

Ministering to the same sex attracted in your parish

So where do we Begin?



We are not where we are in the church today by accident:

Historically, we've done poorly as a church in ministering to the same-sex attracted

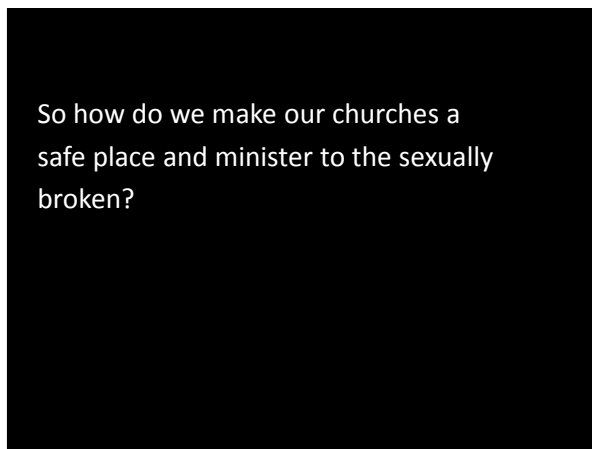
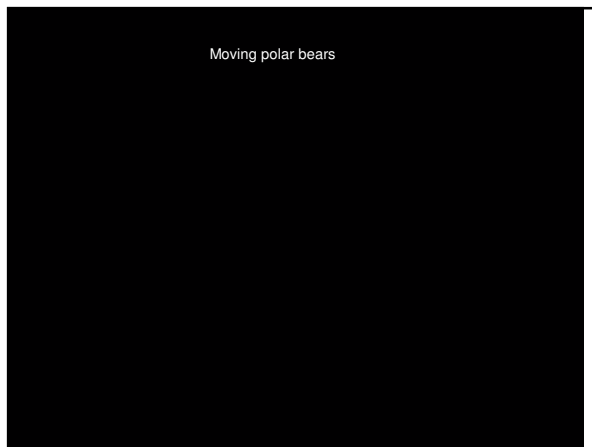
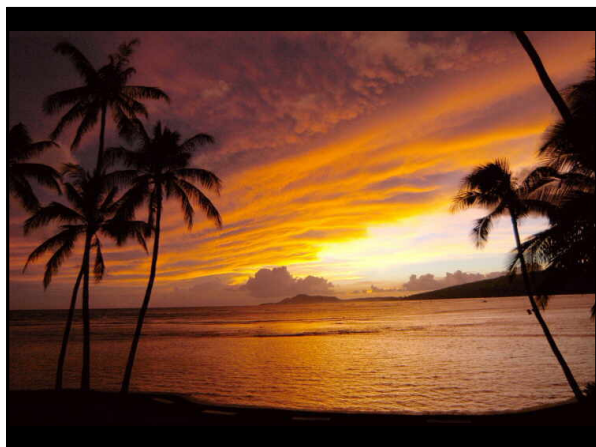
We've ignored the same-sex attracted

Lived and ministered in denial - Didn't think "such people" existed amongst us

We were uncomfortable with same-sex attractions

Didn't want to know anything about same-sex attractions

The help we offered tended to be unhelpful :
Simplistic,
Unloving,
At times judgmental
Lacked understanding of SSA

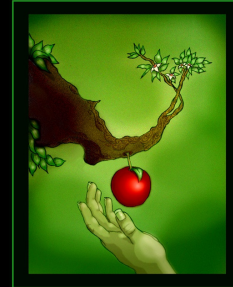


(1) We cannot offer them cheap grace.

"cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(2) And we cannot rewrite Scripture.



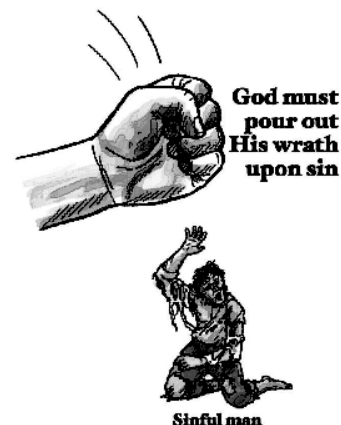
What we offer the same-sex attracted must stand on the foundation of Grace and Truth.

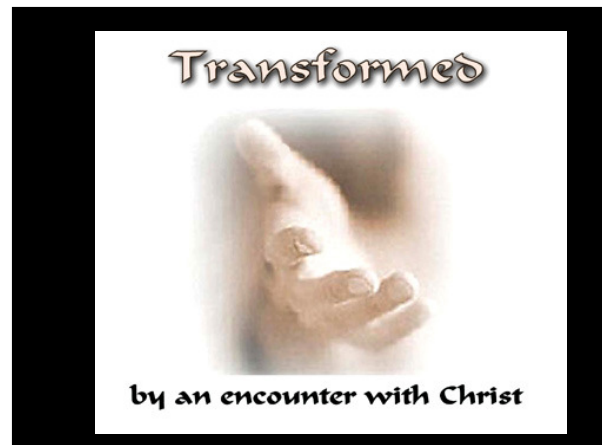
Jesus was the embodiment of Grace and Truth

- He came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
- The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

Truth and Grace

- Grace without Truth is *cheap grace*, and nothing more than deception. And any compassion without Truth is misplaced compassion.
- Truth without Grace is equally problematic. It is judgment, and has a way of distorting itself and becoming anything but the truth.





The opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality but **yielded obedience** to Christ.

If the Lord isn't the Lord of all areas of our lives including our sexuality, then He isn't Lord at all.

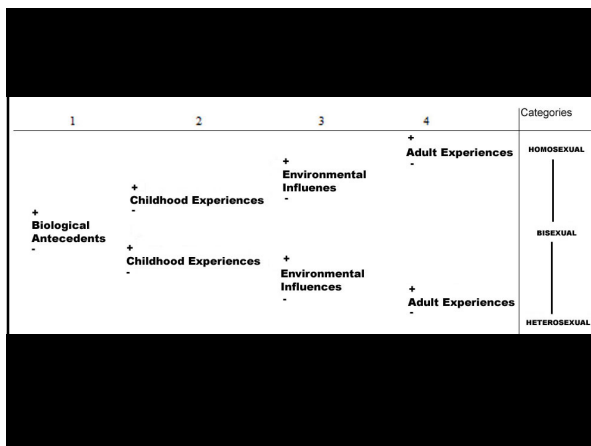
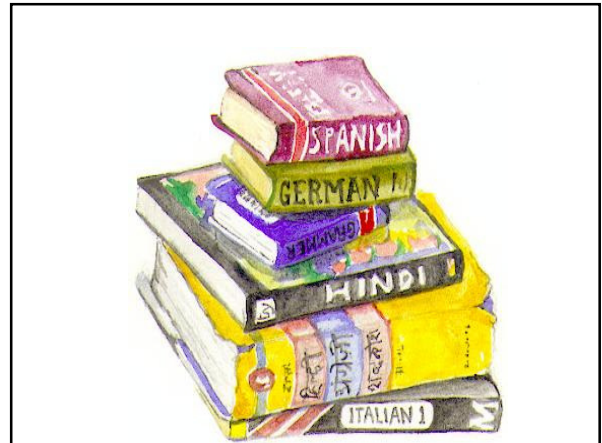
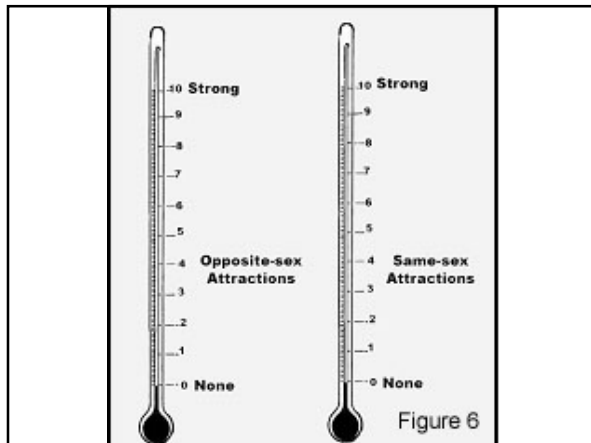
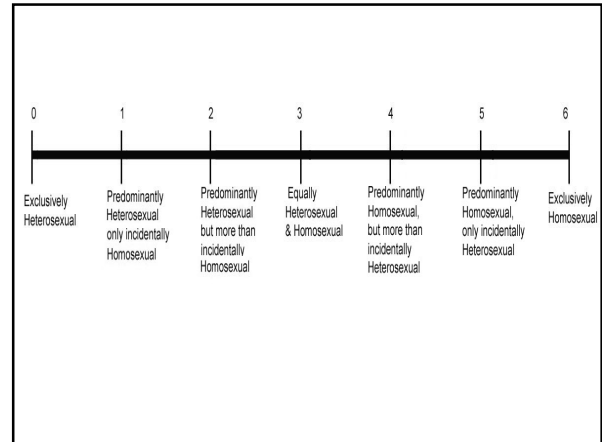
Romans 12:1-2

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

(NIV Romans 12:1-2)

Finally, brothers,
whatever is true,
whatever is noble,
whatever is right,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is admirable
--if anything is excellent or
praiseworthy--think about such
things.

(NIV Phil 4:8)



Childhood traumas
 Trauma as an adult
 Early sexual debut
 Sexual abuse (at any age)
 Physical abuse (at any age)
 Emotional abuse (at any age)
 Spiritual abuse (at any age)
 Same-sex wounds (wounds inflicted by same-sex parents or peers)



Opposite-sex wounds (wounds inflicted by opposite-sex parents or peers)
 Parental influences
 Gender nonconformity
 Gender dysphoria
 (intense dislike of one's gender)
 Psychological Predisposition
 Biological Predisposition



Cultural messages
 Encounter with a homosexual person
 Exposure to Homosexuality
 Same-sex schooling

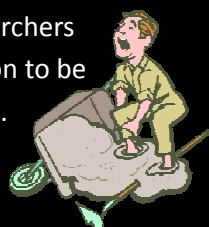


Factors seen as contributing factors towards same-sex attractions by some members of The Zacchaeus Fellowship

Factors	Deb	Al	Dan	Sandy	Mike	Hannah	Carey	Lynn
Childhood traumas	10		20	10	20	25	20	15
Trauma as an adult				15			11	20
Early sexual debut	15	5	20	5	20	23	18	21
Sexual abuse (at any age)	20		22				5	20
Physical abuse (at any age)	10			15			20	21
Emotional abuse (at any age)	15	15	18	25	25		20	15
Spiritual abuse (at any age)	10	5		10	25		20	15
Same-sex wounds (wounds inflicted by same-sex parents or peers)	20	25	22	15	15	10	8	0
Opposite-sex wounds (wounds inflicted by opposite-sex parents or peers)	25	5	15	25	25	23	25	19
Parental influences	25		22		15		5	23
Gender nonconformity	20	8	22	25	25	15	25	10
Gender dysphoria (intense dislike of one's gender)	25		15	10			20	15
Psychological Predisposition	18		17	20	25	15	20	5
Biological Predisposition		10						
Other Factors (self-identified)*								
Cultural messages	15							
Encounter with a homosexual person	17			25				
Exposure to Homosexuality (peers in sports)				25				
Same-sex schooling (all girls)	10			15				
Inferiority complex					25			
Parental inability to show love							15	

But... Is sexual orientation fixed?

While the predominant perspective in the culture is that sexual orientation is fixed, a number of significant researchers have shown sexual orientation to be more fluid than most believe.



"The fact that sexual behavior patterns and sexual self-labeling can change dramatically and sometimes several times (e.g., from heterosexual to homosexual and back to heterosexual) within an individual over time challenges the view that sexual orientation is fixed or determined early in life and remains constant."

Stephanie A. Sanders, J. Reinisch, & D. McWhirter, D., (1990).
Homosexuality/heterosexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation, p xxiv.

“...ironically, just as society has become more accepting of a sexual taxonomy that includes gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, scientists studying sexual orientation have increasingly come to question the usefulness of these categories in light of the increasing evidence for nonexclusivity and plasticity in sexuality, especially among women.”

- Lisa Diamond

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 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. (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Two new challenges for us in the church today:

Scripture “Re-interpreted”
Gay-identity

Identity is a powerful thing

We live what we label ourselves
and what we think we are
– not necessarily who we really are



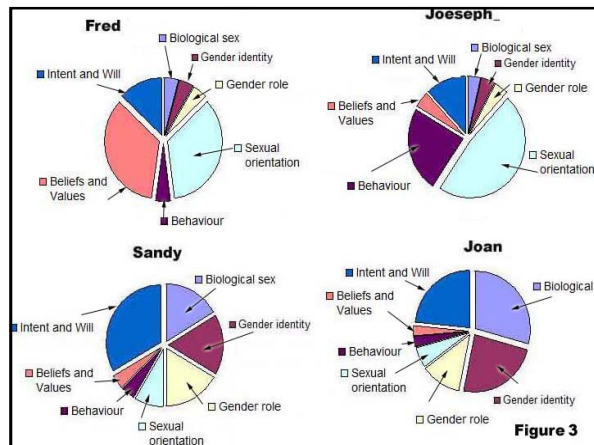
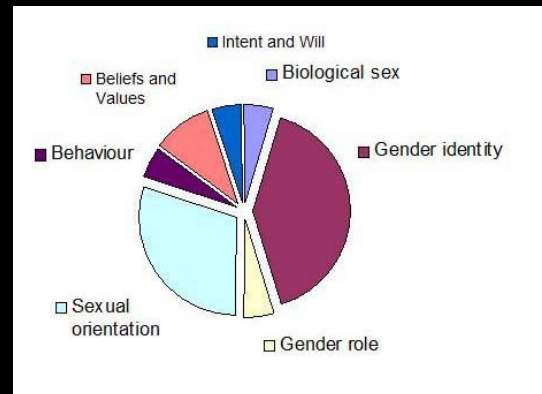
Sexual Identity

Strictly speaking, *sexual identity* refers to the sense of one's own sexuality and one's overall concept of self as a sexual being which includes the act of self-labeling or self-identification with labels such as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Concepts such as innate and fixed sexual orientation and sexual identity are uniquely 20th century Western cultural constructs specific to our time, and to those cultures under Western influence.

Aspects of sexual identity

- Biological sex
- Gender identity
- Gender role
- Sexual orientation
- Behaviour
- Beliefs and values concerning sex
- Intent and will



Nobody is born with a gay identity - It is something that develops

Basically, an individual progresses from his or her first awareness that there is something about his or her actions, thoughts, and/or feelings that can be considered homosexual, to the point of acceptance of a gay-identity (or that of other sexual-minority status) followed by an increased commitment to the sexual identity that becomes integrated and consolidated into one's concept of self.

Meaning Making

For gay identity to develop, certain things need to be in place.

- A cognitive blue-print (or internalized concept of what it means to be gay).
- Association of one's same-sex attraction, thoughts, and behavior with what it means to be "homosexual/gay".
- Assigning meaning to one's own attractions, thoughts, and behavior as being homosexual.

There are four ways in which gay identity is maintained:

(1) by considering the gay-identity to be something that is here to stay,

(i.e permanent, born gay)

For the "gay identity" to thrive, not only is it necessary for the secular world to believe people are born gay, but also that the gays themselves believe they are born gay for the identity to thrive.

*We argue that, for all practical purposes, **gays should be considered to have been born gay** – even though sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the product of a complex interaction between innate predisposition and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence.”*

Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen,
After the Ball, (1989), p. 184.

There are four ways in which gay identity is maintained:

- (1) by considering the gay-identity to be something that is here to stay,
- (2) by establishing social networks and support systems consistent with the identity
- (3) by avoiding situations that can cause conflicting and ambiguous feelings, thoughts, and actions, and
- (4) by increasing social and psychological structures in proportion to one's increasing commitment to the identity.

In providing pastoral care,

We must offer realistic pastoral care.
No promises of healing in orientation.
Healing in relational issues, yes.
Healing in wounded areas, yes.
Learning to relate to opposite sex, maybe.
It's a process that requires time and commitment.

We must never make it about change in orientation – it is about **yielded obedience** to Christ and discipleship.

One of the realities we must face is that so often, same-sex attracted individuals are made to feel they need to change in their sexual orientation before they could be fully accepted in their church.

There are four ways in which the same-sex attracted can strengthen and maintain their Christian identity:

- (1) by considering the Christian-identity and relationship with Christ is here to stay.
- (2) by entering into relationship with Christ and establishing social networks and support systems consistent with the identity,
- (3) by avoiding situations that can cause conflicting and ambiguous feelings, thoughts, and actions.
- (4) by increasing in relational depth with Christ and increasing social and psychological structures in proportion to one's increasing commitment to the identity.

Pastoral strategy

focusing on

- (1) the internalized concepts concerning homosexuality
- (2) the meaning making process
- (3) the stage specific intervention focusing on the individual's needs during different stages of identity formation

Five areas requiring management

1. Relationship with Christ
 - Discipling
 - Prayer life
2. Thought management
 - Learning not to entertain thoughts e.g., thought stopping
 - Learning not to suppress thoughts
 - Replacing irrational thought patterns with rational ones.
 - Learning to set one's mind on things above

Five areas requiring management

1. Relationship with Christ - Discipling
2. Thought management
3. Behavioral management
 - Identifying triggers and patterns
4. Environmental management
5. Relapse prevention

Reclaiming and restoring aspects of sexual identity

Reclaiming and restoring one's sense of gender
 Reclaiming and restoring one's gender-role
 Reclaiming and restoring one's sense of ideal self (intent and will)
 Reclaiming and restoring one's beliefs and values
 Reclaiming and restoring one's behaviour
 Reclaiming and restoring one's biological sex

We all need to bring brokenness and sexuality to Christ and the Cross



The Church must reflect the Master

- Jesus sought the sinners out.
- He hung out with sinners.
- Sinners like Zacchaeus loved that Jesus would come to them.
- We cannot be so "sanitized", that we are a afraid to reach out.
- What "dark corners" would Jesus NOT go into?

What we must offer in the Christian community

- Others "like me" – in Christ.
 We are all different, and we all feel different at one time or another. But we have our similarity in Christ. Emphasis needs to be on our similarity and not on the difference.
- Acceptance – the unconditional Love of the Father extends to all. Not just the "saints."

- Affirmation - affirming that as Christians, we are much more than just our sexuality.
- Support – in our walk with Christ, and in the struggles to remain faithful to Christ in our sexual brokenness.
- Friendship – wholesome friendship with people of same sex and opposite sex
- A place to belong – a member of the Body, a family in Christ, and not just “church”
- A “safe place” – permission to be “broken” individuals

Pastors.... We also need to be consistent

- Biblical teaching on human sexuality is much needed in the church
- Homosexuality must not be elevated above other sexual sins and forms of sexual brokenness
- Pray without ceasing, and never underestimate the power of prayer

- No one is beyond God’s reach. Absolutely no one
- Failure does not mean failure, so *never* give up on the person. God doesn’t, and neither should we
- We need a revival of testimonies. Faith comes from hearing. We need to hear what God is doing in peoples’ lives.

The world is now watching you,
and especially the same-sex attracted are
now watching you
to see how you will “include” and minister to
the same-sex attracted.

