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All the Things You've Never Been Taught About Homosexuality

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Series: The Verdict

Romans 1:24-27

BIG IDEA - SEXUAL BROKENNESS IS NOT SELECTIVE; IT'S UNIVERSAL

Good evening, Two Cities Church. Across all of our campuses, tonight we're going to talk about something nobody wants to talk about. We're going to talk about it, and we thought, "You know what?" In fact, I never do this. I never, ever title my messages, and I never get up here and say, "The title of my message is..." Except for tonight. The title of my message for tonight is *All the Things You've Never Been Taught About Homosexuality*.

I didn't want to just dive right into it. I wanted to first give us an incredible story of encouragement of Dani and her family. Just the courage it takes to share that story publicly. Here's why I wanted to do that. Don't worry; I'll define things, and we'll get to things in 10 to 20 minutes. We'll get to a bunch of definitions.

I know that in this room right now and at our campuses across this church, there are people who struggle with same-sex desire or same-sex attraction. We'll talk about all that. Then there's a whole other group of you who struggle because somebody you love is struggling or because somebody you love is *not* struggling.

What an example Dani's dad is. Think about this. Twenty-two years later, it still brings her to tears to tell the story of her dad's response. "Can I pray for you? And is it okay if we tell Grandma and Grandpa and *they* start praying for you?"

Here's the big idea for all of us. We're going to be a church of compassion and conviction. We're going to be confusing to the world because we're going to be tough on ideas but tender with people. I want to challenge us to stay relationally connected to people who

maybe disagree with us, who are living lifestyles the opposite of us...be relationally connected while remaining tethered to truth.

Guys, today we're going to do two things, and it's going to take a while, so I'm glad there's not another service after this one. It's actually kind of in God's providence. I just said to the worship team, "I don't think this sermon is meant to be preached three times." This happens to me every once in a while. I'm like, "This was not designed to give three times in one day."

What I'm going to do is I'm going to exegete the Bible, and I'm going to exegete culture. That means expose. I'm going to ask, "What is the Bible saying, and what is the culture saying?" By the way, that's why we're having our Multiply Night a week from tonight. When we get together and worship and sing, and then I take us through the major stories of 2025, I'm doing that so we can understand the Bible and understand the culture better.

Let me say one other thing. For some people, this topic is so complex, so sensitive, so emotional, that I recorded another hour-long podcast already that will release Monday morning that will be diving into things we can't even get to today. It's a lot. Let's pray.

Lord, as I pray right now across this room, I just pray for people, starting with myself, but for everyone in this room... Just prepare our hearts. This would not have been a difficult text to talk on 75 years ago or 175 years ago, but there is so much relationship, so much emotion, and so much that we're going to get into that has happened in our nation to bring us to the point where nobody talks about this anymore, but everybody eventually thinks about it.

So, would you give me the grace to teach and preach the Word, and would you give us, as a church, the grace to be people who are tender with people but tough on ideas, people who are full of both compassion and conviction? In Jesus' name, amen.

All right. Grab your Bible. On your app, in your lap, grab it. We're going to start with the Bible. I'm going to meet you in Romans 1:24 in a few minutes. Here's what I want you to know. I want to start by talking about the Bible. Some people think of the Bible as an old book. You'll hear that. Critical people will say, "The Bible is an old book." Incorrect. The Bible is an eternal book.

Because the Bible is an eternal book...this is really cool...the Bible transcends every culture, so in every culture, it will have something it will commend and something it will condemn. In every culture, the Bible has something... "I can celebrate that." At the same time... "I have to challenge *that*."

Now, the problem with you and me is we like it when we read things in the Bible the culture already agrees with. You're like, "Yeah. Forgiveness is a good idea. Other people should do that." You know what I mean? We read parts of the Bible. The question you're going to have to ask and answer is what you are going to do... This is just one area...sex, gender, marriage, any area that confronts your narcissism in your life.

What are you going to do when the Bible disagrees with you or disagrees with culture? You can either change the Bible or change your mind and heart. So, I'm going to just read the text, and I want you to ask this question as I read this text: "What would this text mean if I didn't exist?" Forget about the relative you know who's struggling with SSA. (By the way, most relativism happens because somebody has a relative.)

I want you to just go, "Okay. If I were an alien, and my alien ship landed here, and I was given a Bible, and I could read English, and I read this, what would I think it most naturally is saying?" That's where we'll start. Let me just read the text. There's a lot here. Here's what it says. I'm in verse 24. We're just going to cover four verses tonight.

"Therefore God gave them up..." We've already talked about that. It says it three times. ***"...in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.***

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 themselves the due penalty for their error."

Let me cut to the chase. When you read this passage, you have three options. I'll just give them to you. There are only three options. Here they are. First option: *Paul is wrong*. Just so you know, you can go to a lot of universities, and they're going to be like, "Yeah, Paul is a product of his time, and he's kind of homophobic. Guys, he didn't understand sexual orientation. Paul is wrong." We can't go with *that* option, because we don't believe the Bible is man's thoughts about God but God's thoughts about himself given to man.

Okay. It's not wrong. Here's the other option. People are very sophisticated in their rebellion. Here's the second option: *we've been interpreting it wrong*. Isn't that amazing? From the resurrection of Christ until 1970, every Christian everywhere for all time thought homosexuality was wrong. Now people are like, "No. He didn't know about same-sex marriage. He's talking about nonconsensual relationships. He's talking about a relationship between an older man and a child." He's not talking about any of that.

So, here's the thing. If Paul is not wrong and we haven't been reading it wrong, then Paul is right. So, what do we do? Well, we submit to it. We surrender to it. We help and serve other people who struggle with it. Here's the last thing, and then we're going to get more into the text. I need to set this up, because our authority is the Bible.

Here's another thing. I'm going to give you a lot of categories tonight. If you take notes, it's going to be a lot of notes. There are only five places you can find authority. Just so you know, the battle about sexuality, and everything, is a battle about truth, and that's a battle about authority. Here are the five places. You can come up to me afterward if you have a sixth.

First, the *state*, the government. You don't want the government to be your highest authority. I'm talking about your *highest* authority. It can't be the government. You don't even want to live anywhere on earth where the government is the highest authority. Nobody in here wants to move to North Korea. People go, "Well, if it's the law of the land, and it *is* since Obergefell... Okay. That's the highest authority." Well, no, it's not.

Secondly, *society*. Most of you are not worried about the state, and you don't care what they think. Society is popular opinion with the influencer... For some reason, we care about what celebrities think. I don't know. This is why politicians are changing their platform every year. The Republican Party and the Democratic Party are always changing their platform and their candidates based on popular opinion. Okay. Not society.

Here's the third one: *science*. Listen, guys. Science is the discipline of discovery. Science only deals with facts. Science can't deal with value. Science can't answer the question your 5-year-old will ask you tonight. Can we just say...? The nail in the coffin for science was COVID. Yes, you know it was. "Trust the science," and then worship science and call it *scientism*.

Basically, the fourth is *yourself*. Do you know your brain weighs three pounds? Do you really want that to be the final authority? It's like, "Okay. I have a three-pound brain, and I've been on earth for two and a half decades, but it just doesn't make sense to me. I could never believe in a God who..."

The final one is *Scripture*. I think those are the only five options. The Reformers were a lot smarter than us. They said "*Sola* Scriptura," not "*Solo* Scriptura." Subtle difference. Scripture is our highest authority; Scripture is not our *only* authority. It's the "Supreme Court" authority. It's (here's a phrase for your Thursday night) what they call the *norma normans*. It is the norm that norms all norms.

So, here's what I'm going to do with our time left. This is very logical. I'm going to make one statement about all of us and answer five questions, and we'll get out of here. The

first statement I want to talk about arises out of verse 24. It says, "**Therefore God gave them up...**" Just so you know, that's *you*. "**...in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves...**"

Before we even talk about homosexuality, he talks about lust in general. Here's what I want you to know. This is where we're going to all be together. We're going to feel differently about different things tonight. All of us in here, including me, including all of our staff, all of our elders, and certainly all of you... Everybody here is a sexual sinner. That's not the most encouraging note to tell you at the beginning.

We're all guilty. We're all sexual sinners, just in different forms and in different degrees. He starts with lust. Lust is the desire for the forbidden. Great marriage advice for people getting married is "Hey, guys. Before you get married, Satan will do everything he can to try to get you in bed with each other and, once you're married, everything he can do to keep you out of bed with one another."

That's interesting. You talk to any couple, and they go, "Yeah. Sex is different once we're married from when we weren't married." Do you know why? Because it's not forbidden. Lust always wants that which is forbidden. Last week, because everything got messed up with Worship at Home and all that kind of stuff... We just shot it from a camera, and many of you got to see that.

I talked about being self-righteous. Here's another thing: some of you are self-righteous in your heterosexuality. This is one of the reasons it's hard to talk about homosexuality, and all this, because in a lot of ways, the church, Christians... We've been self-righteous. We feel superior because we don't struggle in a certain area. I'm just going to tell you there are eight types of sexual sin in the Bible. So, before we get to homosexuality...

First, there's *fornication*. I know some of you are like, "That's an *F*-word I've never heard before." You call it *cohabitating*, *friends with benefits*, *Netflix and chill*, *hookup/shack-up/breakup culture*, and four of the apps on your phone, the dating apps. All sex outside of heterosexual marriage is sinful.

The second type is *adultery*. Adultery is sex with someone who's not your spouse. These are all things the Bible clearly talks about. What we're seeing now is the rise of a lot of emotional affairs as well as the rise of open marriages, which don't work. Will and Jada Smith tried that, and I don't think they're together anymore.

The third is *polygamy*. Polygamy is when you're married to more than one person. We make whole shows about this...*Sister Wives* and all that. Then there's a whole other junk drawer...bestiality, incest, prostitution, rape, and pedophilia, which is trying to be normalized in our culture today by calling them *MAPs* (minor-attracted persons).

The first thing I want to say is all of us have sexually disordered desires, but I *will* say that homosexuality and lesbianism get a unique long two verses. Let's read them, and then I'm going to begin to answer five questions about them.

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 themselves the due penalty for their error." All right. Five questions I'm going to try to answer.

1. *Why are we talking about this?* One of the things pastors do is listen to other pastors' sermons on the same passage. Almost every pastor I listened to who talked about this passage did not isolate it. So, what am I doing? Everybody else reads this passage, and then they skip it and skim it and summarize it and say, "It's no big deal, and it's kind of like all of these other sins."

I'm like, "Is something wrong with me? Why do I feel that we need to talk about this for a while?" There are at least three reasons. I had to be like, "What am I doing? Why are we spending an entire...?" I apologized to some of the staff. I was like, "Guys, I don't even know what's going to happen talking about this, but I just have to." Three reasons why.

The first reason is we are being disciplined by the world in a sexual ethic. It's everywhere. We'll get to this. When I went to Duke University to do ministry there... You know, the rule of college ministry is like, "Okay, go to the center of the campus and meet people." So, I went to the center of the campus.

When I was at the center of the campus, I thought, "Well, the center of the center of the campus is the student union," which *is* the center of any campus. Then I was like, "Well, let me just go to the center of the center of the center." A lot of "centers" there, but you know what I'm saying.

Basically, I ended up being in the very middle. I opened the doors of Duke University. I'm finally in this beautiful, top 10 school in the nation. I'm in their student center. I'm brand new. The first thing I see, the biggest office in the very center of the student union, is the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity. I'm like, "This is the religion at Duke."

I'm trying to tell you this. You may not believe me because we live in Winston-Salem, Lexington, and Davie County. Whatever you believe about SSA and homosexuality, it's not going to be quiet forever. You're going to have to give an answer one day. There's nowhere you can escape.

This is the second reason I'm talking about it: You can't escape this. You're going to be asked about it. The number of people who have emailed... "Would you go to a gay wedding? My sister is gay. My nephew is gay. My brother is gay." Or even less than that. "Hey, my good friend is a nurse. She just got engaged to another woman, and she wants us to come and cut the cake with her, but it's a celebratory event, and I don't even believe in this."

Or "The DEI part of my HR company called me in, and I had to go sit under this training of a bunch of goofy stuff I don't even believe about diversity." Or you have to walk into Target and see the gay pride thing, and every June for 30 days, every... It's too much. You know, I'm passionate. I'm just saying it's not...

Dr. Mohler said one time he got called by the *New York Times*. The first question was about gay marriage. The second question was about gay marriage. The third question was about gay marriage. The fourth question, they said, "Why are you so obsessed with gay marriage?" He said, "You called *me*, and you asked *me* about this."

Here's the third reason: it's for human flourishing. We believe that everything the Bible teaches is for human flourishing. The church has been strangely silent. Actually, one of my mentors, who I deeply respect, told me he's not going to talk about this. He lives in a different state, and he just said, "Yeah, in my state, I'm not talking about that because it's too divisive." This was kind of interesting. He said, "Nobody listens to learn; everybody listens to see what side you're on." Okay. Let's get into it.

2. *How did we get here?* This is the historical question. This, for some of you, I think is going to be the most interesting part of tonight. When you read verses 26 and 27... I told you this. If I'm Jonathan Edwards and it's 1748, I talk about this for five minutes and move on. We're all products of our time.

Here's a question to ask: How did we have a moral revolution in one generation? Here's what I mean by that. They say a moral revolution happens when what is celebrated is condemned, what is condemned is celebrated, and those who will not celebrate are condemned.

Homosexuality is ancient. It shows up in Genesis, chapter 19, the first book of the Bible...Sodom and Gomorrah. I'm not trying to be crude here. That's where you get the terms *sodomy* and *sodomite*...from the Bible. Homosexuality is mentioned in Genesis 19 and immediately condemned. Moses writes about it in Genesis. It's condemned. There are six explicit passages in the Bible that condemn homosexuality.

What's interesting is the word *homosexual* is only 150 years old. It came out in 1869 in Europe by this guy who was taking care of a lot of men who struggled with homosexual

desire. He gave it an identity and called it *homosexual*. Here's what's interesting. Think about this for a second. I'm not saying this was right, because there's a difference between sins and crimes, but in 1961, every state in America had sodomy laws. My dad was 3.

Up until 1973, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder in the psychiatric and medical establishment books. My dad was 15. There were still sodomy laws on the books until 2003 when a Supreme Court decision said you can't do that because it goes against a right to privacy.

Obama runs for office in 2008 and says he's against same-sex marriage, even though he was for it beforehand and becomes for it after. We all knew he was faking it, but you get what I'm saying. He basically said, "I'm against it." And now... I mean, I stand up here, and I'm like, "There are gays for Trump." The Obergefell decision is like... Everybody has a gay neighbor, and they're really nice. I can hear some of you. "Leave the gays alone."

Okay. How did we get here? One book. Let me show you this book. You can't buy this book. Well, some of you might be able to afford this book. I can't afford this book. This book is out of print. It's called *After the Ball*. It's \$865 for the edition that's on Amazon. This book came out in 1989, written by cultural elites telling us the plan to make homosexuality normal in a generation. It's part of the reason you can't get it anymore.

They said there were three stages they were going to do. I'm trying to answer the question...*How did we get from the entire world condemns homosexual behavior to we have Pride Month every June?* Three things. First, they said, "We need to desensitize people." Basically, they said, "Show gay stuff so much people get bored."

This is why *Brokeback Mountain* comes out in 2005 and we're like, "What?!" Now every... I mean, it has become a meme. Episode 4 of your favorite show has a gay scene, and one of the main characters has to be gay, even though they didn't have to be gay, but it's just part of... There's no reason.

This is why my boys who are... You know, it gets personal. My boys were watching *Stranger Things*. In season 5, main character Will comes out as gay. Why? It's because, basically, they just want you to see it again and again and again until you either get bored at it or laugh at it, but not in a demeaning way. Like, "Man, the guys on *Modern Family* are so funny. Aren't the gay guys so funny?"

The second thing they want to do is jam it. This is their language: desensitize you, then jam it. Basically, they said, "Connect anti-gay voices with hateful speech." So, basically, out comes the phrase *homophobia*. You know, a modern person would be like, "Kyle is homophobic," which is so genius.

The reason I'm talking about this is because I'm scared of them. I'm not. You know, "He's angry at them. Kyle is a racist!" No, I'm not a racist. That's what they... They actually said this. You can read it. It's all in the book, if you can afford it. They wanted to turn it into marriage equality and civil rights.

The third thing was... They said desensitize, jam, and it's not the best word, but *conversion* was the word. They basically said, "Put our best gays forward." They said, "Make sure they're professional, monogamous, and suburban." In one generation, everybody is like, "What are we even...? Isn't this just another...? Doesn't love equal love?" Which leads to the third question.

3. *What's unique about homosexuality?* It's different than the other vices that are listed after this that I preached on last week. Basically, what Paul is saying is homosexuality is the clearest picture of idolatry we have. You fall in love with your own anatomical structure, which is interesting why some bodybuilders...

There's a higher gay population among bodybuilders. That makes sense. You have to think about it for two minutes. If you spend all of your time looking at your own muscles and comparing them with other men's muscles and are fascinated with the male body and you're a man... So, homosexuality is uniquely a picture of idolatry.

Here's the thing. I want you to notice this too. Here, Paul mentions the acts. What nobody wants to talk about (and I don't want to talk about it) is homosexual activity. No one wants to talk about that. *No* one. They want to talk about love. Well, that makes sense, because you feel like an idiot. "What's wrong with two guys loving each other?" It's like, "What *is* wrong with two guys loving each other?" Well, biblically, nothing if you're talking about brotherly love, but we don't even have a category for that anymore.

Here's the thing. There are two things that make homosexuality unique and two things that make it like everything else. Here's what makes it unique: it's unnatural. You can see that. You can read the verse for yourself. Let me just read it one last time, then we'll be done reading it.

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions." I want you to see the word natural. "For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 themselves the due penalty for their error."

By the way, this is the only mention of lesbianism in the entire Bible. Lesbianism is way more rare historically than homosexuality. There are a lot of reasons for that. One of the reasons is men are willing to give up family for sex. They do it all the time, heterosexual

or homosexual. They're like, "A lot of sex, but don't get to have kids?" They're not thinking right, but they're like, "Oh, I'll do that." Women almost never do that.

Paul is basically saying, "Guys, this has gotten so bad even the women are now engaging in this." We're seeing an increase in this. I'll tell you all of the reasons why in a second, but part of the reason... You have to understand that the average modern, secular woman who then goes to university is taught to hate men. You know, "Hate the patriarchy" and "Men are part of all of the problems."

What's interesting is in lesbianism, oftentimes, the woman... I'm not making fun of any of this. I'm just telling you. You're going to know this as soon as I say it. The woman wants to be in a relationship with a woman who looks like a man. What's *that* about? Don't tell me *that's* not deep. You want a woman who looks just like a man but doesn't have man parts. What is going on?

Two things. It's unnatural. Here's what I mean by that. It's against nature. This is as graphic as I'm going to get. You're not supposed to put an object of life into a hole of decay. It is unnatural. Secondly, it is harmful. I don't know for sure. I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but let me just put my tinfoil hat on for a second.

I think the media and the medical establishment hides a lot from us, because from my limited research, there are a bunch of types of cancers that are 40 times higher in sexually active homosexual men. There are men who engage in this activity and then have to wear a diaper in their 50s.

You can't say it. You can't talk about it. Everybody loves everybody. We can't actually talk about that it might be unnatural and it also might be harmful. We know it's *mentally* harmful, because people living in homosexual lifestyles are more likely to commit suicide, and no, not because we don't affirm them. It's the same no matter where they live. It doesn't matter how affirming the culture is.

Don't worry; it's going to get better. We're going to get there together. There are two things that make it the same as everything else: it's sinful and it's forgivable, but nothing is forgivable that we can't first call sinful. Which leads me to ask the question we're all thinking about.

4. *Why are people gay?* Did you see the...? It got 39 million views, so if you didn't see it, you might be hiding under a rock. Did you see the Uganda interview where the guy...? What's so funny about it is it's so sincere, but it catches the person off guard. He has somebody on who's living a gay lifestyle, and in the most sincere way, he sits down to interview the person, so sincere, and just says, "Why are you gay?" The person looks like a cow staring at him. "What do you mean, why am I gay?"

I think we have to answer that question. Why are people gay? People go, "Was it chance or was it choice? Is it nature or is it nurture? Is it biography or is it biology?" Now, it's interesting. We all come into the world... We have an understanding of sin and the fall and Genesis 3 and all that kind of stuff. We all have disordered desires in us. I already talked about that. Our sexuality certainly doesn't feel chosen.

This is about the most personal story I've ever told from stage, so get ready for it. When I was about 8 or 9 years old, I was watching *Supergirl*. It was a movie. I was 8, 9, or 10, and this beautiful... Whoever played Supergirl back then, I just thought, "Woo!" I just thought she was great. Not as good-looking as my wife, but you know what I'm saying. I was 9.

Basically, I'm 9 years old, and I remember... This is where I'm being a little vulnerable. I remember going to my mom and saying, "Mom, something happens to me when I watch this show." My mom said, "Your dad will be home later." A hundred percent true story. I'm just being really honest. When it happens to you... And I do think people find themselves with that type...

To get real with you guys for a second, don't think that there's... I'm not thinking of any one person, but don't think there's not some 11-year-old boy who one day said, "Oh no. Why am I getting excited about this? No, I'm in a Christian church. I'm in a Christian family. This is not what I should be getting excited about." But there's something going on.

The reason it's more than just nature, it has to be nurture, is 3 percent of the Boomer generation said they were gay. Then Gen X said 5 percent, when they started to add some of the LGBT stuff. Everybody thought, "Oh, there are 2 percent of people who have been hiding, but now that they're free and have more categories..." Well, then the Millennial generation said 14 percent. Currently, Gen Z adults...just the adults, 18 and older...23 percent say they're LGBTQIA. Now, that's not biology; that's a social contagion.

There are three things that I think can contribute to the increasing homosexual desires of people. First, absent dads. By the way, this is not to beat up anybody who's a great dad and has a same-sex attracted son or daughter. I'm not saying you didn't do a good job. Here's the interesting thing: if a dad is in the home, his daughter goes into puberty a year later on average. We don't know why. There are so many things... We think we're modern people and understand everything. We don't understand a lot.

What happens is if a man... I'm particularly talking to men. I don't know how it all works with women. If a man does not have appropriate affection from a man and knows what appropriate physical touch is like and has an example of a man loving a woman, then he

goes off to college, and some guy puts his arm around him, and he goes, "That feels good, because I never had my dad put his arm around me."

Basically, dads, just young dads... We have a lot of them. We have, like, 900 kids fifth grade and under in our church right now, so we have a lot of young dads. Be very physically affectionate with your kids. My dad is 68 years old. He's slightly overweight. He has a scruffy beard, but when he gives me a kiss and a hug, I love it. By the way, when your kids say, "Dad, stop doing that," when you're hugging and kissing them, that means "Keep doing it," if you don't know that. That's really what that does mean.

The second reason... I've actually talked to men who told me this is true. The second thing that can lead at least to the increase of homosexual desire is that which is exotic becomes erotic. Let me explain that. If you feel different than other boys, you often find yourself attracted to the boys who are different than you. Think about a 13-year-old kid who's like, "I'm kind of scrawny, and I'm into art and poetry. I don't really play football, but those football players who do play are strong. They're different than me, and I'm kind of attracted to that."

This is why a lot of young women... They say going through puberty as a young woman and feeling ugly are the same thing. What they used to tell you was, "You're gay. There are no guys asking you out. It's because you're gay." Now they tell you you're trans, but you know what I'm saying.

Here's the third one. This is the biggest one. You know what it is already: the ubiquitous nature of pornography, especially during your sexual formation. There is a difference between watching sex and having sex...a *big* difference. What happens is a lot of people...

I was talking to one of our pastors. He said, "There has not been a person I've met with who has a serious sexual issue that pornography is not at the root." You start watching it for the opposite sex, but then you start seeing your same gender aroused. People are watching an enormous amount of that kind of stuff. So, we have to ask another question. We're almost done.

5. *What is the experience of somebody who struggles with SSA?* Thankfully, people write about this. Godly Christian men and women write about this. I think this is going to help us. They say there are four stages to this. There is *desire, orientation, identity, and activity*. I'll unpack these.

Basically, there are certain people who, for a small portion of their life, with usually one person, will have same-sex desire. A classic example would be a guy who finally gets a friend at 14 who never had a friend, and he has just never had another guy be nice to him.

All of those parts of him turn on, and he's like, "What is going on here?" It's very common to happen with a mentor. "I don't have a father. All of a sudden, I have a mentor. I have this emotional relationship in which he's my leader, and I'm attracted to him because of it."

There's same-sex *desire*. There's same-sex *attraction*. This is an orientation in which you feel like, "I'm not attracted to the opposite sex. I'm only attracted to the same sex, and it's not going away. I'm praying about it, and I'm asking God to do something about it."

Then there is *identity*. *Identity* is when you go public. I'm using their words. You come out of the closet, and you say, "This is who I am." Usually, you leave the normal community and enter the gay community, and then you end up increasing... Usually, there was some activity beforehand, but you increase your activity.

Here's what we're trying to say. We think that genuine, Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians can struggle with same-sex desire and same-sex attraction. Basically, if there's one message... Because there are more and more people who are struggling with that for various reasons, some of which I mentioned in the sermon. If you're struggling with that, I know I represent the pastors and elders in our church by saying if you're struggling with same-sex attraction, you don't have to leave our church. We have the resources and the relationships, and we want to walk with you.

Here's how I feel about it. I'm putting my cards on the table, because people disagree on same-sex attraction stuff. It's hard to figure out all of the details and how to talk about it. I want the people in our church who are struggling with SSA to feel seen and heard while at the same time...hopefully you'll hear this...I don't want to normalize SSA.

I'm a dad, and I know a lot of dads. You do not want every 13-year-old boy in this church wondering if they have SSA. Part of the secret of the LGBTQIA agenda is the *Q*. Do you know what the *Q* is? *Questioning*. So, here's how we're going to try... Let me explain this. Last question.

6. *How, then, do we minister to people struggling with SSA?* Which is different than ministering to people who are living an overt homosexual lifestyle. By the way, when you minister to *those* people, there's no use even talking to them about homosexuality. They've already watched every video and read every book. Their defenses are up. The best thing to do is just love them, talk to them a lot about Jesus, and talk about all the other sin in their life they need to repent of.

If you're talking to somebody with SSA, here's basically what you need to do. First, you basically need to say, "The goal in life is holiness, not heterosexuality." We can't promise

people... There's no promise in the Bible. You know, "You give your life to Christ, and you're going to feel strong, constant, heterosexual desires for the opposite sex, ongoing."

We *can* say, "Hey, listen. Focus less on 'I was born this way,' and focus more on 'I've been born again.'" Do not define... I don't like it when alcoholics call themselves *alcoholics*. I don't like it. I don't like being defined by your sin. I don't think you need to be defined by your attractions.

Look. The way you fight same-sex attraction is the way you fight every sexual sin. We'll get there in Romans, chapter 6. You put it to death. If you're struggling with same-sex attraction, one of the first things to do is be like, "Okay. I'm going to stop looking at all pornography," if you're looking at it.

"Okay. I'm going to get into an accountability group, but not with everybody who struggles the same way, so when we get together we just talk about our struggles. I need to talk to somebody who's ahead of me. I need to cultivate relationships with the same sex that are strong, genuine, and helpful."

Here's the thing. I want us, for a moment, to talk about change. Do you know what's interesting? We live in a time right now where here's what people tell you about sex: "Your sexual identity is the most important thing about you, and you could be anything you want. LGBT...you could be anything. Intersex...whatever you want to be. You can be anything you want, and..." This is what they tell you. This is the message.

"Choose when you're 12, but then if you want to change when you're 16... It can change in a moment, but it's the most important thing about you, and there are 100 options." Here's the other thing. This is the silent part they never say. "You can be anything you want, and you can change at any time...unless you're gay." Isn't that interesting?

If you're straight, you can become bi. You can become queer. You can become transgender. You can do whatever. But if you're gay, you can never leave. It's like, "What is it that once I'm gay, I'm always gay?" Look. I understand that sanctification is a slow process. I understand that there are besetting sins, but I think the American church has lost any hope for change.

Here's why I say this. This is the only time I'm going outside of the verse we're in. Let me read this to you. First Corinthians 6:9: "***Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality...***" All sexual sins are mentioned there, but he ends with homosexuality.

Drop down to verse 11. There were people like that in the church of Corinth. He says, ***"And such were some of you. 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."*** Look. I'm not saying that overnight everything is going to change, but I just want to tell you the reason it says, when it comes to sexual sin, "You were washed" first...

I know, for some of you, your same-sex desires, your same-sex attraction, your same-sex activity, the things you've looked at, has made you feel dirty. That's why the first thing Paul says is "You need to be washed." Then he says, after you've been washed, after you've been cleansed, then you're going to be sanctified. You're going to be transformed. You're going to be changed.

Listen. I want to let you know that whatever you're struggling with, you can walk in a measure of freedom. There are pathways forward long-term for people who struggle with SSA. Celibacy is an option that many have taken. We've seen in our church men and women who've struggled with SSA (you just saw a testimony) who are now married to somebody of the opposite sex and have families.

Guys, what we want to be here, as I close... We talked about so much, trying to give us kind of a "Tour de France" through this. Here's what I want to say. I want us to be people of conviction who believe in change and are very compassionate. I'll end with two quick stories and we'll be done.

John MacArthur, one of my heroes (he died last year), preached for 56 years in one pulpit. It's interesting. He was kind of a direct guy. He was pastoring at Grace Community Church, which is 20 miles (this will become important in a second) from downtown L.A. He was kind of a fiery Bible preacher.

He preached through the whole New Testament, by the way. It took him 42 years. Forty-two years to preach verse by verse, line by line, through the whole New Testament. As he would come to passages like this, he would talk like I am. A little different, but he would talk, and he would talk about the sinfulness of homosexuality, but he was in Southern California near L.A. So, he'd get picketed. He'd get protests. He'd get letters. His church was growing. People were upset with him.

He tells the story... I heard it one time. Twelve years into his ministry... He was 41 years old. That's my age. It was around 1980 or 1981, whatever it was, and the AIDS crisis hit in L.A. He said everything changed. He said men would be waiting outside the door to talk to him. Men would write him letters. Men would call him.

He said every conversation was the same. "I didn't like you. I didn't like what you were saying. I was listening to everybody who told me that this was about love and freedom,

but now I have AIDS, and I'm dying. I didn't know who to talk to, but I know you tell the truth."

Part of what we do as Christians is tell the truth, but we love people deeply, and we wait for God to bring some type of storm into their life that softens the soil so we can have a question. I want us to believe in change, guys. You've probably heard of Rosaria Butterfield. She's a pretty famous lady. She lives in Durham, North Carolina. God changed her life, and I just want to end by reading her testimony. This is her writing.

She basically says, "I lived as a tenured professor of queer theology at Syracuse University. I was in a committed lesbian relationship, I hated the Bible, and I taught thousands of students in my classes to do the same, because I believed gay was good, and I didn't want a new life. I was happy with the one I had.

But then a local pastor and his wife didn't just preach at me; they invited me to their table. For two years, I ate their food and read their Bible. I was looking for cracks in the Word to tear it down, but the Bible started to read me instead. I realized that the truth of Christ's resurrection was a truth over which I had no authority. It was going to be true whether I liked it or not.

I remember the day I realized I had to choose. I looked at the LGBTQ community, the one I'd actually helped to build, and then I looked at God who created me, and I asked, 'Whose dictionary do I trust?' Coming to Christ felt like a death. I lost my partner. I lost my community. I lost my cultural capital.

I stood in a pew for the first time with a butch haircut and extra piercings, terrified. I felt like a lesbian in my body, but I knew I was a child of God in my soul. My sin wasn't just my attractions; my sin was my pride, wanting to be the god of my own life. Today, surprisingly, I am a pastor's wife and a mother.

I haven't been lobotomized. I still have all of my memories. But the miracle isn't just that I married a man; the miracle is that my 'want to' changed. I learned that it is better to be lonely with Christ than to be in a crowd without him. Jesus didn't just take my life away; he replaced it with a hundredfold more."

Isn't that great? Yeah, powerful. Look. The same people who are telling us that once you're gay, you're always gay are the same people who are telling us to take puberty blockers. I believe in the hope and change of the gospel that's incremental but is real. I have seen people set free and, to use an old statement, walk in a measure of freedom, and I want to encourage you. You can do that.

I know some of you saw that video at the beginning and thought, "I'm so far away from that being the reality of my life" or "That's so far away from the reality of what could happen in my son or my daughter's life." I want you to remember, "Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were justified, you were changed."

In a minute, we're going to pray. It's like, how do you call people forward? Here's what I want you to do. All across this room, if you feel led, I want you to come forward and pray that we would be relationally connected but tethered to truth; that whatever happens in the culture, we would be a confusing place, a place of compassion and conviction, people who are full of both grace and truth, people who love people deeply but stay tethered to God's Word. If you'll stand, we'll pray.

Lord, across this room, we talked about a lot of stuff this evening. I thank you that we have such a great, soft church to speak to, a church that wants to know your Word. I just pray right now. We pray for our brothers and sisters who are struggling with SSA, that they would feel heard and seen and feel hope that they can walk in freedom. We thank you. We pray for more stories.

Also, Lord, I just feel led right now to pray that you would raise up an apostle Paul to the gay community. Rosaria Butterfield is that, in part, but in the same way that you saved the great apostle Paul, a religious Pharisee, and brought him out of religion, Lord, would you raise up a generation from within Generation Z, where there is so much confusion... Would you raise up young men and young women who have a vision of God, a vision of sexuality, and a vision of holiness? Because we do know the goal is holiness, not heterosexuality. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.