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## HOMOSEXUALITY

### FLESH BY RICK JAMES • ARTICLE EXCERPT

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FLESH

# HOMOSEXUALITY

Moments before writing this, I just put down an article in *Time* magazine on “R Family Vacations,” a luxury cruise for the three million United States families headed by gay parents. The cruise is being launched and funded by Rosie O’Donnell and circuits between New York, Florida and the Bahamas. In sharing this, I have no desire to fuel outrage, because Christian outrage has done little to bring Christ to these lost people. I mention this only to say that the issue of homosexuality is not going to go away. Therefore, we, as Christians, need to raise our awareness, aptitude and level of compassion for and evangelism toward the homosexual community. They are the 21st, century equivalent of the first-century tax collector.

It may be that you struggle with homosexual thoughts and desires. If you don’t, then just because of the nature of the topic, you’re probably offended by the insinuation. Homosexuality is indeed a sticky issue. There’s no way around it, so we are just going to wade into the murky moral

swampland. But I’m telling you right now, I’m not touching transgenderism. Have that rousing discussion with your parents.

There’s much we (religious folk) and scientists do not know about homosexuality. So, let’s begin with what we do know and work our way out. Let’s start with the Bible. Boy, and do we need it, because there’s no greater need for the objectivity of Scripture than when it comes to sex. Because of sin, almost everyone has aberrant sexual ideas and fantasies: swinging trapeze, acetate clothing (Has he been reading my diary?) and pierced appendages—you name it, we got it! Our minds are carnival sideshows of sexual fantasies. How could we ever define normative sexual behavior by personal preference and without the objective framework provided by the Bible? To define normal sexuality on the basis of people’s sexual attractions would be to open the door to just about anything that walks on two legs (I take that back—make it four legs). Romans 1:25-27 says:

*They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

It seems, without doing some real interpretive gymnastics, that this passage and others would affirm that homosexuality is a sin. It is a distortion of what God designed for sex, intimacy and marriage. Wherever else we go in this discussion, let’s make a pact that we will not forget this one fact that we can know with absolute certainty: the Bible calls homosexuality a manifestation of sin.

The next question, and really the question is, how does a person become a homosexual? Is it

biological; are they born that way? Is it familial, the result of missing role models? Psychological: a distorted Oedipus complex? Is it societal (sociological), stemming from sexual trauma, bad relationships or recruitment to the lifestyle? Or is it simply the result of individual choice to engage in a pattern of sin? While homosexuality is clearly a manifestation of sin, answering this question helps us locate the source, or sources, of the sin. Is it the result of personal sin, family sin, biological sin (the result of living in a fallen world), or societal sin?

As much as we crave the guidance of men in white lab coats, scientifically, none of these options have been proved conclusively. Wisdom, however, would tell us that no single factor is usually, in and of itself, determinative. An honest look at the data would suggest it is the combination of several, or all, of these factors. Why many shy away from an integrated diagnosis is not because of facts but because of a vested interest in proving one cause over and against another. Christians, for example, can often locate all blame on the individual's choice, because it makes it much tidier to assign responsibility (and blame). Others, on the other hand, including the homosexual community, may see nothing but genetic causes under their microscopes, underscoring their talking points that homosexuals are born that way.

In their book *Authentic Human Sexuality*, Dr. Judith and John Balswick suggest the following integration: "We suggest that an individual must possess, as a necessary contributor, a genetic or hormonal package at birth or through the process of physical maturation that renders a person susceptible to a homosexual orientation. ... However, biological factors are insufficient in and of themselves to produce a homosexual orientation." What is further needed, suggests the Balswicks, is sufficient environmental causes (family, psychological or social).

In other words, even with a predisposition, given a good home life and social circumstances, the individual still has a strong chance to develop a normal and healthy heterosexual sex drive. But if the predisposition is mixed with high incidence of negative familial or social factors, there is a good chance they will continue to move toward a homosexual orientation.

Ultimately, there is the level of the individual will. As a person makes choices to engage in homosexual sex or relationships, they fully cement that orientation.

Of course, when one looks back on their lives, there will be a tendency to see a seamless undertow, an orientation that was cemented

at birth. The phenomenon is called "creeping determinism." Malcolm Gladwell, writer for the *New Yorker*, describes creeping determinism this way:

*On the eve of Richard Nixon's historic visit to China, the psychologist Baruch Fischhoff asked a group of people to estimate the probability of a series of possible outcomes of the trip. What were the chances that the trip would lead to permanent diplomatic relations between China and the United States? That Nixon would meet with the leader of China, Mao Tse-tung, at least once? That Nixon would call the trip a success? As it turned out, the trip was a diplomatic triumph, and Fischhoff then went back to the same people and asked them to recall what their estimates of the different outcomes of the visit had been. He found that the subjects now, overwhelmingly, "remembered" being more optimistic than they had actually been. If you originally thought that it was unlikely that Nixon would meet with Mao, afterward, when the press was full of accounts of Nixon's meeting with Mao, you'd "remember" that you had thought the chances of a meeting were pretty good. Fischhoff calls this phenomenon "creeping determinism"—the sense that grows on us, in retrospect, that what has happened was actually inevitable.*

If all of that was too complex or more likely, too poorly explained, let's use another example: alcoholism. Let's imagine that I had a long family history of alcoholism and was born with a biological or genetic package that made me susceptible to certain levels of anxiety, depression, etc. (There is not an alcoholic gene, nor homosexual one). But given a wonderful family and social environment, I avoid moving forward down that road toward alcohol abuse. My brother, on the other hand, has a different set of peers who do in fact move him further down that road and at some point he begins to make personal choices to engage in a lifestyle of drinking. The proclivity is actualized. The next thing you know he's going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings every week of his life to contain a struggle because of a confirmed orientation.

Like alcoholism, the best explanation seems to be a matrix of multiple factors that together lead one to a homosexual disposition.

### **CHRISTIANS WITH HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Following a similar path, only with homosexuality not alcohol, there are Christians who now must daily battle with a confirmed, or habitual, homosexual orientation. Let me make several important observations.

Because these Christians feel the painful reality of their confirmed orientation, it can lead them to justify continuance in the lifestyle to the point of trying to culturally, or exegetically, explain away passages like the one we read in Romans 1:25-27. We have all read or seen in the news the growing number of church and denominational splits over this very issue. Remember our pact; what is the one thing we know? Right—the Bible says homosexuality is sin. Bending the truth to justify our feelings or desires is clearly not the answer. That, too, is called sin.

A second observation is that Christians can be rather unsympathetic to the struggles of a person who has confirmed a homosexual orientation. Yes, there was a component of choice, but it is probably true that many other factors were beyond their control. Their capitulation should not be outside the realm of our understanding, personal experience and compassion. We are sinners, but the world—our environment, even our genes—has also been affected by sin. Adam's fall does not mutate our will but, the world (our environment, family, even our genes).

Third, there are godly programs designed to minister to homosexuals. Through a series of steps, prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit and Christian community, these programs have seen

encouraging results in restoring our God-designed heterosexuality. Balswick states, "In Christ Jesus, homosexuals can reach their full potential through the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile their lives to the glory of God. The goal is for homosexuals to develop rightful same and opposite-sex relationships according to God's initial creation purpose." Some amazing stories and testimonials can be found on the website [www.leadershipu.com](http://www.leadershipu.com).

Last, on the far side of compassion, we can look to God and wonder why he allows a person, or us, to endure such struggle in his or her spiritual growth. Why does he not heal them? The biblical perspective is that none of us will go through the spiritual growth process without some enormous struggles—no one comes out unscathed. Greater struggles provide greater opportunities: to see God work, experience his grace, develop greater relational depth with him and earn eternal rewards. In short, a Christian perspective is that the more difficult the trials, the greater the spiritual opportunity (Blessed are the persecuted, those who mourn, thirst, etc.).

### **HOW THIS AFFECTS YOU**

Let me close with three points of application. The first is for those who struggle with a homosexual orientation. You need to know that you are most certainly not alone and that there were many

factors that, honestly, were outside your control. The choices that were within your control have been completely forgiven and paid for by Christ's death. God knows your struggle and that your path to sexual health and purity will be different and perhaps longer than for others. You also need to know there are proven Christian programs that have seen some utterly miraculous results in reorienting Christians toward heterosexuality. You need to get involved in one. Through this struggle you have a marvelous opportunity to grow in every way in your knowledge and relationship with God. You will be richly rewarded for every step you take to grow, and every day you say no to those impulses. Here are several websites of Christian ministries to homosexuals. This is a place to start. They will be able to help you.

[www.exodus-international.org](http://www.exodus-international.org)

[www.desertstream.org](http://www.desertstream.org)

[www.livehope.org](http://www.livehope.org)

Second, as Christians, we need to be compassionate toward the struggle that homosexuals must endure in seeking to follow Christ. We should continually hold out a merciful and loving Savior to nonbelievers engaged in this lifestyle. Just last month, I learned that a good friend of mine had struggled for years in coming out of homosexuality. He feared sharing this because he suspected even his Christians friends would want to keep their distance, not wanting to catch the virus. I'd like to think that wasn't true in this case, but regardless, generally speaking, he's right—God help us!

Last, even those with a normal and healthy sex drive must keep vigilant. The opportunity provided by pornography can stir things in your heart as well. You could have a predisposed biological package but have enjoyed a healthy family and social life that kept you from going down this road. Pornography, for you, may have the ability to lead you where you don't want to go.

In recent years, many pornographic sites have added homosexual offerings for a growing audience, the major reason being that lust is stimulated by deviation and perversion. Even a soundly heterosexual individual, intoxicated by lust, can begin to find arousal in homosexual pornography. In the late 17th century roughly 40 percent of the American population were confirmed alcoholics. It's rather doubtful that many were biologically predisposed, but rather societal forces and the ubiquity of alcohol made it an epidemic. It is not inconceivable that the plague of pornography could greatly escalate the percentage of individuals drawn into bi- and homosexuality. Through the power of lust, no one is fully immune.