

## Sexual Orientation, Science, & The Bible

By Pastor Mark Christopher

**“... same-sex orientation as an identity category is problematic. From a Christian perspective, it invites us to embrace fictional identities that go directly against God's revealed purposes for His creation. It invites us to define ourselves and the meaning of our lives according to the sum total of our fallen sexual attractions. But God's purposes for us are obscured if we make our sinful sexual attractions the touchstone of our being. God gives us a bodily identity that indicates his purposes for us sexually, and those purposes are unambiguously ordered to the opposite sex within the covenant of marriage. To embrace an identity that goes against God's revealed purpose is by definition sinful.” (Denny Burk)**

Few terms in recent days have been more used and abused than the psychologically contrived label “Sexual Orientation”. It is heard *ad nauseum* from many different quarters. Though it is frequently heard, it is little understood. How many people have you heard use the term and then define it? Next time you hear someone say, “sexual orientation”, ask them to define it for you! Then, when the silence becomes deafening, ask them what they think it means. They might reply with a rhetorical version of *Dancing With The Stars*.

If we don't know what it means and how it is used, that makes it hard to interact with its supposed meaning and the moral and cultural effects it has spawned. It seems like no term or title today is more lodged in the psyche of our culture than that of sexual orientation. So, it is the purpose of this seminar to look at the popular definition of this overused term as the American Psychological Association (APA) defines it. Then we will briefly consider the supposed “science” that is thought to back up modern-day promotions of the same before considering how the concept of sexual orientation interacts and interfaces with the Bible. To achieve the purpose of this seminar, I will endeavor to answer 10 questions regarding same-sex orientation (SSO) and its closely aligned correlate same-sex attraction (SSA).

### 1. Why is a seminar of this nature so important?

- To counter the claims of the current moral revolution and cultural tsunami that has taken the USA, and the West in general, by storm.
- To critically evaluate the *a priori* assumptions that SSO is a genetic given which biologically predetermines who will be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual.
- To present counter claims of the commonly held belief that SSO is an identity that is as innate as it is immutable.

- To look beyond the biblical ethics of homosexual behavior, of which the Scriptures are not unambiguous, and survey the ethics of desire and lust as set out in God's word.
- To establish a biblical basis for ministering to those caught in the web of deceit spun by all things LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, + and whatever else they may conceive).

As Martin Luther so insightfully noted in his day, **“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”**

So, it is the purpose of this seminar to focus on the cause de jour of our day and bring a Christ-centered biblical witness to bear on the Devil's present-day emphasis.

## 2. How does the secular world define SSO?

- Pro-gay Theologian Christine Gudorf: “The most fundamental insight of recent social science regarding homosexuality concerns the discovery of sexual orientation, that is the discovery that sexual attraction in humans is neither uniformly heterosexual nor continuously plastic and fully open to manipulation by the will. Sexual orientation understood in terms of the object of one's sexual attraction, exists on a spectrum between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual, and for most persons in this culture is fixed relatively early in life ... Scientific research can and does suffer from design flaws and /or researcher bias, in addition to various problems in interpreting results.” Note her caveat at the end!
- APA: “Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Research over several decades has demonstrated that sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex.”
- Note the APA's qualifying statement on the science of their claims: “There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no

findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.” Note: They nuance their admission with a final experientially based statement.

- Noteworthy elements of the APA’s definition:

It is highly subjective.

It is wholly predicated on personal self-identification i.e., personal experience.

It is ambiguous and difficult to quantify and, therefore, very relative.

It is long on emotion and same-sex attraction to include sexual possibility.

It, SSO, cannot be diagnostically tested or empirically validated.

- Yet, based on nothing but subjectivity, ambiguity, and scientific uncertainty, the APA pretends that SSO is:

The sum of one’s identify — it is a self-identified trait based on individual desires. Imagine diagnosing your own illnesses and disease based on feeling alone!

SSO is innate and, therefore, unchosen. Hence, it is beyond one’s control.

It is immutable, i.e., one is consigned to this state and cannot change. One can no more change their sexual orientation than a blind man can see with reading glasses.

Given the dogmatic nature of the assertions, it is easy to see how and why LGBTQIA+ activists effectively use such a definition to make homosexuality a civil rights issue and, therefore, a human rights issue.

But: unlike race, gender, or disability, homosexuality does not share the same traits: (1) homosexuality is a self-identified trait, whereas race, gender (biological sex), and disability are readily identifiable by all; (2) homosexuality has not empirically been proven to be immutable — as the testimonies of many former gays indicate — whereas race, gender, and disability are irreversible; (3) homosexuality is not morally neutral, whereas race, gender, and disability are — the Bible never morally condemns one for race, gender (unless attempts to change their gender), or disability, congenital or otherwise.

### 3. What is the scientific basis used to substantiate the SSO claims?

Has science really found the “gay” gene? Is homosexuality a biologically constituted state into which one is born? The average person on the street and in the pew certainly thinks so. Here are just a couple of examples and quotes that challenge the group think theory on the biological basis for SSO/SSA:

#### 3.1. Examples of scientific studies that came up short:

- Dr. Simon Levay formerly of the SALK Institute of San Diego. Levay became a household name in the early 1990s with his hypothalamus gland theory that was heralded by Newsweek, TIME, and other major media outlets as irrefutable proof that a smaller hypothalamus gland in gay men meant that homosexuality was in the brain. But here is what Dr. Levay said about his own study: “It is important to stress what I didn’t find. I did not prove that homosexuality was genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn’t show that men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work.”

In the end, Levay can’t say whether the smaller hypothalamus gland was a result of the homosexuality, the AIDS they all died from, or whether they it was present at birth. In fact, Levay, based on a lack of sexual history of his subjects, can’t say if they were exclusively gay, bisexual, or were primarily heterosexual. And never mind that Levay’s study focused only on men, not women.

- Dr. Dean Hamer and his genetic marker study on a region of the gene called Xq28 of the X chromosome. The presence of Xq28 was said to be passed on through the mother to her sons. The presence of Xq28 in consanguinal brothers meant that in 13.5% of the cases were one brother was gay another brother would be gay as well. His study was never replicated and science hinges on replication based on the raw data. Hamer later conceded, “Homosexuality is not purely genetic ... Environmental factors play a role. There is not a single master gene that makes people gay ... I don’t think we will ever be able to predict who will be gay.”
- Drs. Michael Baily and Richard Pillard and twin studies on monozygotic (identical) twins. Their initial twin study was tainted with sample bias by using convenience samples taken almost exclusively from the gay community, rather than using the more accurate random samples. Subsequently, Baily used the Australian twin registry to send surveys to every twin in Australia. The concordance rate from the first study fell from 52% to 20% in the more accurate second study. Subsequent twin studies validate the 20% concordance rate within a few percentage points. This all but eliminates homosexuality as a purely genetic trait and moves it back into the realm of nurture, with environmental factors playing a key role.

- Homosexuality as the norm for nature: Does nature have anything to teach us about homosexuality as an inborn trait? What about the Bonobos monkey, “gay” penguins, “gay” sheep, and even “gay” fish (the Atlantic Mollies)? Are the psycho-social and psycho-sexual dynamics of the animal kingdom really the same as those of humanity? That one male animal rides another male animal of the same kind probably has more to do with male dominance than it does with homosexual attraction. Do humans really want to teach their children table manners based on feeding time at the zoo, let alone sexual ethics?
- **But:** With all that said, there is some science that indicates that the born-that-way dogma is a myth. Dr. Neil Whitehead, who is both a biochemist and a statistician, reports that 12 published surveys all show that the mean age of the first SSA (a byproduct of SSO) is 9.4 +/- 1.1 years for males, while for women it is 11.1 +/- 1.8 years. This signifies that the first thought of SSA is not the earliest memory of the gay person. This all runs counter to born-that-way orthodoxy.

### 3.2. So, what does the science really tell us about SSO and its correlate SSA?

- It actually tells us more about the state of modern-day science than it does about SSO — that most of the science surrounding SSO has distinct ideological bent. It is advocacy science (scientism) that reveals more about the bias of the scientists behind these studies than the cause(s) behind SSO.
- Genetics tells us that genes do not work in isolation from other complex factors to produce certain behaviors. There is no single gene that governs sexual preferences or any other preferences. Genes create proteins not preferences. There are numerous complex biochemical processes that all take place to produce a physical trait while behavioral traits are even more complex. All of which acts in concert with a person’s environment to influence the expression of a gene.
- Most of the studies are riddled with sample bias, or conformation bias, and convenience samples. Random samples are often avoided in favor of proving what the scientist set out to “prove”.
- The media and LGBTQIA+ advocates are very fond of cherry picking only those parts of a study that promote their agenda. Very few are actually aware that the vast majority of these touted studies are inconclusive, failing to validate the popular claims.
- Almost all the studies are characterized by rhetorical skepticism with the use of weasel words like “may”, “possibly”, “might”, “could”, and the like.
- Therefore, where SSO is concerned, it is case of the blind leading the blind. And no one is the wiser. As one LGBTQIA+ critic explains, “Bizarrely, the members of this group (LGBTQIA+) that no one can define have not only been born this way, they can never change.”!

### 3.3. Additional quotes questioning the science behind SSO:

- The Chicago Sex Survey concluded that the “prevalence of homosexuality in the population at large ... is fundamentally a multidimensional phenomenon that has manifold meanings and interpretations, depending on the context and purpose.”
- Dr. Neil Whitehead, based on 30 years of research, believes that “Homosexuality is not inborn, and not genetically dictated. Nor for that matter is heterosexuality or any other human behavior. In fact, our genes do not make us do anything. Whether its homosexuality, a foul temper, bed-wetting, or addiction to chocolate, our genes have very little to do with it ... No behavior, including homosexuality results solely from genes ... the level of genetic influence could easily be as low as 10%, the balance of 90% coming from the environment ... the genetic content of any behavior drops commensurately with whatever environmental intersections of an opposite kind are brought to bear upon it.”

In summary, the science behind the born-that-way theory of SSO is skating on a very thin sheet of ice as scientific disinformation has been the order of the day for last 30 or so years. No authority, scientific or otherwise, can eclipse the authority that is the Bible!

(Note: The scientific quotes were either taken from my book, Dr. Neil Whitehead, or the book *Fake Science* — all of which are listed in the bibliography at the end of this manuscript.)

### 4. How does the church at large understand and view the APA’s definition of SSO? There are four primary views here based on Burk and Lambert’s categories.

- 4.1. The liberal church: It has long since departed from any semblance of biblical authority, opting instead for “Christianized” secularism instead. Rather than *sola Scriptura* as their creed, they land on the side of *sola cultura*.
- 4.2. The compromising church: This understanding of SSO is quite revisionistic in its approach to Scripture. Instead of abandoning the Bible altogether as the liberal church does, the compromising church seeks to wed prevailing culture with a reinterpreted Bible. Proponents of this view, like Matthew Vine, contend that Bible does not address homosexuality as it is known today. So, as long as same-sex relationships are loving, consensual, monogamous, and covenantally committed between two people, then they are in keeping with God’s paradigm for marriage.

**But:** This is wholly inconsistent. If gender distinction is no longer a necessary requirement for same-sex unions, then why is it necessary to maintain the numerical requirement of only two people? Why make monogamy a requirement at all? Further, why bother with a covenantal commitment?

- 4.3. The neo-traditional church: The argument here is not about the permissibility of same-sex behavior, but rather the notion that SSO is not sinful in and of itself. They even try to find praiseworthy elements in SSO that can be somehow be turned into a positive. Yet, as Burk and Lambert warn, SSA is not exactly a good platform from which to grow spiritual fruit.
- 4.4. The traditional church: Here the church considers both the desires and the and same-sex behavior to be sin. There is understanding that the homosexual must address both the root and the fruit before meaningful and lasting change can be made.
5. What are the undergirding aspects of the theology that need to be considered when seeking a biblical approach and framework to SSO?
- Bibliology: *sola Scriptura* versus *sola cultura*. The primary issue behind SSO focuses on biblical authority. One's view of biblical authority immediately influences and informs his/her hermeneutic. Show me a church that has conceded valuable real estate on homosexuality, and I will show you a church that has traded biblical authority for cultural authority and biblical relativity.
  - Hamartiology (sin): "For all have sinned ...". This implies total depravity. Apart from the doctrine of total depravity, nothing makes sense, including the issue of sexual orientation.
  - Anthropology: It must be understood that man is not measure where morality and ethics is concerned — God is!
  - Christology: Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost! He did not come so that we could save ourselves, but that He could save us from our sinful selves. Christ is central to the SSO debate.
  - Soteriology (salvation): This multifaceted doctrine underscores the cause, purpose, and nature of salvation — a salvation that produces a new creature in Christ where transformative change is experienced.
  - Ecclesiology: Outlining how the church should practically respond to this watershed issue.

This serves to remind us that before the LGBTQIA+ issue is social, cultural, philosophical, political, or psychological, it is theological and biblical, which is the reason the Bible has been in the cross hairs of the LGBTQIA+ advocates. Apart from this understanding, the Christian approach will be attended with worldly baggage of one degree or another and stray from God's standards.

6. What does the Bible say about the connection between one's thought life and associated behaviors?

- Mark 7:19-23 is very instructive on this: Homer Kent comments that “True defilement is spiritual and moral. It proceeds from the inner being of man, which is sinful by nature.” Thus, Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” So, the human heart serves as a beachhead for defilement, which Jesus qualifies in 7:21 as “evil thoughts”. Of interest here are three of the 12 terms used here that stem from the polluted human heart, these three are directly related to human sexual ethics:

*porneia*: “fornications” which serves as a broad category marker for all acts of sexual immorality, which includes a blanket prohibition on homosexuality of any variety.

*moicheia*: “adulteries” is a specific term that singles out adultery as especially heinous when it is used in conjunction with *porneia*.

*aselgeia*: “sensuality” which is used to describe as unrestrained moral attitudes and behaviors. Or, as A.T. Robertson defines it, “unrestrained sex instinct”, which emphasizes the dispositional attitude that gives rise to the fornication and adultery previously mentioned in the context. Thus, the mindset precedes the deed.

- The sum of Jesus’ argument here is that sinful desires find their source in a totally depraved nature that operates from the inside out, not the outside in — sow a thought and reap a behavior!
- Charles Hodge concurs in his systematic theology (2:107): “When a man is convinced of sin, it is not so much for specific acts of transgression that his conscience condemns him as for the permanent states of mind.”

## 7. So, is the SSA that flows from SSO sinful — what does the Bible say?

To answer the question an analysis of the New Testament Greek word complex *epithumia/epithumeo* is required. For the purposes of this seminar, only a few representative passages will be considered to illustrate the points made.

- *epithumia/epithumeo* Lexical significance: The word is most often translated as “desire(s)” and it speaks of a strong “desire” or “craving” for a particular object. It is frequently used with a sexual connotation and is translated “lust”. It is used both positively and negatively, with only the object of the desire determining the positive or negative nature of the desire.
- Jesus’ use of the word in the Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
- The significance of Jesus’ statement: Here Jesus clearly couples the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment with the 10<sup>th</sup> — adultery and coveting. The Mosaic Law did



not prohibit all desires, just those desires that have a forbidden object of the desire.

- 2 Key lessons: (1) By combining the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment with the 7<sup>th</sup>, Jesus extends the meaning beyond adultery to all sexual sin. Adultery just happened to be the most common sexual transgression of the day. As Robert Gagnon keenly notes, the ethic here places an “emphasis ... on sexual restraint, not freedom.” Therefore, even the mere mental entertaining (fantasizing) of sexual distortion of any kind is “already defiling before the act is committed”; (2) What determines the nature (positive or negative) of the desire is wholly determined by the object of that desire. A prohibited object equals an errant desire born from sin (Cf. James 1:15 vs. 1 Timothy 3:1).

#### 8. Does this mean that temptation itself is a sin?

We have often hear people say, “It is not a sin to be tempted.” Is this a correct understanding of temptation?

- James 1:13-15: The issue here is whether the temptation is internal or external.
- The nature of “sin” itself (*hamartia*) can reference either deeds or thoughts (Cf. James 1:15 vs. Romans 7:20, 23).
- The escape hatch from temptation: 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Conclusion: As long as the temptation is not a product of sinful desires/lust it is not a sin to be tempted, as long as one does not concede to the external temptation. For example, it is possible for a man to appreciate the attractiveness of another woman who is not his wife. But the moment that appreciation veers into the lane of immoral thoughts, it is sin. Given that SSO is defined as an “enduring attraction” that contains sexual possibility, it is sin at the desire the level, because it desires an object that is clearly forbidden in Scripture. One can readily see the many negative implications of a church or denomination conceding to this definition.

#### 9. What are the pastoral/ministerial implications of this biblical understanding of SSO/SSA?

9.1 We are all in the same sin-stained boat, because we are all fallen creatures. The hamartiological hangover of sin affects us all through our common ancestor Adam. As such, we all have distorted desires that deviate from God’s holy standards. In the instance of the homosexual, his/her homosexuality is but an expression of fallen desires in the same way that adulterer’s aberrant desires are expressed in an affair.

9.2 A biblical framework of SSO/SSA must inform and direct our evangelism and counselling of SSA people. We need to tell them that sin is not just what we do (pelagian), it is also what we are.

**Therefore:** We need to wage war against both the root and the fruit of homosexual sin. Sinful thoughts and desires must be crucified right along with the sinful behaviors as the old man is replaced with the new man in Christ!

9.3 The goal of all instruction and counsel should be holiness not heterosexuality (Romans 6:1, 12-16; 8:13; 12:2).

9.4 We need to approach the sin of homosexuality and SSA with an equal measure of truth and grace (John 1:14), lest we become imbalanced in our approach. Grace without truth is sentimentalism; truth without grace is harsh and unloving. In this, we must not affirm the homosexual in his or her sin, which the whole concept of SSO does.

9.5 We must convey the hope and necessity of transformative change — Hope & Change! (2 Corinthians 3:18):

After all, what is Christian? Someone who has been regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit and is therefore no longer a slave to indwelling sin. This provides the platform to put off the old while putting on the new man in Christ.

So what kind of change are we talking about?

9.5.1 A change that is not anchored on biblical ethics alone, but anchored on new life in Christ (Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

9.5.2 A change, that while possible, is still often hard. Such change is a process, not an event. It is like a diet, it is never easy. Yet, though it is not easy, the believer has the advantage of the indwelling Holy Spirit who can fill the sail of one's life (Eph. 5:18) and take them to their intended destination despite the rising swells, storms, and contrarian winds!

9.5.3 A change that is beneficial, not harmful as the world now claims.

9.5.4 A change that genuinely pursues godly holiness in the power of God's Spirit (Ephesians 5:1-3).

The one who truly walks in Christ's love does not commit sexual immorality in thought or deed. On this point Burk and Lambert sagely conclude, "Only the goals taught in Scripture will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish them ... the Holy Spirit will not supply grace to pursue a goal he has not commanded."

**Therefore:** The Holy Spirit will not work apart from the word He Himself inspired. True, transformative change is a coordinated effort between both God's word and God's Spirit. The sum of this equation = transformative change!

9.5.5 A change with Christ at its center — “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” (Colossians 1:27).

This is one of the major failings of reparative therapy, it misdiagnosis the problem and marginalizes the solution, so that Christ is not the central remedy.

10. What lessons can be learned from comparing SSO/SSA with the Bible’s emphasis on fleshly “desires”?

Considering all the parameters and aspects of SSO detailed by the APA, when SSO produces an attraction with sexual possibility, it is sin; When SSO forms an identity other than that intended by the Creator, it is sin; When SSO forms an emotional and romantic connection with someone of the same sex, it is sin.

No physical craving, urge, or burning desire, regardless of how enduring it may be, should ever eclipse God’s will for His children. A professing faith in Christ should be evidenced by a practicing faith that walks in obedience to the Lord. Among other things, this means that celibacy is the standard for all unmarried Christians who are same-sex attracted or otherwise.

“When we deal with sinners in general, and gay sinners in particular, we do them no favors by running away from the truth of Scripture ... If we withhold that truth from them out of fear of offending them, then we don’t love them.” (Burk & Lambert)

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