

Week 6

Respect, Honesty, Truth and Love for Those Facing Same-Sex Attraction

At Hope we often talk about **matter** and **manner** - this is where we're looking for unity, not uniformity of thought during these small group discussions. We should expect a range of thoughts on various topics, because our personality, experience, friends & family, upbringing, etc. all come into play as we shape our thoughts. Let's remember we all need Jesus and his grace is sufficient to cover each of us and our struggles, past or present.

How can we have a conversation that can honor God, the bible and each other?
Can we challenge ourselves to use this time to learn, listen and grow together?

? The Church has been criticized as an anti-gay institution. What examples come to mind that would validate such a criticism?

(What makes this study difficult is, properly understood, weeks 5 or 6 or 7 would immediately follow week 2 which speaks POSITIVELY of God's design and intent for sexual intimacy. To utilize this week as a stand alone could wrongly communicate only what God is against and perpetuate the church as being anti-gay. Does God speak to the realities of homosexual acts and behavior? Yes. But to then conclude that such people are beyond the reach of God's salvation and grace is not true.)

An Exchange

Romans 1:16-32

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ 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.

²⁸ Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

? The principal concern of these verses is not the sin of homosexuality or any other of a litany of sexual sins. It is something far more serious and sinister. What is it?

? As a result of this far more serious and sinister sin, a series of consequences and implications, judgments, and sins follow. As best you can from the passage, can you track the domino effect of events that lead from one thing to the next?

? Who does the text have in view in 1:18-1:32? (hint: see 2:1)

Much to Consider

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ 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.

? Scripture will often list out a bunch of sins. And though homosexual acts are just one example within the list, it is often isolated and treated differently. Why do you believe it is viewed differently within the Church? Given your study of Romans 1, do you believe that distinguishing it from other sins is necessary? Why or why not?

? In Week One's study, we saw that God is the authority from which Christians ascertain what is good, beautiful, life-giving, etc. One of the cultural mottos of our day is, "Do whatever makes you happy as

long as it doesn't hurt anybody." How would you respond to someone who genuinely wants to understand why you wouldn't just let a person do whatever they want behind closed doors?

? Another cultural motto is, "Love is love." Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

? Our culture no longer accepts tolerance for those who disagree with the practice of homosexuality. They demand acceptance and even celebration of it. In your mind, what does it look like, as far as it depends on you, to live at peace with such people (Rom. 12:18)?

Real Life Scenario

How can you engage in building relationships with coworkers, in light of your differences?

How can you care for others in your neighborhood, in light of your differences?

How can you care for others in your family, in light of your differences?

For Discussion and Accountability

? In all honesty, does this study and conversation make you feel uncomfortable? Why or why not? How does the good news of Jesus affect our words and actions as we wrestle in the discomfort?

? This particular issue may be your struggle. It may not be your struggle. Regardless, do you feel like you've classified it as a worse sin than other sins?

? What would it look like for you to show the love of Christ, even this week, to yourself (if this is your struggle) or to another?

Additional Resources

- *Gay Girl Good God* by Jackie Hill Perry
- *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* by Rosaria Butterfield
- *Is God Anti-Gay? (And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction)* by Sam Alberry