



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends and Fellowship Partners,

update june 2024

Have you noticed a growing division within the church regarding how we understand and respond to those with same-sex attractions and desires? Although we are one Body, we come to this issue from various viewpoints and perspectives.

On one side of the debate, we see a growing number of Christians embracing their same-sex desires. Organizations like The Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender—which has emerged as a major voice in evangelical churches across the country—and Revoice—which holds an annual conference—both embrace this message.

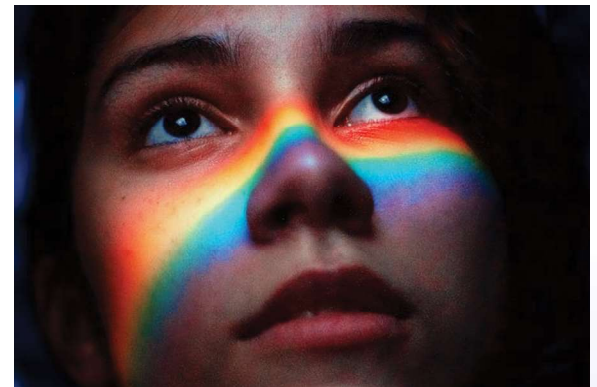
Those in this camp teach that same-sex attraction is not something that needs any type of resolution, but rather, the goal is to learn to live with the desires in a way that pleases God (through abstinence).

On the other side of the debate, we hear from those who speak strongly against embracing an LGBTQ label or even finding peace with their same-sex desires (regardless of whether one acts on them or not). These individuals argue that the desire itself is a morally culpable sin.

Rosaria Butterfield, while speaking at Liberty University last November, called out Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and Preston Sprinkle when she said, “Have you ever heard that same-sex attraction is a sinless temptation, and only a sin if you act on it?” Butterfield continued by sharing that the idea is a lie, and that same-sex attraction itself is sinful. And in his article “The Queering of the SBC,” Jared Moore rebukes several “unbiblical teachers” who fail to teach that same-sex attraction itself is a sin and, therefore, requires repentance.

So, when does desire become culpable sin? I believe it’s not so black and white, but yet, we do know there is a difference between the two. James 1:14-15 teaches that people are “..tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin...” In Psalm 19:12, we read, “But who can discern their own **errors**? Forgive my hidden **fault**. Keep your servant also from willful **sins**.” (emphasis added) Here, David delineates between “errors,” “fault,” and “sin.” Shouldn’t we also? And, of course, we know that Jesus was tempted in every way but was without sin (*Hebrews 4:15*). Regardless of whether desires are sinful, we should never find peace or complacency with ungodly desires, temptations, errors, or faults that lie within. So, what do we do with all this? What message needs to be shared with the same-sex attracted person?

I think back to when I was a teenager struggling with unwanted same-sex desires. I knew God and, through His word, learned that these feelings were not part of His plan or purpose for my life, so I sought (although not perfectly) to walk in obedience, not allowing my desires to become sin. Yet, in those initial years, the struggles and desires persisted.



“He has sent me to bind
up the brokenhearted, to
proclaim liberty to captives,
and freedom to prisoners.”

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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Today, I'm thankful I did not hear the message that I should find peace with the attractions, but I'm also thankful that I did not hear the message that SSA desires are just sinful and that I must repent simply because I had them.

I'm sharing this because I believe there is an important element missing on both sides of this debate. Instead of framing desires as sinful or not sinful, I would suggest that we respond to same-sex desires in terms of *brokenness* (which, of course, can potentially lead to sin). People who have same-sex desires are seeking to meet legitimate needs in counterfeit ways. In this regard, it's not much different than any type of brokenness.

Most Christians understand that when a brother in Christ turns to alcohol for solace, he might have some underlying relational wounds that need attention, or that when the young Christian girl compromises her sexuality in search of love, she just might need to attend to the emotional wounds of her abusive, unloving father. Yes, drunkenness and fornication are sinful behaviors that require repentance, but if we don't seek to understand how underlying wounds contribute to a person's confusion, doubt, uncertainty, and sin, the fractured person is left broken. This is why discipleship, wise counsel, and mentoring become crucial to the Christian's maturing and sanctifying process.

Although God can heal in any way He desires, I believe this healing work primarily happens in the context of biblical discipleship. So, while we teach biblical sexuality, preach our true identity in Christ, or have conversations about desires and sin, let us always offer the hope of transformation that comes through an intentional healing process. Let's encourage the Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction that they have legitimate emotional and relational needs; that they're not alone as they explore how they've been wounded in their sexuality; and most importantly, that Jesus offers healing, resolution, and wholeness for our broken sexual desires.

Does your church have this discipleship process available for people struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction? Are you sharing the hopeful message that God renews minds and heals broken hearts? If this is missing in your church, please connect with us to learn more about our discipleship programs, and may we together offer hope found in Christ.

In Christ,



Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Summer 2024: Emotionally Healthy Spirituality



We are excited to offer the *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* series on Tuesday evenings in July and August on Zoom. Topics covered include *The Crisis of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality*, *Exploring Your Family of Origin*, *Grief & Loss*, *Silence & Sabbath*, and more.

To register: www.portlandfellowship.com

Summer 2024: In-Person Hope Group

The Hope Group will be meeting in-person the second Friday of the month in June, July & August. Join us for dinner, testimonies, and prayer.



portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

events calendar

June 14

In-Person Hope Group

Join us for a night of food, testimonies, sharing & prayer for our LGBTQ-identified loved ones.
6:30pm

portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

June 21-22

RHN HOPE 2024 Conference

Restored Hope Network's annual conference will be held in-person in Rocklin, CA. To register:

www.restoredhopenetwork.org

Speakers and personal support can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com

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