

## **The Christian's Struggle with Sexual Temptation** by Dr. Charles L. Manske

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The struggle is difficult for many who take their discipleship to Christ as primary and yet struggle with their sexual identity. Am I a child of Christ, or am I at the whims of my biological and psychological inheritance? Some Christian homosexuals try to rationalize, "If God created us to be homosexuals, it is not our fault—and it is OK to practice what God has ordained us to be." Wrong answer! Using the same logic, heterosexuals also could reason that since we find ourselves enslaved in sin and easy prey to sexual temptation, it must be God's will for us to continue in our heterosexual sins.

God has created us to live in relationship with *Him*. But we cannot do so because we are caught in our own web of actual and original sin. In our own self-centeredness, we choose sexual and other carnal sins that separate us from God and His family.

Whether we come by our "sexual orientation" by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental conditioning (nurture)—whether by birth or by choice—homosexual and heterosexual sins alike are wrong before God. Both need the forgiveness that is ours in Jesus Christ. Do not rationalize your sexual sins as being acceptable before the throne of God the Father. And yet, the picture of Christ in the New Testament is not one of a judge of sexual indiscretions, but of One who has empathy for those who have not met the letter of God's Law. When Christ meets the woman caught in adultery, He does not admonish her but her accusers. To the holy men of the community, Christ says, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).

How then should the Christian Church minister in the name of Christ? Henri Nouwen was a celibate Roman Catholic priest who continually dealt with the temptation of homosexuality. Author of more than 40 books, former teacher at Harvard University, popular speaker, and a servant and advocate for the poor and dispossessed in South America and Canada, he struggled secretly all of his life over his homosexual inclinations. Nouwen sought counseling from a center that ministered to homosexual men and women. As Philip Yancey describes it in *Soul Survivor* (Doubleday, 2001):

- 1) "He could remain a celibate priest and 'come out' as a gay man, which would at least release the secret he bore in anguish.
- 2) "He could declare himself, leave the priesthood, and seek a gay companion.
- 3) "He could remain a priest publicly and develop private gay relationships.

Nouwen carefully weighed each course and rejected it. Any public confession of his identity would hurt his ministry, he feared. The last two options seemed impossible for

one who had taken a vow of celibacy, and who looked to the Bible and to Rome for guidance on sexual morality.

- 4) "Instead, he decided to keep living with the wound. Again and again, he decided."

The four choices are not only before Henri Nouwen. The choices are before those who struggle with sexual temptations but who wish to continue to be disciples of the Savior. What are we to do? The first answer is to stop trying to justify your sins before God:

- Don't tell God that your wish to sin is more important than the blueprint for Christian living that we find in the Bible.
- Don't pretend that your sexual needs are more important than God's commands.
- Don't pretend that your need to practice your lust on your sexual preferences is more important than God's plan of sexual monogamy in Christian marriage.
- Don't pretend that living with a partner replaces God's plan for marriage and the nurturing of children within heterosexual marriage.

God knows you inside out. He knows when you are pretending to be something you are not. He knows when you are trying to rewrite the Bible according to your sexual needs. He knows the games you are playing with Him, and He is unhappy with it.

God gave you life. God offers you the plan that assures that you will be living in heaven with Him forever. *Your* plan does not work. Face It. You need to be in *His* plan, or you miss being with Him in heaven ... forever.

The Good News is that God provides an acceptable way for either the homosexual or the heterosexual who is struggling with his or her sexual identity. It is not up to us to turn around our fallen biological inheritance or our environmental conditioning. We could not do it by ourselves anyway, no matter how hard we try. So God provides the only way it can be done—through His Son, Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

The Redeemer comes to us as the servant on the cross who died there for all our sins. He comes to us as the triumphant risen Savior who has conquered death and the grave. He forgives us free and clear. Our sexual sins are forgiven once and for all. We are no longer slaves of what we were; but we are what we are—forgiven by our Savior and on our way to His home in heaven forever.

The struggles with sex will continue as long as you live. Whether you are self-centered or Christ-centered will be a struggle as long as life continues here on earth. But you now know who you are and to Whom you belong. If you are a gay person, God can

restore you to be the new person that He created and redeemed you to be. Look to the cross for forgiveness, repent of your past and look to the power of the resurrection through which the Holy Spirit can bring about the miracle of a new birth.

Rejoice in the new identity that you have in Christ. No longer are we slaves to our sexual urges, but we are free to be citizens in our future home in heaven, a home we can begin to experience here on earth. For the kingdom of God begins in this life and continues forever.

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