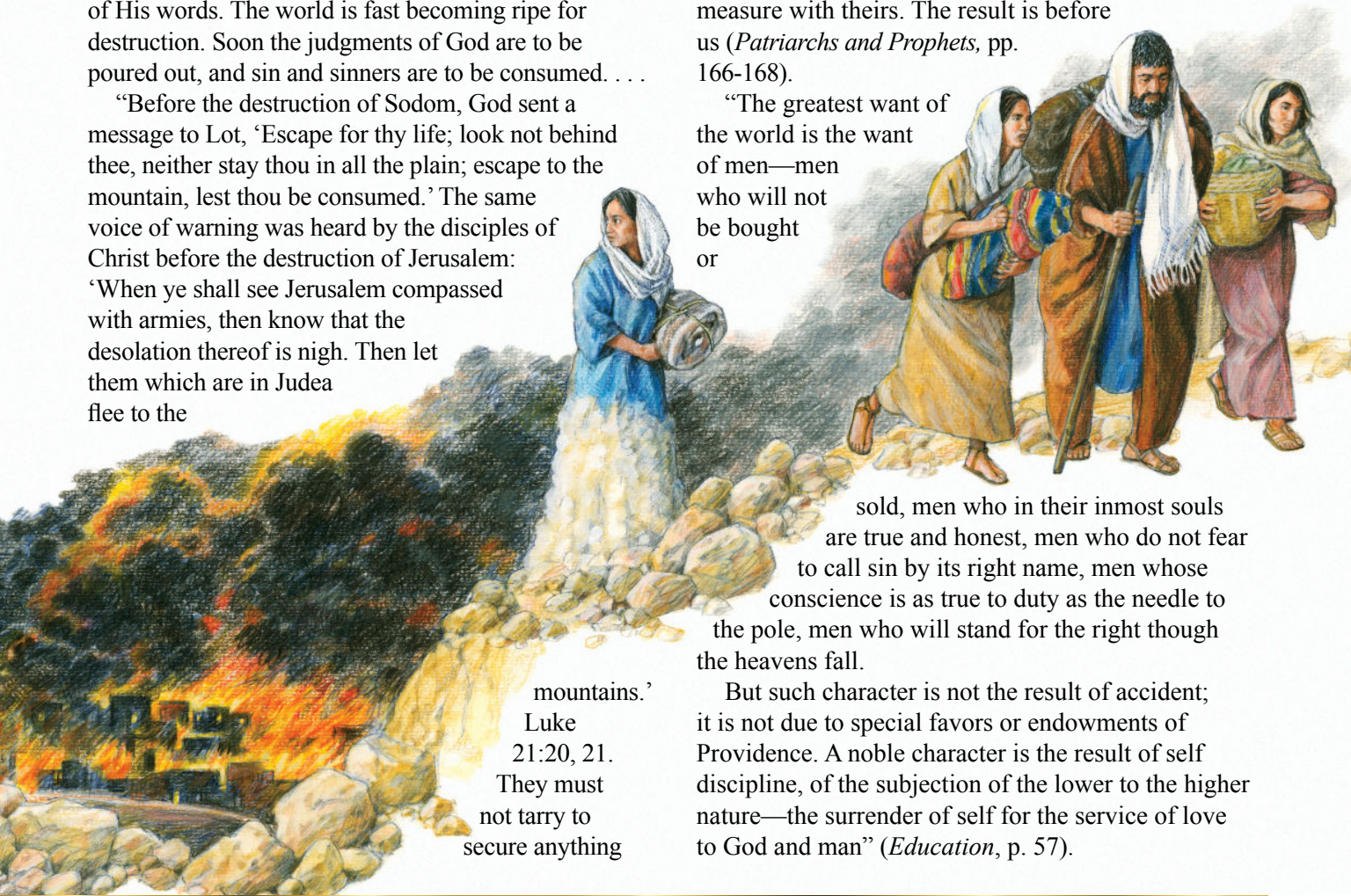
166-168).

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or

sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

But such character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man” (*Education*, p. 57).

mountains.’
 Luke
 21:20, 21.
 They must
 not tarry to
 secure anything



WHEN THE SON SETS YOU FREE

Finding freedom from homosexuality

By Gina Wahlen, Editor, *GC Executive Committee Newsletter*

As a child, Samir knew he was gay. Attracted to other young boys, he began experimenting sexually with his playmates but never talked about it. Growing up in a Muslim country, the subject of homosexuality was taboo. However, at age 16, Samir and his family moved to Sweden. He was delighted to live in a country where homosexuality was not only accepted but embraced.

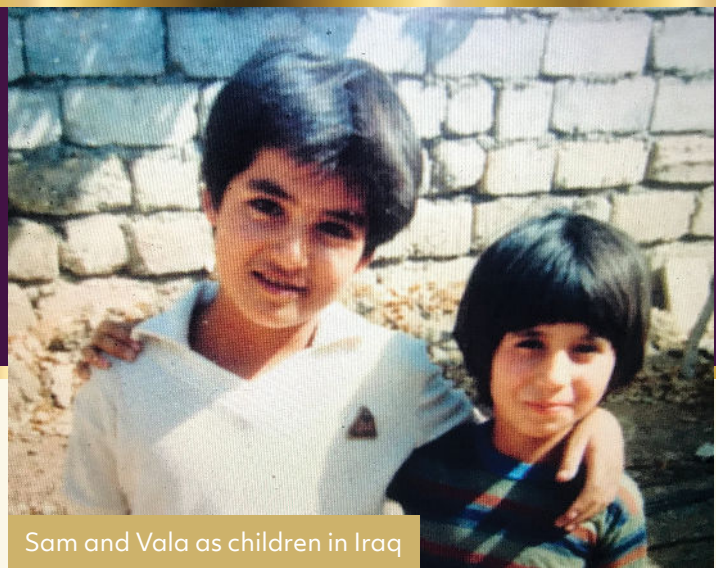
Learning Swedish quickly, Samir was soon at the top of his high school class. Following graduation, he worked as an aerobics instructor by day, and was active in Stockholm's gay bar scene at night. Although free to live the life he felt born to live, Samir wasn't happy. Finally, he decided to move to Los Angeles, California.

"L.A. is extremely gay," he recalled. "Beautiful cars, beautiful

people . . . I was in 'gay heaven.' All the men were asking me out on dates." Just a few weeks after arriving, Samir was invited to the 50th birthday party of Whoopi Goldberg, a well-known Hollywood star, where he rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous.

Having a love for money, Samir came up with a plan to grow his cash supply—he attended hairdresser school at trendy Santa Monica college. At the same time, he took real estate training, aiming to get into high-end real estate deals. Before long, Samir was working in star-studded Beverly Hills.

"I got connected with rich people," he said. "They got to know and trust me. People liked to do



Sam and Vala as children in Iraq

ALL PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY SAM JACOBSON

to Sam Jacobson, which he assumed would sound better in the American environment.

In just a few years, Sam's real estate business skyrocketed, and he was selling multimillion dollar homes. Well-known throughout Hollywood, his contact list was filled with celebrities with whom he did business and socialized with on a regular basis. When he thought things couldn't get better, Sam was approached by one of the wealthiest men in Hollywood to be his boyfriend. The two became one of the hottest couples in the city. Nevertheless, Sam still didn't have real happiness. And neither did those around him.

business with me, and I started telling my clients I also did real estate."

Socially gifted and with a strong drive, Samir changed his name

"Many of my 'successful' friends were unhappy," he said. "My boyfriend was a billionaire, but woke up every morning with anxiety, terrified he would lose it all. A couple of months after I sold a house to a very successful artist, she was very close to dying of an overdose."

Trying to ease his own anxiety and depression, Sam took a cocktail of anti-depressants and other treatments, but nothing seemed to work.

SEARCHING FOR SATISFACTION

A severe blow came with the death



Sam, second from left, jet-setting with the guys

of Sam's mother. Desperate to get in touch with his dead mother, Sam went deep into the occult, attending high-powered séances and other spiritualistic ceremonies.

During this time, his three-year-younger niece, Vala, was visiting from Sweden. Vala and Samuel were best friends since childhood. Unwanted by her parents, she had moved with Samuel's family to Sweden when they were teens.

Together in California, the two attended highly spiritualistic Ayahuasca sessions, hoping to find satisfaction for their deepest longings. Sam asked the spirits to put him in touch with his dead mother; Vala, whose life was full of drugs and alcohol as she attempted to drown out her childhood pain, simply to "find the truth."

While the demons embraced Sam, allowing him to communicate with his "mother," they warned that Vala was a "child of darkness;" he must immediately cut off all contact with her. Desperate to maintain contact with his dead mother, Sam quickly sent Vala back to Sweden.

God, however, heard Vala's cry and through a series of miracles led her to Himself. "Jesus set me free," she said later. "In just one day I became drug free. He cleansed me, and I felt His love. I just wanted to hug every human being!"

Back in California, Sam continued trying to contact his mother through the spirits, but the Ayahuasca ceremonies no longer worked. He tried going to different shamans, but nothing helped—he was no longer able to access the spirit world. Unbeknownst to Sam, his niece was praying for him, half a world away.

"JUST BE MYSELF"

While Sam was deep into

spiritualism, a well-known Iranian-Swedish popstar, Laleh, who was living in Los Angeles, asked Sam to fly to Sweden to accept a music award on her behalf. Her hit single, "Bara få va mig själv" ("Just Be Myself") had gained a 4x Platinum certification. It was nominated as Song of the Year at the 2017 Swedish "Grammis,"¹ and had won the QX Readers Award.



(l to r) Singer Laleh; producer Miriam Rothbart; Sam's ex-boyfriend, Chris; and Sam

QX is the largest LGBTQ-media publisher in Scandinavia. It also arranges the yearly GayGala Awards in Stockholm, which is broadcast on national television.

Standing on the QX Gala stage was a high moment for Sam as he came out publicly to the live audience. "The song, 'Just Be Myself' speaks directly to my heart," he said. ". . . I will not look down on myself anymore. I've lost two wonderful friends to suicide because they were told it wasn't okay to be the way they were. . . . when we reject ourselves, it becomes fatal. . . . So, if you out there are afraid to come out . . . come out and just be yourself!"²

Despite the show, however, all was not well. Sam's life was spinning out of control. Throwing himself further into the gay life, he had multiple sex partners and dove deeper into drugs. "It's a miracle I didn't get AIDS," he said. Finally, Sam ended up in the hospital with his blood pressure soaring up to 207. After 30 days of rehab Sam was still at a loss; nothing seemed to help.

Then he decided to reach out to his niece and was shocked to hear she was doing well. "Vala had never been doing well, he recalled. "Her life had always been miserable— heavy drug addictions, suicide attempts." But something had drastically changed.

"She told me God opened her eyes to see the spirit world; to see the evil. Then she told me that we have a God." Because of her upbringing, Vala first thought that God was Allah, but soon found her real Savior in Jesus Christ. Encouraged by the amazing change taking place in Vala's life, Sam began to search for his Savior.

"I googled 'Jesus' on YouTube,

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He also started
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Sometimes he
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and started watching cartoons about Him,” he said. He also started reading the Bible. Sometimes he fasted. Sam’s heart warmed as he read the teachings of Jesus. As he continued reading, he noticed a peace coming into his heart. “It was a completely new element,” he recalled. “And I noticed I could say ‘no’ to drugs and sex, and I could sleep during the night.”

THE TRUTH

Then one day, Vala called. “Just so you know,” she said, “if you’re going to follow Jesus, you have to repent from homosexuality.”

Sam was furious. He had lived as a homosexual for more than 30 years.

“How can God ask me to deny who I am deep down as a person?” he wondered. “I am who I am!” Sam was about to walk away from God, yet he didn’t want to let go of the peace in his heart.

Searching for answers, Sam called a local Christian pastor who said, “People have misunderstood. God is just love. As long as you get married you can be gay and have Jesus. It’s the promiscuous gay life that God rejects.”

It was exactly what Sam wanted to hear. But somehow, he knew the answer wasn’t right. He couldn’t deny the profound changes taking place in Vala’s life.

“God,” he prayed, “show me the truth.”

For three days Sam was in agony. “I read the Bible for myself, which is abundantly clear about homosexuality,” he said. “I was facing a battle between rejecting the truth and accepting it.

Then on the third day, I woke up 100 percent convinced that homosexuality is a sin and I needed to repent. I realized God wanted to remove something that was harmful to me. I went on my knees and cried and cried and cried.”

“I know you are God and You are real,” Sam prayed. “And I know what

You want. But how? This is the only life I know. Will I live alone the rest of my life?” Then he remembered Abraham and how God asked him to leave his country, his people, not knowing where he was going.

“I told God, ‘OK, I’ll leave.’” From that moment a peace and joy like he had never known washed over Sam, and he knew he was free from homosexuality.

A NEW LIFE

Realizing he needed to leave his old life behind, Sam broke up with his boyfriend, wrapped up his business affairs, and returned to Sweden, where God led both him and Vala to become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 2022, Samuel shared his testimony to a packed house during a special weekend event titled, “LGBTQ: Can You Choose?” Ironically, QX magazine covered the event, and quoted Samuel’s appeal:

“To all of you who live in LGBTQ, I want to say, there is a deep inner deception going on. You have been tricked into thinking you are fighting for something beautiful, like love and equal rights. It sounds very nice, but it is not true. You are I are not our sexual desires and urges; we are made in the image



Sam and Vala witnessing in Stockholm



Sam and Vala, now Adventist members

Q & A

ECN: How is it showing love to LGBTQ+ people when you say God has given you full victory over homosexuality?

SAMUEL JACOBSON: We have turned love into sentimentality and nice words. True love is leading people to Jesus, who alone can give them true joy and peace. Sometimes we are worried about hurting someone's feelings if we tell them the truth, but what if they miss out on eternal life because we did not share God's truth with them? How is that showing love?

If we tell people they must leave LGBTQ+, won't that mean they will have to live alone for the rest of their lives and feel depressed?

I can assure you I have never been happier than in the last six years since becoming a Christian and leaving homosexuality behind. God is all I need, and my future is in His hands. He has given me many wonderful Christian friends and church family. I look forward to spending eternity with them.

Shouldn't we just show love and tone down what we say so we don't hurt LGBTQ+ people? Let's build bridges. After all, the church is a hospital, and we are all sick.

It is true the church is like a hospital, but what kind of a hospital is it where patients come in and not a single patient gets well? How long have you been admitted to this hospital? Twenty years? And you're still limping and having trouble breathing? Then there might be something wrong with the hospital, or the treatment.

I am a living witness that our God is the perfect Doctor—when He does an operation, the patient recovers 100 percent. Jesus has freed me completely from homosexuality, and this is good news! We should not downplay that our Doctor is perfect; we should share the good news with the world! We know that victory is already ours if we wholeheartedly follow our Lord Jesus Christ. The end is very near.

of God and when we receive Jesus we are adopted as children of God, and the peace and joy that comes with that passes all understanding. When you have tasted true freedom, you will gladly leave not only homosexuality, but everything else that can separate you from Jesus.”³

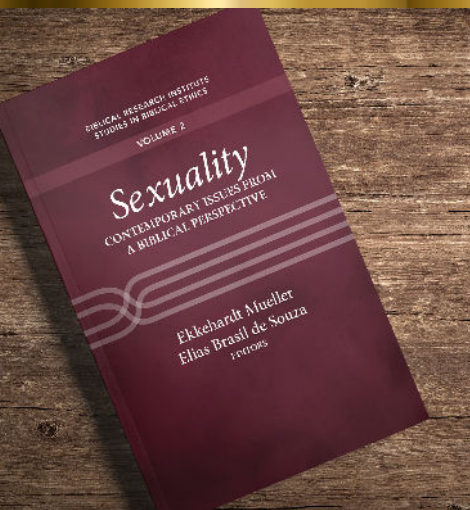
“When I tell people I have repented from homosexuality and I now follow Christ, many feel sorry for me and think I am denying my identity or that I turned my back on the gay community,” says Sam, who now goes by Samuel. “But the truth is, God saved me from a life of pain, selfishness, and self-destruction. I wish more people would give Jesus Christ a chance.”

¹ “Laleh (singer),” Wikipedia, bit.ly/LalehSwedishSinger.

² QX, “Han kom ut som stolt gay på QX Gaygala – föreläser nu som ‘ex-homo’” (“He came out as proudly gay at the QX Gaygala - now lectures as an ‘ex-gay’”), Sept. 5, 2022, bit.ly/QXSamJacobson

³ Ibid.

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF SEXUALITY*



COURTESY OF BRI

Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, eds., *Sexuality: Contemporary Issues From a Biblical Perspective*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Biblical Ethics 2 (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2022), 625 pages. US\$25.00.

Recent discussions have thrust issues of sexuality into the spotlight, rekindling debates on abortion, same-sex marriage, gender identity, and contraception. A comprehensive exploration of these and other subjects from a biblical standpoint is found in *Sexuality: Contemporary Issues From a Biblical Perspective*, published by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI). The topics discussed benefit from contributions by 22 authors of diverse international backgrounds.

The initial chapters address fundamental questions about human sexuality and define sexual immorality. It engages questions of premarital sex, cohabitation, polygamy, sexual addiction, prostitution, and rape. It also includes explicit conversations on queer theology, homosexuality, and robotic sex. Readers will learn much from a perusal of the volume, perhaps feeling at times they are learning a little too much. For example, some theologians imagine an erotic trinity and even sexualize a relationship Jesus. The book interweaves intriguing historical insights, such as the ancient Egyptians' utilization of spermicides. It also educates readers on recognizing and responding to child sexual abuse.

Two chapters explore the complex issue of transgenderism. The first, co-authored by Elias Brasil de Souza and Larry Lichtenwalter, notes its existence in civilizations like Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia before delving into a biblical examination of the topic. The other chapter, by Kwabena Donkor, offers an Adventist perspective on gender and sexuality. After defining various LGBTQ+ terms, he assesses three distinct Christian frameworks for understanding transgenderism. Donkor concludes by proposing a “great controversy framework” as the most constructive way to understand and assist transgender individuals. Notably, the treatment of sex-reassignment surgery could have been explored in greater detail.

The book culminates with a consideration of “The Seduction of Forbidden Intimacy” by Alberto Timm. The chapter documents the prevalence of sexual fantasies, presenting important lessons drawn from scriptural instances of forbidden intimacy. Timm provides readers with a set of eight principles designed to cultivate resilient relationships

impervious to the allure of affairs. The book includes an appendix of sixteen church-voted documents from 1987 to 2019 that pertain to the issues discussed in the volume.

In our present era characterized by a heightened focus on sexuality, with even children contemplating alternative gender identities, *Sexuality: Contemporary Issues From a Biblical Perspective* constitutes a crucial resource for Christians. It offers help navigating this sexually charged environment. While some might wish for a more comprehensive spectrum of perspectives on these issues, many readers will undoubtedly appreciate the authors' articulate, biblically-grounded reasoning. As the challenges posed by these issues continue to transcend geographical and generational boundaries, the book equips parents, pastors, teachers, and others influenced by the seismic shifts in society's sexual norms. It encourages readers to engage critically with their beliefs, potentially prompting a reassessment of their perspectives. Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza are to be commended for providing a valuable resource that facilitates a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics through the prism of biblical teachings.

“
Readers will learn much from a perusal of the volume, perhaps feeling at times they are learning a little too much.”

*Adapted from *Adventist Review*, Sept. 3, 2022. For full version, bit.ly/biblicalviewsexuality.