What About . . .

Homosexuality

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This pamphlet is intended to help Christians answer some questions about homosexuality. The church recognizes this as both a significant challenge and, more importantly, as an opportunity to speak the truth in love, reaching out with the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What does God say about homosexuality in His Word, the Bible?

The Lord teaches us through His Word that homosexuality is a sinful distortion of His desire that one man and one woman live together in marriage as husband and wife. God categorically prohibits homosexuality. Our church, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has declared that homosexual behavior is "intrinsically sinful." Why does our church take this position?

We read in God's Word the following statements about homosexuality:

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. . . . Do not defile yourselves by any of these things" (Lev. 18:22, 24).

"If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. . . " (Lev. 20:13).

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:26–27).

"Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

". . . The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, . . . immoral persons, sodomites. . . and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:9–10).

Through His Word, God teaches us very clearly that homosexuality is a sin. A person who persists in homosexual behavior stands under the condemnation of God's Word. This is true for anyone who persists in sin without repentance. While this may be an unpopular message, it is the truth taught to us by God in His Word.

What is the church's message to persons who are homosexual?

The church's message to homosexual persons is the same message it proclaims to all people: Repent and believe the Gospel! All human beings are born with a sinful nature that results in sinful thoughts, words and actions. Homosexuality is but one of many sinful situations human beings encounter in this life. From the moment we are born, all human beings stand under God's perfect judgement. All of us, by nature, are lost and condemned sinners. We all need God's mercy in Christ for our salvation.

The church's most important message to homosexuals is the promise of forgiveness and eternal life through the person and the work of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into this world to live a perfect life on our behalf, and to die a perfect death as the payment for all of our sins.

A statement regarding homosexuality from the Lutheran Church in Australia summarizes the church's response to homosexuality in a very helpful way: "The Church, while rejecting on the one hand the movement which claims tolerance of homosexual behavior in the name of freedom of the individual and of moral progress, must also resist the popular reaction of persecution and ostracism.

"The Church must exhibit understanding and sympathy for the homosexual, show love and pastoral concern, being ready to give help and encouragement in whatever way possible. It must proclaim to homosexuals, as it does to all men, the judgment of God against sin, above all the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake, and the possibility of new life through the power of the Holy Spirit. . . ."

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Another Lutheran pastor has written about homosexuality: "God is presenting to the Church a great challenge and opportunity. We can proclaim the Word of God in a clear and fresh manner. We can offer new hope to sinners whom God loves. We can apply the Means of Grace to another area of human need, so that sins can be forgiven and the Spirit's power employed to create new life in Christ."

What can Christians do for the families of homosexuals?

It is tempting to ignore the problems and challenges associated with homosexuality. As God's people, we are able to take actions that demonstrate love and concern for homosexuals

and for their families.

While clearly affirming the sinfulness of homosexuality, we will also want clearly to affirm God's promise of forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Often families of homosexuals are embarrassed and ashamed. If Christian friends and relatives treat them in ways that increase this shame, it is little wonder that they will attempt to rationalize or otherwise explain away a son's or daughter's sinful lifestyle.

Christians should reach out in compassion to these families, expressing their love and concern, offering the encouragement that is ours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the person caught up in the homosexual life, Christian friends and family members should continue lovingly to share their convictions with this person, reaching out with the forgiving love of Christ and the hope that is found only in Him. Various organizations work with homosexuals who desire to turn away from the homosexual lifestyle. A Lutheran group working in this area is "Keys Ministry." Their address and telephone number are at the end of this pamphlet.

How should Christians respond to the "gay rights" movement?

There has been a growing increase in the influence of the "gay rights" movement, even within some Protestant churches. The "gay rights" movement wants our culture to accept homosexuality as an alternative natural lifestyle in which human beings may express their sexuality. We have reached the point where even the idea of "gay marriages" is considered an acceptable possibility. The church must resist these attitudes with the truth of God's Word.

Our church encourages our members to exercise their duty as Christian citizens to be aware and informed about these issues. The Christian citizen must be knowledgeable about the positions taken by politicians in regard to homosexuality, and other issues, so that responsible participation in the political process can take place.

The church is committed not to the political process, but to the preaching of the Gospel. This is the church's mission. The church does encourage its members to be responsible and active citizens in our country. Thus Christian citizens will work to enact laws that reflect Biblical truth in regard to homosexuality.

Why have some churches changed their position on homosexuality?

We have noticed changes particularly in many Protestant churches in our country when it comes to the issue of homosexuality. Even the national media has noticed these changes, printing long stories on national church studies on the topics of homosexuality. Because the news media does not always distinguish carefully between Lutheran churches in the country, even our own members have sometimes wondered about the position of our Synod on these matters.

What accounts for these changes in some churches? First, homosexual groups within these churches often engage in "lobbying" efforts and gain considerable influence. Second and more important, attitudes toward homosexuality have changed as a result of changing attitudes toward the authority and reliability of the Holy Scriptures.

An academic philosophy about the Bible, called "higher criticism," puts man in the position of determining what is true and what is not in the Bible. With this attitude, we can understand why some churches have attempted to explain away the Bible's teaching about homosexuality.

How can Christians respond to attempts to make homosexuality appear as merely an alternative lifestyle?

All one has to do is turn on the television set and watch a few popular situation comedies to realize that there is an enormous effort underway to create an image of homosexuality as merely an alternative lifestyle. Homosexuality is portrayed as a perfectly normal and natural expression of human sexuality. Persons who view homosexuality as abnormal are portrayed in popular culture today as being "homophobic" or otherwise on the fringe of our society. It is therefore all the more important that Christians not hesitate to speak lovingly, yet clearly, about this issue. Parents need to take the time to discuss this issue with their children when they reach an age where they can understand these things.

What Lutheran resources are available to help minister to homosexuals and their families?

Keys Ministry is a Lutheran group dedicated to helping individuals and their families who are struggling with homosexuality. You may call Keys Ministry at (507) 352–4110. You may write to Keys at Box 97, Wykoff, MN 55990.

A study called "A Christian Perspective on Homosexuality" may be purchased by calling Concordia Publishing House at 800–325–3040 and requesting stock number 20–2586.

— Dr. A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod