



Are people born gay or do they choose to be gay? Both sides of this debate use this same question in an attempt to prove their position. After all, if people are born gay, then we assume God created them this way. If this is true then it must be okay. On the other hand, if people choose to be gay then they can choose to be straight. Problem solved. Right?

It's really not that simple. This question is misleading because it is really two separate questions and the answer to both is, "no".

But how can that be? I'll explain.

The first question is: Are people born "gay"? Despite misleading and flawed research that often makes it to the evening news, good research shows no "gay" gene and no empirical evidence that people are born this way. Many may report that they felt this way ever since they can

remember, but that in itself does not indicate they were born that way. There are other factors that can account for those feelings.

Now, since many accept this false assumption that same sex attraction is genetic or biological, at least two assumptions have been made. First, if people were born this way then one could reason that it would be nearly impossible for them to change their sexual orientation. Because most in the media have adopted this position their bias is clear that changing one's sexual orientation is impossible. They further assert, with no empirical evidence to back them up, that attempts at doing so are harmful. However, reliable research shows that people have successfully changed their sexual orientation with positive results. It may not be easy, and may not happen for everyone but the facts show that for many, successful change has occurred.

In Christian circles, a second more pernicious assumption is made: If men and women were born with same sex attraction, then God made them that way and hence Sacred Scripture must be incorrect or misinterpreted since several of these verses so clearly condemn homosexual acts. I will get back to this later. First, let's look at that second question.

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Does one choose to be attracted to the same gender? Well, there's no dispute even among those defending homosexual behavior that it is a more difficult lifestyle with social un-acceptance and possible rejection by family and friends. So, choosing it would be unlikely. The question, more accurately then is does someone who experiences attraction to someone of the same sex choose to act upon these feelings? Yes, ultimately, the man or woman does make a choice to act or not act upon this attraction. But if these individuals who are burdened with these feelings, are told that they are born this way, they may feel there is no other choice to make. So if you experience opposite sex attraction, imagine what you might feel if you were told that becoming romantically involved with the opposite sex is sinful and the consequences are hell. If we are to help those with same sex attraction come to the fullness of truth in Jesus Christ, we must act out of compassion and realize that men and women with same sex attraction did not ask for or choose this condition.

Combining these two questions simply creates a smoke screen to hide a bigger agenda. Although homosexuality has been around for thousands of years, it has only been seen as an identity or "type of person" for about 150 years (Medinger, 2000). This is when the term "homosexual" was coined. Prior to this, it was always seen just as behavior, not a type of

person. But after the sexual revolution of the 1960's, homosexuality is now seen as an identity which, many assert, should be entitled to minority status.

Homosexuality is not an identity. One ***is not a*** "same sex attraction", but instead one ***experiences*** same sex attraction. For years, Courage, the Catholic support group for those with same-sex attraction, as well as many other Christians, have refrained from using words such as "gay", "lesbian", "bisexual", "transgender" or even "homosexual" because they are labels which insinuate that this is in fact an identity.

In 2003 researcher Alan Medinger (Medinger, 2003) cited a number of false beliefs that come about when one accepts homosexuality as an "identity":

- I must have been born this way.
  
- If I was born this way, then God made me this way.
  
- If God made me this way, how can there be anything wrong with it?
  
- It's my nature and I must be true to my nature.
  
- If it's my nature, I can't change.
  
- If I try to change I would be going against my nature and that would be harmful.
  
- Accepting myself as gay feels so good- I feel like a thousand pound load has been lifted off of my back so it must be okay.

□ If people can't accept my being gay, then something is wrong with them.

□ If people can't accept my being gay, then they don't accept me because that's who I am.

If we accept the idea that homosexuality is an identity, then the truth is chipped away further and further until we are left with nothing. What do I mean? Let's suppose a man with a strong Catholic faith accepts the identity of being "gay". If he believes that God created him this way; then his beliefs are strongly contradicted in Sacred Scripture and do not make any sense. For example, Scripture states that the acts of homosexuality are an abomination and if he commits this act, his consequences are hell. On the other hand, Scripture is filled with hundreds and hundreds of references to God's love for each and every one of His children. Why would God create him because he loves him, and then make him "gay" only to send him to hell. To make sense of this, we're forced to chip away at other truths.

For example some scholars suggest that it is not Scripture that condemns homosexuality but the *interpretations of scripture* that actually condemn the acts. Some have actually suggested that King David and Jonathan were lovers! Other scholars are saying that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality but instead the sin of "inhospitality". These scholars are chipping away at the truth until one is left with nothing.

If we accept the untruth that homosexuality is an identity, then, as Medinger points out, we are forced to accept other untruths to help make sense of this one. Certainly there are some dissenting factions within the Church that exploit these false premises to bring about other changes within the Church (Eg. Acceptance of abortion, female priests etc.). However, there are also many faithful priests, religious and laity who have accepted this lie that homosexuality is an identity without much examination. These good faithful people don't encourage therapy or healing but rather remain vexed at the question and simply abstain from the debate.

An important thing to note is the history of the acceptance of same sex attraction within the psychological profession. Prior to 1973, the DSM- the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders listed homosexuality (aka: same sex attraction) as a mental disorder. It was removed from the manual in 1973 in response to political pressure exerted by gay activists to "normalize" this behavior, and not because of any empirical research to the contrary. Curiously, that was also the year the Supreme Court issued it's infamous Roe v Wade decision legalizing

abortion, something else that was always deemed to be immoral and disordered. Clearly in this time in which we live, political and social upheaval exert a powerful pressure for change and the “scientific method” and truth are just two of the casualties.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that every individual must “acknowledge and accept his sexual identity” (no. 2333). This refers to the “physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarity of both genders which are “oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life” (Ibid.). At the most basic level our identity is rooted in the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God- “Male and female he created them”. (Gen 1:27).

There is hope for those who experience same-sex attraction and we must not abandon efforts to help others understand the truth. But first we have to gain a better understanding of how same sex attraction may develop in an individual.

For example, in many men the root of same sex attraction is not sexual. Many have said that they experienced this attraction as children before knowing anything about sex. For many, the attraction was really about admiring the qualities in those of the same-sex. As a child, he may have thought... “If only I was athletic like him, look like him, or strong like him, then I would be liked by others.” If a child has these thoughts of coveting others and self pity, when he reaches puberty this can become sexualized and he may become confused.

Once the lie is exposed, wounds that led to this lie such as abuse, rejection, or lack of affirmation in one’s gender identity can be addressed, healing can begin and the person’s true identity can emerge. When this healing process begins, for many the attraction to the opposite sex has increased. For others it has not developed but they are able to live productive and fulfilling chaste lives. But since this is not an easy journey, there are others that may simply go back to embracing this “false” identity.

Again, this is not easy, especially when the false beliefs are strongly rooted in painful wounds of the past. However, it does happen. Remember that Jesus Christ is the way, the **truth** and the life. First we must bring the truth to bear to shatter the false illusions and lies we may believe because of misinformation on this topic or from the wounds we have suffered in the past. He is the Divine Healer. He loves everyone He has created and He died to set us free. A therapist who understands the truth and turns to Jesus in the healing process can be very helpful, perhaps indispensable but ultimately healing comes from Jesus Christ and His saving death on the cross.

Some folks go to therapy with the goal to change their orientation and others prefer to obtain healing in order to live a healthy and fulfilling chaste life. In addition to therapy, as Catholics we have so much available to us in order to help us on our journeys in life, what ever our struggles are. I invite you to take advantage of the many Graces that are showered upon us by frequently attending the Holy sacrifice of the Mass, and frequently receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. The Heavenly Father loves you too much and will not abandon you. If you struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction, know that you aren't alone. Check out the national Courage website at [www.couragerc.org](http://www.couragerc.org)

Matt 7:7-8“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks the door will be opened.”

1. Alan Medinger, *Growth into Manhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000).

2. Alan Medinger, “Calling Oneself ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ Clouds one’s Self-Perception”

from *Same-sex Attraction: A Parent’s Guide*. Eds. John F. Harvey, OSFS, and Gerard

V. Bradley (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2003) p. 173

Suggested Reading:

“Homosexuality and Hope” the Catholic Medical Association. An excellent resource with current results of research. Go to web site: [www.cathmed.org](http://www.cathmed.org)

“Homosexuality and the Catholic Church” By Fr. John F. Harvey, OSFS (Ascension Press, 2007).

Same-Sex Attraction: A Parent’s Guide” Edited by Rev. John F. Harvey, OSFS and Gerard V. Bradley.

National Courage Website: [www.couragerc.org](http://www.couragerc.org)

It is filled with articles, and many more recommended readings

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