



## Homosexuality: Understanding Same-Sex Attractions

**Tim:** The issue of homosexuality is probably one of the hottest topics out there in the media. We hear about it in the tabloids. We hear about it in the legislatures. It's being considered in the high courts, you know, same-sex marriage: Do we allow same-sex couples to adopt children, all these kinds of issues out there. It raises a lot of questions for a lot of people. How do we understand this issue of homosexuality? For someone who has never been attracted to anyone except the opposite sex, it just seems like this is something very strange, very foreign to them. And they're not sure what to do with that.

Jeff, you're a counselor. You're on staff here at RBC, and you've written material for us here on the issue of homosexuality and homosexual struggles. And you're also counseling with people on a regular basis on this issue; especially you focus with men.

Rob, you're a pastor of an inner-city church and it's a multicultural church that wrestles with a lot of these kinds of issues that people bring into your church.

Gentlemen, as we talk about the issue of homosexuality, help me understand what in the world is going on when someone is attracted to the same sex?

**Jeff:** It's largely misunderstood. Let's just start there. Just the whole topic of homosexuality tends to be largely misunderstood by people who are struggling with it and by people who are on the outside observing it. I think an important distinction to make

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to begin with is there's this distinction between feeling same-sex attractions, feeling sexually drawn to members of the same sex verses the opposite sex, and then acting out on those feeling in your thoughts or in your behaviors.

**Tim:** So there's the feelings—the attraction—but then there's the follow-through. What do I do with that? How do I respond to whatever I'm feeling?

**Jeff:** Right. The second is what I believe the Bible is referring to when it talks about homosexuality. The first is what can happen to anybody in this world who gets wounded. It's just a symptom of living in a broken world where relationships don't go the way God intended, and out of that certain struggles emerge and one of those struggles can be feeling sexually drawn to the same sex.

**Tim:** Okay, because there's a lot of people that get wounded, in a number of ways. We all do. I mean, let's face the fact, we all have wounding because nobody had a perfect home, nobody had perfect parents, and we don't live in a perfect world. So all of us battle with wounds, but why are some people drawn to this . . . responding to their wounds this way? I guess that's what I'm trying to ask.

**Rob:** Well, part of my response, before I even get to that question is, we shouldn't be surprised that we have homosexuality in the

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world.

**Tim:** Okay.

**Rob:** We shouldn't be surprised that we have greed or lust or dishonesty. We should not be surprised. Jeff said it's a result of living in a broken world.

**Tim:** Okay.

**Rob:** That's not quite saying your sin caused that, maybe. But the brokenness of others sometimes causes certain reactions. Now let's get back to the question.

**Tim:** Or it stirs something inside of me—puts me in a place where I have to make a choice.

**Rob:** Yeah. The form of the wounding may be somebody else's sin impacting me leads me to walk out that wounding in a specific direction. And so the homosexual, the wounds in their past, their multitude—and we can't put anybody in a box—but there are some patterns that I'm sure both Jeff and I have seen, woundings of abuse, woundings of different personalities accepted culturally or not, resulting in teasing. So the woundings lead to the reaction.

**Tim:** Okay, so first there's this distinction between—a person can feel a same-sex attraction, and that doesn't mean that they're

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homosexual. I mean if they're feeling that, it doesn't mean that I am a certain way. You're just saying something is getting stirred because of their experience, their personality—a number of these kind of factors that play into that, whether they act on it or not becomes a major issue.

**Rob:** I'm thinking about a fellow who's in my office, a number of years ago. We'll call him Tom. He came in; he'd been living a gay lifestyle—he's in his fifties—for 30 some years, and he said to me, "I don't really want to be gay. But I'm gay because that's the only place I can get love and affection." Now I don't think that's true in a larger sense, but from his perspective it was reality.

**Tim:** So his understanding was: This is the only way; he saw this as the only way that he could . . .

**Rob:** He came from a very abusive, unemotionally connected family; and all of us have a desire to be connected, to be loved, to be affirmed. Young boys need to be affirmed by their father. He got none of that! And so for him, the place to receive all of those natural God-given desires, he turned out of his woundedness to the homosexual lifestyle. And he hated it. But for a brief second he felt some love.

**Tim:** So there was something, there was some kind of payoff for him?

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**Rob:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** What there was is there was this natural desire and natural need to feel affection, attention, love, connection from the same gender. It didn't happen in his life; and eventually he turned to it in a sexual way, as he got older.

**Tim:** So that natural desire for love and affection and connection somehow gets sexualized—in an inappropriate way. And so that's where this . . . okay, there's got to be some other factors here. I mean, more than just . . . the thing that strikes me about homosexuality is it's pretty complex. It's not easily understood. There's a number of factors. What are some of the factors that play into this? When you say wounding; but that can come from any number of areas, correct?

**Jeff:** Well yeah, I mean Rob kind of mentioned some of them in this gentleman's story. But you can have this disconnect between a son and a dad, and whether that's because, you know, Dad's just not around or Dad's mean and distant. You can have a mother who over-nurtures a son, maybe overprotects him, maybe emasculates him and protects him from getting involved in a rough and tumble world. I've heard stories many, many times where guys will come to me and they will say, "My mother is my best friend." And really mean that. These are guys in their twenties, early twenties, teens, twenties; and after talking with

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them awhile they shift from that, they go, “I don’t like my mother at all” because they came to see that Mom, not intentionally did this (most moms don’t), but Mom kind of smothered them and emasculated and didn’t let them get involved in the masculine world of their boyhood.

**Rob:** That would be a wound! I mean, that doesn’t seem like a wound. An extra loving, overbearing mother, that is a wound that messes with a young boy.

**Jeff:** It messes with a young boy because it keeps him from bonding with his gender. It keeps him from developing a gender identity; just like not bonding with Dad keeps him from bonding with his gender. And another thing happens with his peers that can come into play if he’s very different from his peers, let’s say he’s an artistic boy and he’s kind of sensitive, and the guys in his class, in his school, are very rough and tumble kind of boys and he doesn’t connect with them.

**Tim:** Or if he has a brother that’s rough and tumble and he’s not.

**Jeff:** Exactly, and they alienate him, and they exclude him and he feels different and he feels less than and he feels other than, he doesn’t feel like a male because of that. He doesn’t feel like he’s in the masculine world like he belongs.

**Tim:** Okay, now you said he doesn’t feel like a male.

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**Jeff:** Doesn't feel like he's one of us.

**Tim:** He is a male.

**Jeff:** Oh yeah, he is.

**Tim:** So he is a man, but he doesn't feel like a man?

**Jeff:** He doesn't feel like he belongs in the world of masculinity. Feels kind of lost.

**Tim:** So Dad's distant and unconnected in some way. Mom can be overinvolved and overprotective, kind of compensating for Dad. But doing that has this negative effect on the son growing up in that home.

**Jeff:** Could.

**Rob:** This is very true. But it's a for instance. It's not the answer to all. We can't put this hat on every head. So it's different.

**Tim:** So everyone's story is unique and different.

**Rob:** Everyone is unique. But your question is right! The wounding, what is the wound? You've got to go back and explore: Is it an overbearing mother, is it an absent father, is it

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an abusive father, is it sexual abuse, is it teasing in high school, is it [being] drawn to the things that are traditionally female? So understanding the wound is important. To understand the wound is the beginning place of the healing. It's been said you can't heal what you don't feel. And that is so un-American! Right? What do we do with our pain? We ignore it, we run from it. And when we run from it, it owns us.

**Tim:** And you know, especially, that's true for men.

**Rob:** Right! Suck it up. Big boys don't cry! All that stuff.

**Tim:** Exactly. So if we're talking about men who are struggling, especially with same-sex attraction, that's a huge factor.

**Jeff:** The other factor that comes into play is not just cultural but there's this huge shame surrounding these, you know, how can I come out and ever admit that I feel sexually attracted to another male or a female, the same way. Tons of shame, because you know they've either heard that it's the worst of all struggles or sin; of course they've been teased mercifully in a lot of ways . . .

**Rob & Tim together:** Or mercilessly . . .

**Jeff:** Mercilessly, thank you. And so yeah, there's just this huge shame in, and more, if I tell you this. You've rejected me before; you're really going to reject me now. I don't want to go there. So

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there are all these things that keep them from acknowledging it to other people and to themselves. They just kind of tend to bury it and just hope it goes away.

**Rob:** Let me add this to the discussion too. Understanding homosexuality. Homosexuality isn't the problem! It might be the solution to a deeper problem. It's a fruit . . .

**Tim:** Explain that, Rob.

**Rob:** It's a fruit to the root. Now the fruit is very problematic—sinful, wrong, has all kinds of negative consequences. But picking fruit isn't going to heal the root. So understanding homosexuality, you have to go to the root, the wounding, the pain. And when you get to the root, well, the fruit will take care of itself, right? If you pull up the root, there's no more fruit.

**Tim:** So you're talking about a person who's struggling and needs to be willing to take a look at their story—of how this has developed, where did this come from, and how did it grow—in order to deal with whether they're acting out on it or whether they're stifling it. It's like living in isolation because they're terrified of being known; and they don't have any connection, kind of like living in the dark. Rather than that, if they're going to really walk through this, they're going to have to take a look back and say, "How did this start to grow?"

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That's a process because there's any number of factors. It can be family factors—the not bonding with the same-sex parent you talked about. The overinvolvement of the opposite-sex parent in ways that were unhealthy. You talked about abuse. Rob, you work in the inner city. You see a lot of folks who come who've got a history of abuse. That's a big factor too isn't it?

**Rob:** Yeah, I'm thinking of a woman I'll call Betty and a guy I'll call George. You would look at them both and you would know instantly that they are homosexual. She looks like a he, he looks like a she. And they personify that. Both of their stories have a commonality of some pretty horrific abuse as children. She was abused by men. And therefore she has wanted to downplay the source of her shame, the source of her woundings. And so she got rid of anything feminine about her. She looks like a man. He . . .

**Tim:** So she's no longer attractive to men.

**Rob:** No.

**Tim:** To stay away from abuse.

**Rob:** Right. And she looks like a man. So she's drawn to women where she's found safety and some of the comfort, similar to the other fellow.

And then the guy was abused as a young kid, multiple times from different people. And so he learned as a man, "I'm

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unlovable unless I'm giving something sexual to these people.” Now it's a very broken and messed up way of thinking, but it's what he was conditioned to do. If he wants affection and love, he's got to give something sexual.

**Tim:** So this natural hunger that we all have for love, affection, and connection, somewhere in the story of their past, has been twisted to become sexualized. Whether it's through the unhealthy attachment that wasn't there in their family or through abuse. But what about this question I hear thrown around out there: Some people are just born this way. What do you think, Jeff?

**Jeff:** I don't think so.

**Tim:** You don't think that person is born homosexual?

**Jeff:** Some people believe they're born this way. Some people believe people choose to be this way. I don't think either one of them are true. But no, I don't think people are born this way. I know there are a lot of studies that have been put out there that say that, but they're—just to say it very briefly—they're not repeatable, not verifiable. But it's not the point.

**Rob:** Amen to that! It's not the point.

**Jeff:** It's not the point, because . . .

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**Tim:** What is the point?

**Jeff:** The point is that this is a symptom. The whole struggle is a symptom of a very wounded heart; that if we believe who Jesus is and Jesus was—one who came to rescue us from our sins and to restore us—He can restore some of that woundedness, much of that woundedness. God created us as male and female. He created us to be marked by our gender. He created us to start from our gender. And there are things that can happen in a person’s life that keep that from happening. But it doesn’t have to stay that way. A person can come to Christ and through Christ’s power, through the renewing of their mind, through seeing things that aren’t true, and starting to believe things that are true, can start to heal and start to grow and begin to embrace who they really are as a male or a female.

**Tim:** So if I understand you right, what you’re saying is [that] when God said He made man and woman, male and female, He made them in His image. Going back to understand what God intended there and what has gotten messed up in between can help people be released from their struggle with homosexual urges.

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Rob:** Right on!

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**Jeff:** It is key.

**Tim:** That's fundamental.

**Jeff:** That's fundamental.

**Tim:** As to who we are as male and female in God's image.

**Jeff:** Right.

**Tim:** We're going to have to talk about that one a little bit later.  
Hey, thanks for sharing guys, appreciate it.

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