

Session 7 - Sexual Preference vs. Identity

“When someone says they’re gay, or for that matter, lesbian or bisexual, they normally mean that, as well as being attracted to someone of the same gender, their sexual preference is one of the fundamental ways in which they see themselves. And it’s for this reason that I tend to avoid using the term. It sounds clunky to describe myself as “someone who experiences same-sex attraction.” But describing myself like this is a way for me to recognize that the kind of sexual attractions I experience are not fundamental to my identity. They are part of *what I feel* but are not *who I am* in a fundamental sense. I am far more than my sexuality.” - Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* page 10-11

“It’s easy to get these feelings out of proportion in another way: to think that they represent the sum total of our identity. We live in a culture where sexuality is virtually equated with identity: “You are your sexuality.” We are encouraged to think that to experience homosexual feelings means that you are, at your most fundamental core, a homosexual. It is very easy for Christians to lose a healthy perspective on this. We can think that SSA is the issue in our Christian life, as though no other sins or struggles warranted serious attention. My own perception is that I struggle with greed much more than I do with sexual temptation. But SSA can become the lens through which the whole of our Christian life is viewed. Yes, it has a significant effect on a number of areas of life, but it does not define your life.” - Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* page 46

1. There can be a difference between a “homosexual” and someone who practices homosexuality.

When someone identifies as “gay” or “homosexual,” what do they mean?

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV)

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor **men who have sex with men (*arsenokoitai*)** 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NASB)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor **homosexuals (*arsenokoitai*)**, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Do you see the confusion this can cause reading the NASB?

Paul is talking about those who “practice” homosexuality.

"Desire" or "temptation" is not the sin. Acting on that desire is the sin.

Matthew 4:1 - Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 Cor. 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Whenever you come in contact with someone who claims to be gay, don't automatically assume there is homosexual sexual activity.

Reinforcing this distinction will help communicate that someone can have these emotions and not be in sin.

2. Be careful not to reinforce the idea that someone's sexual orientation defines them.

How we would we reinforce this association?

By how we talk to them, how we treat them, the things we talk about with them, the motivation behind talking to them or not talking to them.

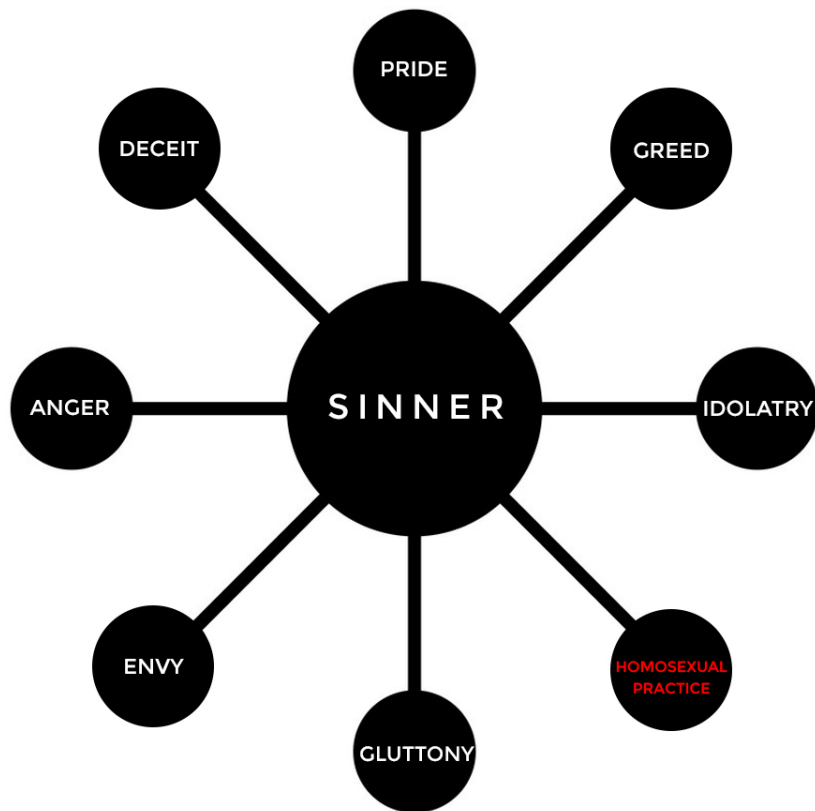
You can address the sin and need to repent, but we need to spend our time helping them understand that they are a sinner in need of a Savior, not simply a homosexual.

3. An unbeliever who practices homosexuality should see themselves as a “sinner,” not a “homosexual.”

Homosexual activity is just one of many indications that they are a sinner.

Homosexual practice is the result of a sin nature.

Let's focus on the real issue. Let's deal with the root of the problem.



If we think of homosexual as the root or core of their problem, they will fixate only on passages that deal with this issue, rather than looking at the Bible as a whole.

We are born with a sin nature, therefore we sin.

Psalms 51:5 - Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalms 58:3 - Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.

Ephesians 2:1-3 - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Romans 1:24-27

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts.

Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

If we only look at Romans 1:24-27, and not Romans as a whole, we will miss the good news of the gospel.

4. Those who confess Jesus as Lord are given a new identity.

At the end of Session 1, we covered a few things about salvation.

1. Temptation is not sin.
2. One sin will not send you to hell.
3. Repetitive sin can exist, for a time, in the life of a believer.

(it's possible to struggle with homosexual practice as a child of God)

1 John 3:9–10 - No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

1 John 2:1–6 - My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

The evidence of true salvation is repentance, confession, conviction, and overcoming sin for good.

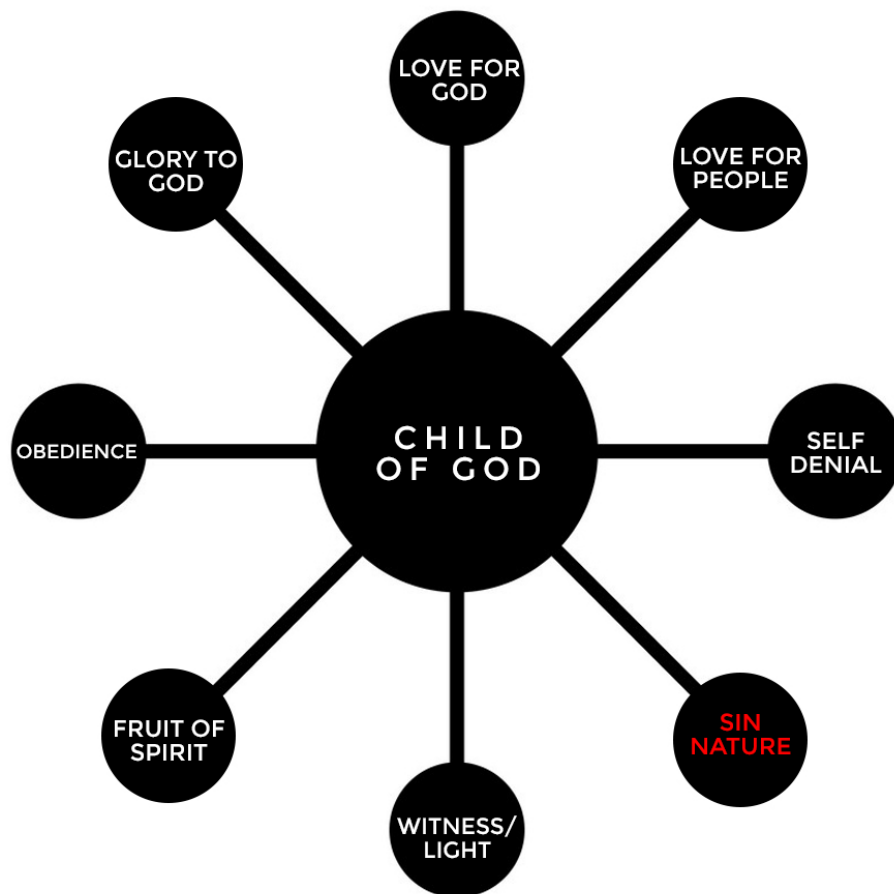
HOW DO I OVERCOME SIN?

Understanding who you are in Christ will empower you forsake your sin nature and walk in obedience.

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 **And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!



Romans 6:1–14

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

It's only when we truly believe that our old self of has died, that our behavior will reflect our new identity.

Galatians 5:24–25 - Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Let's walk like people who understand they belong to Christ. Let's walk like people who understand and believe that their flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires.

Do you believe that you've died to sin?

Your sexual orientation does not define you. Jesus bought you, saved you, cleansed you, owns you. He gets to define you.

Know who you are. Know who's you are.
How you see yourself will determine how you think and act.