

CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED CHURCHES WITH EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TO
MALE HOMOSEXUAL STRUGGLERS

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ABSTRACT

CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED CHURCHES WITH EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TO MALE HOMOSEXUAL STRUGGLERS

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The dual purpose of this qualitative study was first to evaluate why the ministry of selected churches who are ministering to male homosexual strugglers was effective. What makes these churches safe and welcoming for those seeking to gain victory over same-sex attractions and behaviors? And second, to convince church leaders that our churches need to become the kind of churches that are effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers.

A confidential survey methodology was used in asking both male strugglers and active church members their perspective on their church's attitudes and actions as it related to ministering to and discipling male strugglers.

The participating churches were chosen based upon the entire church body having embraced the ministry to those who were struggling and desiring assistance out of homosexuality or same-sex attraction. The churches were located in Texas, Indiana, and Virginia.

The results of this study highlight that effective churches are: 1) welcoming and safe environments for those who are seeking assistance out of homosexuality, 2) exhibiting an attitude of equality throughout the congregation that the sin of homosexuality is treated as a sin not the greatest sin, 3) demonstrating empathy by a variety of church members engaged in relationship with strugglers counseling them to a place of holiness through discipleship, and that those churches 4) are committed to the equipping and training of heterosexual men to minister alongside each of the strugglers. Results were validated by the survey answers provided by the male strugglers as compared with active church members. In summary, the study brings to light that effective churches have created a welcoming and safe culture by demonstrating equality, empathy, engagement and education in its ministry to male homosexual strugglers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, I became the discipleship pastor at Heritage Baptist Church the church that my wife and I had served through our early married life and through my years of seminary.¹ My seminary training had prepared me well for the teaching and preaching aspects of ministry but I was woefully unprepared for the counseling load that I would face in the years to come. Our worship pastor was passionate about biblical counseling and began to encourage me to begin stepping deeper into people's lives when they came to me in crisis or in need of biblical advice. My normal mode of handling counseling or crisis situations was to refer people back to him; after all, he seemed passionate and willing to help. Over the years, I learned that the answers to life's greatest problems were found in the Scriptures and applied in the context of discipleship relationships. My confidence grew and I began taking on more difficult counseling situations. I eventually became the "go-to-pastor" for situations dealing with sexual temptations and problems. I was the pastor men would seek out for help with addictions to pornography. As these men started having victory over sexual temptations, a few men who were struggling with same-sex attraction or homosexual behaviors come to me asking for help.

¹ Marilyn Lichtman, "Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide," (Sage Publishers Inc., 2010). Traditional research methods ask the researcher to remain outside the system in order to be objective and produce objective and scientific evidence. However, in qualitative research, such as this, there is more latitude both in the use of inductive reasoning, reflexivity, and in writing style. For this section and in Chapter 5 I will, therefore, allow myself to be more personal in my writing style.

Although I have had the privilege of watching God transform scores of men addicted to pornography, progress was harder to come by among the men struggling with same-sex attraction or homosexual temptation. I have always held to a high view of Scripture believing that the Bible is sufficient to meet man's greatest needs. Yet I found that there was a disconnect somewhere in the transformation of male same-sex strugglers. I had met with several male strugglers over the years who had a deep passion for God yet found themselves drawn to same-sex temptations. The duel in the hearts of these men went beyond the temptations of pornography for heterosexual men. These men struggled in a different and deeper way.

During the summer of 2002, I began receiving anonymous emails from a male homosexual struggler who was desperately seeking help. We conversed for several months by email. His anonymity allowed him to share deeply, openly and bluntly about his life. It was during these email conversations that I began to understand why there had been very little success in my ministry with other homosexual strugglers. They did not feel safe. They felt safe enough with me to share some parts of their stories but they did not feel safe in the church. For many of them, same-sex attractions and homosexual behavior were "unpardonable sins". There was great fear of being found out, excommunicated, exiled, or abandoned. The thought of sharing their struggles with anyone in their church was horrifying.

This dissertation is the result of my personal journey as a pastor who has been placed in multiple counseling situations with men who struggle with same-sex attractions and homosexuality. I have heard detailed confessions, desperate pleas for help, and confused thinking and fears of being found out, from numerous men who struggle with

same-sex attractions. Fear of discovery was a common theme. I kept hearing the same criticism of the church: “It is not a safe place for me to be.” The idea or thought that the church is not a safe place is disturbing.

This journey developed over a period of time and through a series of events. My anonymous friend and I were able to start meeting in person. These discussions were beneficial for me as I tried to determine why these strugglers had such a difficult time believing or feeling like the church wasn’t a safe place to get help. The following journal entry I received from my anonymous friend gives a glimpse into a struggler’s inner turmoil and his perspective on the church:

The fear of “being found out” is balanced by the fact that I must write these things to clear my mind ... and my heart. If someone were to actually read these murmurings, I’m sure I would be condemned, judged, and ridiculed. People would be shocked. The closet would be open. And they would be disappointed ... I’m not the man that most people believe me to be. I struggle with desires that *I know* are wrong, but still live inside me, cravings that are hard to understand and even more difficult to manage. The struggle is a desire to be intimate with another man. That is a very hard statement to make, to believe about oneself. But, in my case, it’s true. I have had more experiences in my life with men than with women. However, I also know that this is wrong, very wrong. And that makes God sad. I wish that it made me sad too.

My heart is sad. It actually hurts. My mind is confused and I try to understand *why* God has left me here in this place. I’m so lonely, so confused, so absolutely disconnected from my life and desire for holiness. *Where* am I and why do I feel this way? God, where are You? Have I drifted so far away from You that I no longer hear Your voice? I know my heart is in a bad place. I know my desires are not pleasing to You. Please Father, take them from me. Please, just let me be normal, know normal, understand normal! Why do these temptations hold such a strong grip on my soul? Why do I get so excited at the possibility of being involved in a situation about which I cannot even allow myself to write? Why?”

Please don’t leave me here. Please don’t make me stay this way forever. I cannot live here. I cannot deal with this desire, these feelings. I need YOU to help me, make me holy. Give me purity that only comes from You because I cannot achieve this on my own. I need You to forgive me, to release me, to deliver me from this sin, this pleasure, this confusing and exciting place. This is a shameful and unnatural desire. Let me be holy, for Jesus’ sake. Give me some understanding. Let me know, KNOW, why I am like this. What purpose does this

serve but to make me more dependent on You? But I fail!!!!!! And I cannot handle the deep emotional distress that I feel, experience, when I fail You like this. I am so defeated. The overwhelming sense of worthlessness, uselessness, corruptness is more than my mind can understand. Shut down! I have to shut down so that I don't overload. The guilt is too deep and I know the meaning of Unworthy. I AM unworthy and yet, You love me. Why? I do nothing but bring You pain. You sacrificed more than Your life. You sacrificed Your being. Can I lean on You more? Please, carry me ... at least for a little while. I'm too tired from the struggle to carry myself.

This young man's heart is very similar to other brothers who are pleading with God to deliver them from other unwanted temptations and sins. Over the years the church has adapted well to the needs in society by developing ministries to divorced people and single mothers. It has learned to forgive and have great compassion on those who come to the church for help. These people have been welcomed to a place of safety where healing, restoration and life transformation can take place. But is the church welcoming toward the struggler or has the church been resistant, cold, and at times harsh toward believers who admit that they have a struggle with same-sex attractions? Has the church been proactive in developing an environment that is welcoming to the homosexual struggler? Has the church developed ministries that assist the struggler in the process of transformation?

The church has always wrestled with balancing grace and judgment, and the twin problems of same-sex attractions and homosexuality bring this issue to the surface once again. The church must remain steadfast in its opposition to the behavior, agenda, and lifestyle of homosexuals, but it must also be a safe place that is welcoming to strugglers, particularly those who may already be in its congregations. There are Christian men in our congregations who struggle but they still long for the things of God

and they desire to be free from their temptations and behaviors. The message of Scripture is clear: Jesus welcomes people as they are, and yet He did not embrace anyone who desired to remain outside the will of His Father. So we must ask, “Is the church welcoming?”

Will Honeycutt, a colleague, made the following statement in a conversation regarding my research. “The church is supposed to be a place for broken people on the mend, where people should feel safe to share their brokenness and be supported by fellow saints in the process of being perfected.” All too often, strugglers do not believe that the church is fulfilling this biblical responsibility

In the early stages of my research, I discovered H. Newton Malony’s article “A Practical Theology of ‘Welcoming’” that has become the framework for my hypotheses. He states, “Practical theology is about what the church does in its practice. It is concerned with the behavior of the church as an organization; of the church as the people of God; and of the church in the programs it offers, of the church as individual persons whose lives are being changed by God’s grace and who embody that for which the church exists.”² Malony’s article challenged my perspective on the outworking of the church’s theology, as well as my own personal theology. It is easy to say that I believe something but my real theology is what I live out. Likewise, the church can say that it loves the homosexual but until the church’s behavior, programs, and people demonstrate

² H. Newton Malony, “A Practical Theology of “Welcoming”,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 143-4.

this belief the homosexual struggler will not see the church as a safe and welcoming place.

As I have worked with strugglers, several other resources profoundly shaped my vision regarding what the church could and should be for those who struggle. My anonymous friend introduced me to the book *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* by Chad Thompson.³ Chad himself has struggled with same-sex attractions, and he strongly believes that the church should be a safe place for strugglers to deal with their issues rather than a hostile place. He has challenged the church to rethink her position against homosexuals from the perspective that Christians are supposed to love homosexuals as Jesus did. The book also addresses the claim of the gay-rights movement that the church is homophobic. Thompson agrees that many in the church are homophobic, due to a lack of participation in the lives of strugglers. He asserts that it is much easier to take a strong judgmental stand against the sin of homosexuality than to walk with homosexuals through their struggles out of that lifestyle.

Thompson was the first to challenge me with the thought that a homosexual struggler could be a normal person who passionately loved God but who was caught in a miserable cycle of confusion and sin. A struggler is no different from anyone who struggles with a life dominating sin or poor patterns of behavior. He does not suggest that homosexuality is a lesser sin but it is also not a higher sin.

³ Chad W. Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004).

As I was counseling my anonymous friend, he made me aware that same-sex temptations were more than just a thought or urge to participate in a forbidden fantasy. My friend explained that his struggles were deeper than an urge but were tied to his identity. Thompson states, “Often when Christians attempt to discuss certain issues with LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual) people, communication breaks down because the two sides are basing their arguments on differing assumptions about homosexuality. Many Christians view homosexuality as a behavior that can be altered, but most homosexuals view it as an immutable identity.”⁴ This brought me to the realization that sexual orientation or identity is defined differently by Christians and homosexuals. The church must adjust its practical theology before it can become an avenue that strugglers will approach for help and assistance. The first words they hear must affirm them as a person whom God uniquely designed. We should be careful not to give credence to homosexual behavior while we lovingly live out to strugglers the message of reconciliation and transformation. In order for the church to possess a practical theology of welcoming, it must be educated regarding the facts of this great issue.

It was through Thompson’s book that I was introduced to the life story and writings of Joe Dallas. His story is similar to those of the men that I have counseled. Dallas is a former homosexual who has been delivered by God from the temptations and behaviors associated with homosexuality. He has become a leader in the ex-gay movement and has served as the president of Exodus International. His book *Desires in*

⁴ Ibid., 48.

*Conflict*⁵ opened my mind to the inner battle that strugglers are facing on a daily basis with same-sex temptations. Numerous articles and books including Dallas's book, *A Strong Delusion*⁶, opened my mind to the agenda of the pro-gay community toward normalizing homosexuality as a viable lifestyle. These efforts such as attempting to find a gay gene through science, treating the homosexual lifestyle as an equal rights issue alongside of race, promoting the homosexual curriculum in the educational system, celebrating the gay lifestyle in the mainstream through TV and media, supporting openly gay politicians introducing legislation to be voted into law, and attacking the traditional family by introducing gay marriage bills. Each of these is extremely deceptive and militant with the goal of alienating or marginalizing as homophobic those who will not accept their policies. These books strengthened my resolve to make sure that the church presented itself as a place of safety for those strugglers who desire life change.

It was through Dr. David Crum's doctoral dissertation⁷ that I was introduced to the writings of Dr. Elizabeth Moberly⁸ and Joseph Nicolosi.⁹ Both deepened my belief that change is possible for the homosexual struggler, and both support reparative therapy,

⁵ Joe Dallas, *Desires in Conflict* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1991).

⁶ Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996).

⁷ David Crum, "A Disciple's Approach For Ministering to People Who Struggle With Homosexuality" (DMIN Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000).

⁸ Elizabeth R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1983; reprint, 1996).

⁹ Joseph Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1991; reprint, 1997).

which posits that homosexuality is at its root a matter of “relational deficits.”¹⁰ Consequently, Moberly and Nicolosi propose that part of the change process for a struggler is to place him in a safe group of heterosexual men who will walk with him through the process of healing and change.¹¹ Moberly says, “The homosexual condition implies a problem in the capacity for relating to the same sex, and not merely a desire and facility for so doing.”¹² “In short, homosexuality is a phenomenon of same-sex ambivalence, not just same-sex love; and it is in itself a relational deficit vis-à-vis the same sex rather than vis-à-vis the opposite sex.”¹³ Both Moberly and Nicolosi claim that the problem is a defensive detachment. Men are somehow detached from their gender due to the many factors or traits listed above, and homosexuality is an attempt to repair this separation. Moberly states that the homosexuality is not pathological: “It is quite the opposite; it is an attempt to resolve and heal the pathology. This does not imply that the solution should be acted out sexually, but it does imply that the solution should not be mistaken for the problem.”¹⁴

The cure for homosexuality is not a heterosexual relationship, as has been proposed by naive heterosexuals. Such a relationship does not meet the same-sex deficiencies in the gender-deprived person. In fact, a heterosexual relationship may cause more problems, and may at the same time destroy the life of a heterosexual woman. The

¹⁰ Moberly, *Homosexuality*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

goal in counseling a homosexual struggler is not heterosexuality, but holiness. Holiness can be described as a life of discipleship, or pursuing a life that reflects the life and character of Jesus Christ. The pursuit of holiness will lead the struggler to wholeness.

So we have learned from the experts that there is a significant gender deficiency in the life of the homosexual struggler. How do we come alongside a struggler to help him overcome this defensive detachment and pursue holiness? I would suggest that the local church is “the safest place” only if the local church recruits and trains secure heterosexual men who are willing to invest their time and effort in welcoming a homosexual struggler into their world of masculinity.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this research is to determine whether the response of selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within their doors is in line with their biblical responsibilities. “For the sake of the many hurting souls who yet remain in the grip of the demonic, *cultural and internal*¹⁵ lie that homosexuality is just another choice or just a normal variation, the church must do what it can. It can offer Christ. Yes, in Christ, it must offer truth, but, in Christ, it must also offer grace and love. Without love, we are but a tinkling bell or a clanging cymbal. Neither the effete bell of the ‘liberal church’ nor the clanging cymbal of the ‘legalist church’ will lead lives to Christ and

¹⁵ Italics added to notate my personal addition to this thought. The lie is not only a lie from Satan. It is also the lie of the culture which rejects God as well as the lie of the flesh that doesn’t desire to submit to God. There is some thought among some charismatic groups that homosexuality is caused by the struggler’s being possessed by a demon of homosexuality.

freedom.”¹⁶ Freedom can and will come from the church that provides love and offers fellow Christians living out their biblical responsibilities to minister to one another, regardless of one’s sin propensity.

In the full scope of this issue, the church has the opportunity to reach into the lives of three different groups of male strugglers. There are Christian strugglers who are already in our congregations and will look to their church for help. There are Christian strugglers who are looking for a church that will actively engage them in their struggle. And then there are those who are unchurched and unconverted that may seek the church for help in their struggle. The ministry of reconciliation will involve counseling and discipleship for the believer, but must also involve the evangelizing of the lost. However, the focus of this research project will be limited to the male Christian struggler already in these selected churches.

The greatest challenge for each individual church is to determine her practical theology of welcoming and ministering to the struggler. The issue of homosexuality raises many fears in the hearts of Christians. We are told to love the sinner but hate the sin. How is this practically lived out? How do we express both truths when we come to assist a struggler? There are many paths that denominations and churches have taken in regard to this issue. We have all heard the news reports of denominations are now accepting openly homosexual men and women into the clergy. These same

¹⁶ James R. Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 118.

denominations and churches are leading the way for gay marriages. Is this really loving the sinner or is it avoiding the issue of sin?

Churches face tough decisions. If we welcome and accept homosexual strugglers does that mean we are validating their lifestyle? If we reject their lifestyle are we rejecting the person? Are we homophobic?

I believe that there are three possible stances that churches can take regarding working with homosexuals. First of all, there is the liberal approach. Because the liberal church denies the inerrancy and thus the authority of Scripture, this approach accepts the struggler with all of his baggage, welcoming him and fully accepting his lifestyle. He is never confronted about his sin because homosexuality is not regarded as sin. These churches accept the homosexual even knowing that the gay lifestyle, more often than not, recognizes and accepts infidelity as being normal and expected.

The other end of the spectrum is the legalistic approach. This approach rests heavily on the belief that the church's responsibility is to protect God's moral standards at all costs. Homosexuality is viewed as a great sin, and is often perceived as the greatest of moral sins. This approach communicates a harsh, unloving, unwelcoming message to the struggler. These churches communicate that the sinner must be "fixed" before he can join their congregations. If a struggler then abandons his lifestyle and seeks restoration through the church, he often finds that there is no one there who desires to enter into the transformation process with him. This approach can be referred to as the "condemn and ignore approach."

The third approach is one of balance. It is characterized by a desire to preserve God's moral standards, but it also understands that God calls us to accept people where

they are and move them to a place of life transformation. In most cases, life dominating sins do not go away overnight, even when a person has biblically repented; there is a process that moves him to freedom. This approach underscores the biblical responsibility that God has given us to accept and love the sinner as well as assist the struggler to a place of spiritual health. The churches that understand their biblical responsibility in the transformation of lives will adopt a healthy theology of welcoming for those who struggle. This approach does not minimize the gravity of any sin but reflects the biblical perspective that people are the supreme object of God's affection. He desires them to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The greatest unused resource in the church today is the community of believers striving together to bring about the reconciliation of male strugglers to Jesus Christ.

Since the focus of this research project will be examining the responses of selected churches to their biblical responsibilities toward the strugglers already in their congregations, it is important to understand that many of the strugglers in our churches have not experienced a welcoming environment. The typical struggler in our churches faces a cycle of rejection that causes him to live in a personal prison longing for help but afraid of rejection. Listen to the words of Mel White, co-founder of Soul Force, as he recalls his childhood struggle. "In spite of their many gifts to me, conservative Christians remained silent about the secret longings in my heart. And although I was surrounded by their loving presence, that same silence left me feeling increasingly isolated and lonely. In the days of my gay childhood, there was no one who even tried to help clear up my

growing confusion, guilt and fear.”¹⁷ The fear of rejection is complicated by a variety of assumptions or realities. Because of the fear, strugglers, like White, do not seek out a listening ear to assist them through their turmoil.

On the other hand, Richard Mouw, in taking the church and Christian organizations to task during a discussion with other scholars for *Christianity Today*, states:

“...I am wary of the arrogant and unrepentant spirit that I see in some organizations. Christians should remember that one of the reasons the culture is in such bad shape sexually is that we failed in the past to address the issues in a positive, biblical way and instead fostered a sexually oppressive subculture. We did not treat the sexual sinner well. We have not done a good job at manifesting a healthy, self critical, repentant attitude toward our actions. We have treated homosexuals horribly in the past. And if homosexuals are angry with the church, we first need to repent and then try to seek the credibility in this society to begin speaking.”¹⁸

Robert Gagnon complements this idea when he writes “The person beset with homosexual temptation should evoke our concern, sympathy, help and understanding, not our scorn or enmity. Even more, such a person should kindle a feeling of solidarity in the hearts of all Christians, since we all struggle to properly manage our erotic passions.”¹⁹

Each case that I have dealt with over the years has followed a similar pattern with some variations. The pattern starts with gender confusion, resulting in feelings of self-rejection and rejection from peers, family, and the church. These feelings contribute

¹⁷ Mel White, *Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America* (New York: Penguin, 1994). As quoted by Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 91.

¹⁸ Michael Maudlin, “Scandal?: A forum on the evangelical mind.” *Christianity Today* 39, no. 9 (1995). 25

¹⁹ Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). 31.

to a private, inner prison of hopeless confusion. Strugglers often describe memories of feeling different from other boys. These thoughts and feelings of being different are often rooted in a combination of several of the following: personality traits, abuse, passive or absent father, obsessive mother, peer rejection, and inferred comments. These potential causes will be discussed further in chapter 2.

The gender confusion at some point may become eroticized,²⁰ either at puberty or earlier. The sexualization of one's gender confusion can be a result of abuse or a longing to be attached to someone of one's own gender as a result of a lack of a male role model. Gender confusion is complicated in the church by a strong antigay message. For the one who is confused, this pushes him down a spiral of guilt and hopelessness. The stronger the message the more isolated and alienated the struggler feels. It produces a great fear and embarrassment that forces the struggler to keep quiet, never seeking help from the church. Further complicating this confusion are the gay jokes that float through some congregations, they seem funny at first until one actually meets a struggler who identifies with each of those jokes in a real way. Further, these jokes can cement several things into the mind of the struggler, including a stronger sense that he is gay and a continued feeling that the church is not a safe place. It is at this point that a struggler tends to feel trapped and begins to accept a gay identity. He believes there is no safe place to turn for assistance in moving toward a biblical sexuality, and when this feeling is combined with a strong gay rights media message, the struggler begins to accept his gay

²⁰ Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. 57-76. Dr. Nicolosi commits a whole chapter to this very thought.

identity. This is a dangerous place: Up to this point the struggler is just dealing with thoughts and feelings, but at this stage he could easily accept his identity and begin to indulge in the practices of homosexuality.

At this point, he emotionally leaves the church and seriously contemplates leaving the church and his faith altogether. He finds acceptance and safety in the gay community. They encourage him to embrace who he is and he is pulled farther away from the church. He hears a welcoming message that was missing from the church. He is drawn to the gay community because it is safe. He is not drawn to it necessarily because they embrace his actions, but because it provides a place for him to be himself.

At first the struggler gets secretly involved in the gay community, but he then moves to a place where he embraces his gayness but remains confused, unhappy, and unfulfilled. If the struggler is still in the church, he remains silent and greatly frustrated as the anti-gay message becomes more offensive. (Alternatively, the church may remain silent, allowing the culture to form the sexual ideals of church members.) If the struggler is out of the church, he may give the church continual chances just to see if it presents a welcoming redeeming message of hope. This is a typical pattern with numerous variations.

It is not my intent to validate the choices of the struggler in this process. The cycle of rejection explained above is reality to those who struggle. I do not advocate the excuses for continuing in sin. Nor do I justify and defend the church for not adequately providing a safe place for the struggler to process through his gender confusion. This is not a ministry for the high and mighty but a ministry for those who desire to see all men brought to the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is time for the church to “get down and dirty.”

The issue of homosexuality in our culture will never be answered politically. Thompson states, “If we continue to fight the onslaught of homosexual curriculum with hostility toward and ignorance of the legitimate hardships faced by LGBT students, we will not only set ourselves up for political defeat but also alienate the very people we wish to bring into the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the rest of the world, which knows nothing about the dark side of the homosexual political movement or the deceit of those who wish to indoctrinate our school children, will hear the accusations of our opponents and simply assume that we are the bad guys.”²¹

Nicolosi,²² Moberly,²³ Konrad,²⁴ and Sia²⁵ each in their own words opine that one of the greatest needs for a homosexual struggler is to be involved with heterosexual men who are secure in their masculinity, grounded in their faith and willing to listen to the dirty and personal messes that represents the struggler’s story. If society increasingly moves toward the idea that homosexuality is a viable lifestyle, where do men go for help if they are trapped in homosexuality (or struggle with same-sex attractions) but want out? If the church takes the legalistic approach, the liberal approach, or the silent approach these people will not find the help that they desire. However, if the church is proactive

²¹ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 88.

²² Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. 194ff.

²³ Moberly, *Homosexuality*.

²⁴ Jeff Konrad, *You Don't Have to be Gay: Hope and Freedom for Males Struggling With Homosexuality or For Those Who Know of Someone Who Is*, Revised Edition ed. (Hilo, HI: Pacific Publishing House, 1987; reprint, Fourth).

²⁵ Michael R. Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1988).

and takes the biblical approach of loving strugglers where they are and assisting them to move toward life change through discipleship and strong heterosexual friendships, then the church becomes the conduit for life transformation. If friendships with heterosexual men are part of the solution to moving men to a life change, then the church should be the place of safety for strugglers who desire to leave their present situation. So this leads to the following questions: Are there safe churches to which they can go? Are local churches places of safety for the struggler? What does a safe church look and feel like?

Some great work is being done among same-sex strugglers by para-church organizations such as Exodus International, Harvest USA, Desert Stream Ministries, Love in Action, Living Hope Ministries, and Love Won Out . Organizations such as these have filled a void that local churches should be addressing. One of the greatest problems encountered during this research has been finding churches that are actually involved with helping strugglers. In my effort to find churches, I contacted several of these para-church organizations. Several responded by saying one of their goals was to help educate and equip local churches to be active in reaching the strugglers in their congregations. One church indicated that 70 percent of those attending a weekly strugglers' freedom group were not from the church sponsoring the ministry. This makes it difficult to include such a church to this research project because the majority of the men in the groups were not being affected by the total ministry, mission, or life of the church body. I also found a few churches that are affiliated with para-church groups, like Exodus, such partnerships provide strugglers with counseling services and support groups, but not the accountability of the local church. In my personal experience and in my Christian circles it seems that there are very few churches who are directly involved in any type of ministry to

strugglers. This has made my research very difficult. It took nearly a year to locate three churches who were actively involved in working with male homosexual strugglers and were willing to participate in my research.

Statement of Purpose

It is my desire and purpose to examine selected local churches that have made it a part of their mission to bring biblical redemption and reconciliation to same-sex strugglers and to provide a model that other churches can emulate. I strongly believe that the local church should be the most active organization and group of people ministering and counseling strugglers, particularly those who are already part of their congregations. This study will focus upon a few selected churches that are effectively ministering to male homosexual strugglers who are a part of their local congregations or who have sought the church's help.

This study will concentrate specifically upon churches who are actively involved in assisting male strugglers. This focus is not intended to deny the needs of female strugglers, but is intended to better align with the larger need found in my own ministry. I am of the biblical conviction that men are to be the leaders in our homes and churches, so I think much good could be accomplished if we can determine how best to minister and bring biblical reconciliation to male strugglers as we define, reaffirm, and model biblical manhood to them in our local churches. Many of these men deeply love the Lord and desire to walk with Him free from the private struggles of same-sex

attraction and homosexual behaviors. These men are redeemable. The church should be the natural avenue for healing and restoration of biblical masculinity.

Primary Research Questions

What makes the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers consistent with their biblical responsibilities? In other words, what makes the church a safe place for the person who struggles with same-sex attractions or homosexual behaviors?

I hope to determine what makes these select churches effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers. The central focus of my research will not be upon the strugglers but rather upon the selected churches. What are they doing that allows men to share openly or privately about their struggles? What makes these churches safe and attractive places for strugglers seeking help? What moves these churches in their desire to be a place of safety for the struggler? These are the questions for which I hope my research will provide answers.

In order to find answers to these questions I have developed four hypotheses that I will try to prove through means of literature research and gathering of pertinent information from selected churches. My hypotheses are as follows:

1. The selected churches understand their biblical responsibilities toward male homosexual strugglers.
2. The selected churches have the caring attitude needed to minister to male homosexual strugglers.

3. The selected churches demonstrate caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers.

4. The selected churches have change agents to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers.

It is my belief that effective churches strongly believe in the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, and they base their beliefs and practices upon the teachings of the Scripture. The churches' (the churches in this study) systematic theology is matched by a well--thought out practical theology. These congregations believe that it is their responsibility and privilege to minister to every person who enters the church. Those who are willing to follow biblical counsel for their lives will be welcomed and assisted in their journey, regardless of what their struggles might involve. Effective churches understand and are willing to live out their biblical responsibilities regardless of what society says on the one hand or what legalists might say on the other hand.

Effective churches demonstrate a caring attitude to all types of strugglers. This is their theology fleshed out in ministry. They deeply care about people, regardless of what sin or mess those people are in. They accept people as broken, fallen creatures such as themselves and love them right where they are. Their attitude produces deep care that is demonstrated through their caring actions toward strugglers.

Churches that are effective in ministering to male strugglers are also involved in equipping the entire congregation to minister to the homosexual struggler. They have training programs that enable church members to walk with strugglers through the journey of change and healing. These members are equipped to understand the needs,

hurts and temptations of the struggler to a degree that they are able to apply loving care and discipline and to provide resources for growth. They are in essence disciplers.

Significance of Study

This study will result in the development of an approach to ministry that will equip local churches to get in the battle for the souls of homosexual strugglers. We are now living in a post-Christian America. The fragmentation of the family (through divorce, single parenting, and absent or silent fathers) and the silence of the church on the topic biblical sexuality are beginning to produce an increasing number of Christian men who wrestle with what biblical masculinity looks like. As our society continues to push an anti-moral agenda into the main stream, we have also seen immoral thinking creep into churches and into the minds of the younger generations. Our schools are pushing the movement of tolerance, and a growing number of young people are now experimenting with same-sex relationships. The church is woefully unprepared. We continue to stand on the sidelines preaching against homosexuality, but we refuse to get involved in rescuing those who have been ensnared by its lies. We must get involved with this issue. Real people, believers, are being swayed. The struggler finds the homosexual community to be a safer place than the church of Jesus Christ.

This project will eventually assist me in developing a healthy environment of safety for the struggler at my church as well as churches abroad. At this point, very little is being done in an organized fashion that even communicates that we care or that our church is a safe place to struggle. The general attitude within the church is one of hating the sin and loving the sinner, but in reality very few men have stepped forward in our congregation for help. We are not as welcoming as we might think.

I expect, as a result of this project, to have learned many things that will assist me in ministering to the homosexual strugglers that God places in my care. Although I have learned much from first hand involvement, I know that I am only beginning to learn how to have an impact in the lives of these precious men.

Definition of Terms

Since one of the purposes of this research is to educate the church on how to minister to male homosexual strugglers in Christian congregations, it is important to define some key terms. Among the LGBT population, the preferred way to describe a homosexual person, especially a man, is the term “gay.” For a gay woman, “lesbian” is used. The term “homosexual” is used to define a person who has a sexual attraction to members of the same sex.

Another widely used phrase in the gay community is “homosexual orientation” or “identity.” This refers to a person’s preference in sexual matters. Sexual orientations can range from heterosexual (attraction and desire for the opposite sex), homosexual (attraction for the same sex), bisexual (desire for either male or female sex partners), and transsexual (attraction for either sex, as well as dressing up as male or female). It is easy to see that many terms can be used to identify the same thing, as is typical of the English language and culture.

It is important to understand that a Christian is defined as one who is “born again” as opposed to a church attendee or a nominally religious person. A Christian has put faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, including His death on the cross as payment for sins and His resurrection on the third day. This person is trusting Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. He is one who has surrendered his life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

I make a distinction between liberal churches that accept, accommodate, and bless homosexual relationships and evangelical churches that hold firmly to the inerrancy of Scripture as their guide to truth in their treatment of homosexual strugglers. Liberal churches are defined as those that do not believe the Bible to be the inerrant, inspired Word of God. They believe that the present culture has the freedom and authority to reinterpret the scriptural texts to make the Bible's teachings relevant to the situation. By contrast, evangelical churches believe the Bible to be the inerrant, inspired Word of God. They believe that the present culture is to be interpreted by the Bible and that the Bible's teachings can transform culture as well as the life of an individual.

For the purposes of clarity and consistency, I will restrict my vocabulary to the terms "homosexual strugglers," "struggler(s)," and "same-sex attraction". The term "homosexual struggler(s)" or "struggler(s)" refers to men and women who sit in the pews of evangelical churches Sunday after Sunday, defeated, confused, hurting, and inwardly crying for help. They struggle with homosexual feelings, thoughts, actions, and desires that they do not want and did not ask for. They struggle silently because of guilt, fear of rejection, and embarrassment. The writer has a heart to help Christian men like these who may have been deceived into thinking that homosexuality is a legitimate lifestyle.

The third phrase, "same-sex attraction", is becoming more popular among all who write about homosexuality. It describes the inward desires that an individual has toward a member of the same gender. The attraction is described by strugglers as the same feeling of attraction that a heterosexual will have for a member of the opposite sex.

A person who struggles with same-sex attraction may or may not have acted upon those feelings. There are many people who struggle with same-sex feelings and thoughts but have never been physically intimate with someone of the same gender. At the same time, they do have a desire for the same sex. As will be discussed later, the literature reveals that there is a vast difference between homosexual identity and homosexual behavior.

Preview of Remaining Chapters

It is my intent, as a result of my research, to shed light upon the biblical responsibilities that churches and believers have to provide a safe place for male strugglers who desire to be biblically pure and need assistance to achieve their spiritual goals. The next chapter of this dissertation will provide a biblical theology for welcoming strugglers as well as an explanation of the various aspects of the homosexual struggle. We will take a close look at the literature as it relates to the various issues of the homosexual struggle and to the issues churches need to understand in order to fulfill their biblical responsibilities.

Chapter 3 will be an overview of a survey created for selected churches who are actively involved in the ministry of assisting male homosexual strugglers. The survey will be designed in a way that the church, not the struggler will be the object of the survey. I will, however, have two separate groups of people in each church taking the survey. First, strugglers will be taking the survey based upon their personal experience of how their church has welcomed and assisted them as they have processed through their homosexual issues, attractions or temptations. Second, a sample group of church members will be taking the survey. The questions are virtually the same for this group as

for the strugglers, but the church members will answer them based upon their perspective of the ministry to strugglers in their church. I hope that this will provide more details on how effectively each church is demonstrating the theology of welcoming. In chapter 4 we will discuss the results of the survey to see if my hypotheses were correct.

The final chapter will discuss whether or not my learning objectives were reached. I plan on providing some definitive challenges to the church and local congregations to accept the responsibility for strugglers who desire to live biblical lives but find themselves trapped by homosexual temptation, attraction or sin. I hope that my research will also be the spring board for future researchers who also have a desire to see the church become effective in rescuing and redeeming male strugglers from the brink of moral chaos.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within their doors is in line with their biblical responsibilities. I have embarked upon this study because I consider the local church and the community of believers one of God's primary resources for assisting homosexual strugglers to find and experience God's transforming power for their struggle. The local church can be a primary source of help and encouragement to the struggler; but is the church welcoming in attitude and practice? In this chapter we will examine the literature as related to the church's responsibility toward homosexual strugglers. It is the belief of this writer that the church has abdicated her responsibility to this segment of our society.

It would be wise for us to start with a thorough examination of the Scripture texts related to this issue before we move into the practical theology of whether and how the church is to assist a male homosexual struggler. Before a church can understand and put into practice her biblical responsibilities toward homosexual strugglers, she must be able to take a firm stand on the teachings of the Bible.

Literature related to Church's Responsibility to Homosexual Strugglers

The Bible and Homosexuality

Dr. John C. Holbert's article, *What Does the Bible Say about Homosexuality?* clearly represents the reinterpretation of biblical texts that has become a trademark for the "Christian gay movement" a faction that is invading the thinking of the church culture today. He states "The Bible says nothing at all about homosexuality, at least in the way we in the 21st century think of it. The concept, in terms of sexual orientation, was unknown until the advent of modern sociological and psychological analyses in the 19th century. While various ancient texts and biblical texts have served as resources for modern discussion about sexual orientation, what these texts meant by same-sex relations and what we mean by them are very different."¹ The liberal thinking today in our churches (found mostly in liberal churches, but also among some border-line evangelicals) is being dominated by the ideas of tolerance and acceptance, in the framework of grace and love. Our culture is placing these very philosophies above the authority of Scripture and science itself. It no longer matters what the Bible teaches, it is a matter of interpreting the Bible through the lenses of tolerance, acceptance, and individual truth. Scripture is no longer the authority for faith among many believers today. Homosexuality has become acceptable and is accommodated in the name of tolerance and acceptance.

¹ John C. Holbert, "What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality," *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 153-54.

For churches who desire to be effective in ministering to the strugglers within their congregations, it is of critical importance that they stand firm upon the inerrancy of Scripture and its teachings for a guide to success. Because a biblical understanding of homosexuality has been diminished due to the militant efforts of the gay rights community, churches must have a full understanding of the biblical texts that are being reinterpreted that movement.

Churches must also bring to this ministry a balance between the doctrines of grace and judgment. Jesus loved the woman at the well, but did not accept or accommodate her adultery (John 4). We must have a starting point in wrestling through the task of being a welcoming church for homosexual strugglers. The church must not sacrifice scriptural truth for tolerance. The church must stand firmly on truth while presenting itself to the homosexual struggler as a church that cares for him and accepts him where he is. We must be willing to come alongside a struggler with the truth but also with great love and compassion. The church must fight the temptation to give in to the revisionists of Scripture and instead be revisionists of the culture. It is the responsibility of the church to know, defend and apply biblical truth as members become incarnationally involved with the strugglers who worship among us.

The gay rights theology “meets every Bible verse referring to homosexuality head-on, and attempts to explain why each verse is misunderstood today. It is the boldest part of the gay rights movement and, for many Christians, the most difficult to respond to. That is because these arguments take what is obvious in Scripture and claim to have

discovered that it has a different, heretofore hidden meaning.²² The pro-gay movement has twisted Scripture, diminished its authority, and reinvented a new hermeneutic for the Bible in an effort to legitimize and normalize homosexuality in the eyes of the Christian. It is not the purpose of this researcher to do a theological treatise on specific passages, but rather to provide a glimpse into the distorted interpretations of pro-gay theology. The church that desires to minister to male strugglers in the pew must be able to respond to the gay rights revisionists of Scripture. Most strugglers have heard or read these revisionist interpretations of the sacred text. If the church is to assist these men, it must understand that it is the church's responsibility to defend the Scriptures as the rule of authority for faith and practice. The Scripture still is the starting point for all moral issues.

Genesis 1 and 2: Creation and Created Intent

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man

² Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996). 185.

will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.³

The traditional view of creation and God's created order is that He created male and female, limiting the sexual relationship to between a man and a woman. He designed the heterosexual union so that mankind could reproduce and multiply. This is the only sexual union that can fulfill God's intended order. God observed that even with the animal kingdom as company, Adam was lonely. God created the woman out of Adam's rib. He created her for Adam and encouraged them to cling to one another. The woman was designed for the man and the man for the woman. This passage teaches us that the woman was created to meet man's emotional, psychological, and sexual needs, and in the same manner, the man was perfectly designed for the woman. God's plan is clearly heterosexual.

The pro-gay theology has challenged this long held Judeo-Christian ideal by stating that God's design was not strictly heterosexual. This passage does not forbid homosexuality because "these verses cannot be seen as a model for all couples. Many heterosexual couples are childless, or are unable to have sexual relations."⁴

Joe Dallas gives two responses to this pro-gay interpretation.⁵ Although this passage does not directly forbid homosexuality, it does provide the primary model which all other sexual relationships are to follow. And secondly, the male-female union is the only

³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the NIV.

⁴ Joe Dallas, *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007). 173.

⁵ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 187-88.

sexual union that is described in a positive sense in the entire Old and New Testaments. This passage goes to the extent of addressing the biblical model for monogamous marriage. "Nothing is said here about the legitimacy of homosexual relationships. Even though an evaluation of same-sex intercourse is not the point of the text, legitimation for homosexuality requires an entirely different kind of creation story. Only a being made from man can be a suitable and complementary counterpart for him."⁶

Genesis 19:4-9: The Destruction of Sodom

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning." "No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square." But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." "Get out of our way," they replied. And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them." They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

The traditional view of this passage states that men of Sodom were attempting to have homosexual contact with Lot's visitors, the two angels. As a result of the men's sin, Sodom was destroyed. Her wickedness was not limited to homosexuality but that

⁶ Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). 61-62.

evil certainly represented the pinnacle of her wickedness. This passage is a strong statement on how God views homosexual behavior.

One pro-gay view of this passage reinterprets (twists) the meaning to condemn Sodom for inhospitality rather than homosexuality. Boswell states,

Lot was violating the custom of Sodom by entertaining unknown guests within the city walls at night without obtaining the permission of the elders of the city. When the men of Sodom gathered around to demand that the strangers be brought out to them, ‘that they might know them,’ they meant no more than to ‘know’ who they were, and the city was consequently destroyed not for sexual immorality but for the sin of inhospitality to strangers.⁷

This view that Lot had violated Sodom’s custom of not entertaining visitors without permission, redefines the word “to know” to a more general definition meaning “to get acquainted with,” thus eliminating the sexual connotation.⁸

Michael Saia responds brilliantly to this pro-gay argument by stating that there are several problems with this reasoning.⁹ If Lot was trying to make up for a lack of hospitality why did he offer the men his daughters? Is this vicarious hospitality? Why didn’t Lot call their offer of hospitality, wicked? He didn’t say anything about hospitality. What difference did it make to these men that Lot’s daughters were virgins if this incident had nothing to do with a sexual assault or intent?

⁷ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1980). 93-94.

⁸ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 189.

⁹ Michael R. Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1988). 64.

A second pro-gay interpretation claims that Sodom was destroyed for attempted rape not for homosexuality.¹⁰ This bizarre reading of the text does deal directly with what was happening – attempted rape – but it dismisses homosexuality altogether.

Saia again points out numerous problems with this pro-gay interpretation,¹¹ but the biggest objection is found in Lot’s response. Lot offers his virgin daughters to the men of the city, to do with them whatever they pleased. How bizarre and wrong is Lot’s thinking, and his reaction to the threat upon the visitors! If homosexual rape was the issue, did Lot consider heterosexual rape a lesser crime? Apparently so, or he wouldn’t have offered his daughters. Now, it is easy to judge Lot’s decision here, but that is not the point. Most of us would agree that Lot was wrong in his solution. The point is that “Lot’s offering of his daughters tells us that he was applying the word ‘wicked’ to the homosexual aspect of the act, not just the gang rape.”¹²

A third pro-gay argument holds that Sodom was destroyed because “...she and her children were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy” (Ezek 16:49). Since the prophet Ezekiel did not mention homosexuality they assume that Genesis 19 had nothing to do with homosexuality but rather dealt with pride and arrogance along with greed.¹³

¹⁰ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 190. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. 93.

¹¹ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 191.

This pro-gay argument is easily answered if one looks at the entire log of Scriptures that mention Sodom's destruction. Jude 7 reads as follows:

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Combine this verse with the rest of Scripture, including Romans 1, and we can easily conclude that Sodom was destroyed for its entire realm of wickedness. It is evident that homosexuality was not the only cause, but it certainly was the last thing that filled the cup of God's wrath.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: The Levitical Law

Leviticus 18:22 - Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

Leviticus 20:13 - If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

David Crum writes, "The traditional understanding of these texts is based on a rather straightforward, plain reading of the texts. A man is forbidden to have sexual intercourse with a man. Male-to-male sex is called an abomination. The act itself is described as detestable. Death is the assigned punishment."¹⁴ It is clear from this passage that the Old Testament specifically denounces homosexual acts in any form.

The pro-gay argument states, "The practices mentioned in these chapters of Leviticus have to do with idolatry, not homosexuality. The Hebrew word for 'abomination' ...has less to do with something intrinsically evil and more to do with ritual

¹⁴ David A. Crum, "A Discipler Approach for Ministering to People who Struggle with Homosexuality" (DMIN, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000). 17.

uncleanness.”¹⁵ Dallas explains, “Pro-gay authors refer to heathen rituals of the Canaanites, rituals that included both homosexual and heterosexual prostitution, as reasons God prohibited homosexuality among His people.”¹⁶ In other words, homosexual behavior was not forbidden, but it was homosexual acts done in worship of pagan gods that God forbade in His law. Dallas writes, “They contend that homosexuality itself was not the problem, but its association with idolatry and, at times, the way it was practiced as a part of idol worship... God was not prohibiting homosexuality we see today; He forbade the sort that incorporated idolatry.”¹⁷

When approaching the Leviticus passages, the pro-gay argument lumps all the moral, legal, and ceremonial laws together in order to discredit the passages that forbid their sexual practices. The traditionalist must not be swayed into thinking that all the OT laws only apply to the nation of Israel. There is a great difference between the ceremonial laws and legal laws that God instituted for Israel’s protection and safety. God desired the Jews to follow these laws so that they would not be led astray by the pagan religions of the Canaanites. These laws are often referred to as the “Holiness Code.” The moral laws of the Old Testament were not bound to the people of Israel or to the Old Testament time period. Jesus did not do away with the moral law, but validated it through His teachings and the teachings of the other writers of the New Testament.

¹⁵ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Cited by Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 192.

¹⁶ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 192.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

Dallas states, “The prohibitions against homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20 appear alongside other sexual sins, adultery and incest, for example, which are forbidden in both the Old and New Testaments, completely apart from the Levitical codes. Scriptural references to these sexual sin practices, both before and after Leviticus, show God’s displeasure with them whether or not any ceremony or idolatry is involved.”¹⁸ God commanded the Jews to avoid all forms of immorality, homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery, not based on their ties to idolatry, but because such acts are detestable to Him. These acts can be tied to idolatry, but in essence they can themselves be idols that pull God’s people away from worshipping Him through holy and pure conduct.

Dallas concludes his argument by stating, “it logically follows (if we take the pro-gay argument to its full degree) that they (sexual acts) would be permissible if they were committed apart from idolatry. That would mean incest, adultery, bestiality, and child sacrifice (all of which are listed in these chapters) are only condemned when associated with idolatry; otherwise, they are allowable. No serious reader of these passages could accept such a premise.”¹⁹ The pro-gay theology is a biased, self-seeking, action-defending hermeneutic that has little regard for the authority and historicity of Scripture.

The whole discussion of Old Testament homosexuality rests not on the practices of pagan cultures but rather on what God desired His people to be. Just because homosexuality was present in pagan cultures of the Old Testament period doesn’t mean

¹⁸ Ibid., 193.

¹⁹ Ibid.

that it was justifiable for Israel. God saw the behavior of homosexuality as an abomination. Gagnon states, “Contrary to the contemporary trend of Jewish and Christian communities to accommodate to the prevailing cultural approbation of homosexuality, the entire context of the Holiness Code stresses the distinctive holiness of the people of God. God’s people are to imitate the holiness and purity of their God and not the abominable and defiling practices of other people.”²⁰

1Samuel 18-23: David and Jonathan

The story of David and Jonathan is an incredible account of true male to male friendship and loyalty. Traditional interpretation sees nothing more than a deep friendship between these two men as they both long to see Israel become a kingdom and receive God’s blessing. Much of what is recorded in this story centers around David’s anointing as the future King of Israel. Jonathan, as King Saul’s son is the rightful heir to Israel’s throne, but due to Saul’s disobedience, the kingship of Israel has been forfeited and given to David. David, however, finds himself serving Saul even though he is the rightful and anointed future king. Saul’s jealousy of David causes David to spend many years on the run for his life. Early in this story, Jonathan, Saul’s oldest son and the heir to his throne becomes friends with David. This friendship develops into a bond that very few have experienced. Jonathan commits his loyalty to David, in essence communicating to David his commitment to his future kingship and kingdom at the expense of his own right to the throne.

²⁰ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 116-17.

It is alleged by the pro-gay movement that David and Jonathan had a homosexual relationship²¹. There are numerous incidents in the biblical account that describe incredible closeness, loyalty and genuine friendship for each other. It is to imagine David in a homosexual relationship considering the problems that he had controlling his heterosexual passions as attested to by the number of wives, concubines and children ascribed to him (1 Sam 18:17-29; 25:39-43; 2 Sam 3:2-5, 13-16; 15:13-16; 11:1-27).

Gagnon suggests that “viewing the relationship of Jonathan and David in purely personal terms grossly distorts the purposes of the narrators. The personal dimension is significant, but primarily insofar as it conveys a political point.”²² David is not looking to overthrow King Saul but is a staunch supporter. David was anointed as the next king of Israel due to Saul’s failure to follow God’s standards. The relationship between Jonathan and David was one of staunch loyalty to God’s purpose for Israel and a true example of “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov 18:24). David’s first encounter with Jonathan was immediately after David slew Goliath. He was brought before Saul and asked to identify himself. The text reads, “After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself” (1Sam 18:1). Jonathan and David’s story quickly becomes much more than simply a private friendship. God was raising up David to be the next king, and the writer of 1 Samuel describes how Jonathan, the next legitimate heir to the throne, is drawn into

²¹ Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1978). As referenced by Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 146.

²² Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 154.

the larger picture of God's plan. Jonathan immediately sees the hand of God upon David's life, and the Scripture details the incredible faith of Jonathan and his loyalty and commitment to God's plans over his own rights. Upon recognizing David's anointing, Jonathan's soul becomes one with David and with God's purpose. They become as brothers with all the rights and privileges of such a family relationship. Nothing in the narrative gives the readers any indication that a homosexual relationship is taking place. Gagnon states, "David and Jonathan had in effect become 'kin' with all the mutual privileges and obligations that such a relationship entails. The two now relate as brothers, not as a romantic couple... Mention of the fact that Jonathan's soul was bound to David no more expresses erotic love than do the words of Judah to Joseph in Genesis 44:30-31."²³ He continues, "the word קִיָּנָה usually refers to a binding of people together for political purposes."²⁴

As the narrative progresses we witness a continued strengthening of the bond between these friends, "Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan was very fond of David" (1Sam 19:1). The writer tells how Saul grows jealous of David and how Jonathan nonetheless makes a covenant with his friend. Israel is in love with David. He has become a national hero and much more popular than King Saul. Saul's jealousy deepens as David's popularity grows consequentially so does Jonathan's fondness of David. He begins relaying to David his father's mood and plans. His loyalty grows as he offers to protect David from Saul, placing himself in a place of

²³ Ibid., 147.

²⁴ Ibid.

dishonor with his own father, Saul. Jonathan and David have formed a deeply personal and yet political alliance with one another. Gagnon elaborates on two important points: “First, the language of love is typical of covenant-treaties between an overlord and vassals or between two political rulers of roughly equal powers.”²⁵ He continues, “Second, Jonathan’s act of handing over his robe, armor, and ‘even’ his sword, bow, and belt was not only an extraordinary token of heartfelt commitment to love David ‘as his own soul’ and to protect him at any personal cost; it was also an act of political investiture.”²⁶ Jonathan is willing to transfer his rights and privileges to David out of admiration and loyalty. Jonathan’s extraordinary acts do demonstrate a remarkable political and personal loyalty, but there is no indication of a sexual relationship.

In 1 Samuel 19-20, David flees Saul for fear of his life. David asks Jonathan what he has done that could have caused Saul to hate him so much. Jonathan assures David that he will not die, yet, David is still concerned about Saul knowing of Jonathan’s loyalty to David. Jonathan devises a plan to communicate to David the next day regarding his father’s plan to harm him. Jonathan wishes that harm upon himself if he doesn’t do everything he can to protect and assist David to escape. The text continues:

But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family, not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself (1Sam 20:14-17).

²⁵ Ibid., 148.

²⁶ Ibid.

In return for his loyalty and assistance, Jonathan asks David for future kindness and mercy. He fully understands the ways of the culture. When David ascends to Saul's throne, Jonathan could easily be seen as a threat. In the Near Eastern culture, it would not be unusual for the new king to eliminate all traces of the former king's loyal servants, military leaders or family. Jonathan is requesting that David grant him and his descendants kindness and long life in return for present assistance and loyalty. They agree to these terms as friends, not lovers. Jonathan reaffirms his oath to David "out of love for him because he loved him as he loved himself." Again, nothing in this passage gives any indication that Jonathan and David were homosexual lovers. Everything, however, does point to a covenant of loyalty between the rightful heir to the throne of Israel and God's sovereign choice to succeed Saul as the next king of Israel. These verses continue to communicate Jonathan's understanding and acceptance of God's plan no matter how devastating it would be to him personally. David was not only Jonathan's friend but God's anointed one.

Jonathan returns to his father's table and begins probing his father's heart and plans. Saul's jealousy and anger over his son's loyalty to David causes him to attempt to kill Jonathan (1 Sam 20:30-34). Saul could not understand Jonathan's loyalty to David. In Saul's eyes, Jonathan was throwing his future kingdom away.

Jonathan then meets David in the appointed field to inform him of Saul's motives and plans. "After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the most" (1 Samuel 20:41).

The pro-gay proponents believe that this was a homosexual encounter.

“David’s threefold bowing to Jonathan speaks to the political overtones of the farewell. David and Jonathan are in extreme distress because Saul’s actions have made it clear that he has set his house against the house of David. David and Jonathan know that they might not see each other alive again.”²⁷ This is an emotional farewell between loyal friends. Gagnon explains in detail that there is nothing inherently homosexual about two men kissing in the ancient Near Eastern culture.²⁸ This was nothing more than two committed friends and political allies expressing the emotional pain of parting due to circumstances beyond their control.

At the end of this story, the narrator tells of David’s reaction to the news of the death of Jonathan. “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women” (2 Samuel 1:26). “Jonathan’s repeated display of [non-sexual] kindness to David at a time when Jonathan was in a position of power, selflessly risking his own life and certainly his kingdom, surpassed anything David had ever known from a committed erotic relationship with a woman.”²⁹ Scripture is clear that David later fulfilled his obligations to the covenant agreement with Jonathan by taking in Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth.

Gagnon concludes his discussion on Jonathan and David’s relationship by stating, “None of these texts, taken singly or as a collective whole, provide persuasive

²⁷ Ibid., 151.

²⁸ Ibid. Gagnon gives us a detailed overview of the uses of the word for “kissing” in the OT Scripture. He also gives some additional information related to the weeping that accompanied David and Jonathan’s last anticipated meeting.

²⁹ Ibid., 152-53.

support for a homosexual relationship between Jonathan and David.”³⁰ He continues, “Only in our day, removed as we are from ancient Near Eastern conventions, are these kinds of specious connections made by people desperate to find the slightest shred of support for homosexual practice in the Bible.”³¹

Romans 1:26-27: “Natural” and “Unnatural”

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.

The traditional interpretation of this passage is clear and literal, stating that God views homosexuality as a condition of fallen humanity, describing it as unnatural and unseemly.³² By contrast, the pro-gay theologians, in an attempt to portray Scripture as neutral toward homosexuality, argue that “Paul is not referring to homosexuals who, as he says, ‘changed their nature.’ The real sin here is in changing what is natural to the individual.”³³ In other words, they argue that Paul is condemning those men who are by nature heterosexual but who participate in homosexual acts, which are unnatural to them. By contrast, if men who are by nature homosexual commit homosexual acts, this is natural for them, neither unnatural nor sinful.

³⁰ Ibid., 153.

³¹ Ibid., 154.

³² Dallas, *A Strong Delusion.*, 194.

³³ Ibid.

Gagnon defends the traditional and literal interpretation when he explains that the context of this critical passage is “to show that God’s verdict is just and right. This is so precisely because the Gentiles do indeed know that what they are doing is wrong. God does not judge them for their ignorance but for acting contrary to the knowledge that they do have.”³⁴ Idolatry and same-sex intercourse are the two specific ways that the suppression of this knowledge is exhibited in the lives of those who reject this knowledge of God.³⁵

In Romans, Paul describes three distinct yet inseparable occasions when God is described as giving people over to something. In 1:24, He gives them over to the sinful desires of their hearts for the degrading of their bodies with one another. In 1:26, He gives them over to shameful lusts, which Paul describes as same-sex passions. And in 1:28, He gives them over to a depraved mind to do what is unthinkable. “The three ‘giving overs’ do not represent temporal sequences but rather are speaking of the same fundamental act.”³⁶ When a person rejects the knowledge of God he is exchanging the truth for a lie. “Quite appropriately, an absurd exchange of God for idols leads to an absurd exchange of heterosexual intercourse for homosexual intercourse. A dishonoring of God leads to a mutual dishonoring of selves. A failure to see fit to acknowledge God leads to an unfit mind and debased conduct.”³⁷ In essence, “the exchange of natural

³⁴ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 246-47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

intercourse for unnatural intercourse in 1:26 represents the appropriately absurd and self-debasing outcome for people who foolishly exchange God for idols.”³⁸

Again, the pro-gay interpretation suggests that this passage is referring to changing what is natural for an individual into what is not natural for him. In other words, if a person is homosexual it would be “unnatural” to try to make him heterosexual, and if a person is heterosexual it would be “unnatural” to make him a homosexual. (It is ironic that this argument is used, because the pro-gay movement is working to convince our children at an early age that sexual orientation is a matter of choice.) This is a desperate attempt to normalize homosexuality by reducing Scripture to subjective personal interpretation, feelings or felt needs. “Many human emotions (for example, lust, anger, jealousy, covetousness) obviously run counter to God’s intended design for nature and cannot be pronounced good simply because they are felt. Paul attributes such sinful impulses to the fall of Adam (Rom 5:12-21). However, anatomy is not quite as skillful a deceiver and for that reason is a more effective mediator of the truth.”³⁹

The phrase ‘contrary to nature’ (παρὰ φύσιν) does not mean ‘contrary to one’s personal sexual preference.’ It is a much deeper and more technical phrase. “This is the only passage in the Bible that mentions female homosexuality. It is a brief reference, and only states that certain women turned from the ‘natural function’ or ‘natural relations’ to that which is ‘against’ nature. ...The ‘natural function’ mentioned here is heterosexual sexual relations, and that the ‘unnatural’ function to which the woman turned is ‘woman

³⁸ Ibid., 252.

³⁹ Ibid., 264.

to woman.”⁴⁰ Saia explains that the reasoning homosexuals use to interpret this passage is feelings-driven rather than function-driven. “The Scripture does not speak of natural or unnatural feelings, but natural and unnatural function.”⁴¹ Gagnon speaks directly to this issue when he says that at a minimal level Paul is referring to the anatomical and procreative complementarity or fittedness of male and female.⁴² “For Paul it was a simple matter of common observation of human anatomy and procreative function that even pagans, otherwise oblivious to God’s direct revelation in the Bible, had no excuse for not knowing.”⁴³ In other words, common sense and observation tells us what constitutes the natural design of God for both the male and female.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:10: Unable to Inherit the Kingdom of God

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 (1Cor 6:9-10).

The traditional view of this passage interprets the strong language in a literal manner. This passage strongly teaches that practitioners of the aforementioned vices, particularly “homosexual offenders,” will not inherit the kingdom of God. Hill elaborates, “There are four words in these two verses, which sometimes are used in ancient Greek to speak of homosexuality (πορνοι, μοιχνοι, μαλαχοι, and αρσενοκοιται). The last two of

⁴⁰ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 71.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁴² Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24, no. 4 (2005). 254.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 255-56.

these are here used to refer to homosexual acts, possibly referring to the receptive and penetrative role.”⁴⁴ Gagnon adds, “I have translated *μαλακοι*, which literally means ‘the soft ones,’ as ‘effeminate males who play the sexual roles of females’; and *αρσενοκοιται*, which literally means ‘male-bedders,’ as ‘males who take other men to bed.’ He adds in his book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, “*Μαλακοι* should be understood as the passive partner in homosexual intercourse, the most egregious case of which are those who also intentionally engage in a process of feminization to erase further their masculine appearance and manner.”⁴⁵

Pro-gay theology rejects the literal interpretation based on Paul’s use of the word *αρσενοκοιται*. They suggest that since Paul coined this word and it appears nowhere else in Greek literature, it doesn’t carry any significant meaning regarding homosexuality. “Had he meant to refer to homosexuality, he would have used one of the words already in existence.”⁴⁶

Devising new words was not uncommon for the Apostle Paul, who may have coined over 170 words in his letters.⁴⁷ “It is remarkable that he would have coined this one, considering that he derived it directly from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint.”⁴⁸ The word *αρσενοκοιται*, Dallas tells us, is “a compound

⁴⁴ James R. Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 141.

⁴⁵ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 312.

⁴⁶ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 197.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

word consisting of two terms, ἀρσενο, from ἀρσεν, male, and κοιτοι from the word that means bedroom or bed...⁴⁹ Dallas continues by explaining that both the words are found in the Septuagint translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. “In other words, when Paul adopted the term ἀρσενοκοιτε, he took it directly from the Levitical passages ...forbidding homosexual behavior.”⁵⁰ Some have argued that this word simply means “male prostitute.” When these two words are combined, the resulting compound word can literally mean ‘to bed a man’.⁵¹ Based on this meaning, pro-gay theology wants to limit this word to mean “male prostitution.”⁵² However, Paul already covered “male prostitution” when he used the word πορνος.

For adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine (1Tim 1:10).

The New International Version translates the word ἀρσενοκοίταις as “perverts.” This is the same word that Paul coined and used in the previous passage. Hill says, “Paul also rejects ἀρσενοκοίταις ... as well as πορνοι in general. The rejection of homosexuality is clear and repeated and in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament.”⁵³ The conclusion reached regarding 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 can be applied to this verse as well. The only difference is that Paul is making a list of sinners rather than

⁴⁹ Crum, “A Discipler Approach”. 23.

⁵⁰ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 198.

⁵¹ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 312.

⁵² Crum, “A Discipler Approach”; Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 198

⁵³ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 141.

saying that they will not be permitted into the kingdom of God. It is clear that in both of these passages Paul is condemning homosexual behavior.

All in all, the arguments of the pro-gay movement are an attempt to argue homosexuality out of definitive passages of the Bible. When the Bible is interpreted with by using the historical grammatical hermeneutic, it is very clear that both the Old and New Testaments are opposed to homosexual behavior and the homosexual lifestyle. However, if one approaches Scripture through culturally relevant hermeneutics the verses are open to private interpretation, instead of allowing the Scripture to dictate faith and practice, the researcher then reduces this hermeneutics reduces the Scripture to his own culturally relevant preference. It was only after Joe Dallas returned to the Lord and forsook the homosexual lifestyle that he began to realize that he had embraced a theology that allowed him to justify his lifestyle. His feelings and desires had become his hermeneutic, justifying and arguing away the truth of the Word of God. He states, “Although the years have passed since I realized my error, I’m reminded daily how easily a man can kid himself into accepting what he *wants* to believe, over and above what he *truly* believes.”⁵⁴

In light of a proper interpretation of the Scriptures, what have we learned about homosexuality? Saia suggests three things:⁵⁵ First of all, the biblical texts speak

⁵⁴ Joe Dallas, *Desires in Conflict* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1991). 227.

⁵⁵ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 77.

only of homosexual acts and behaviors. Homosexual orientation⁵⁶ is not addressed or condemned by the Scriptures. The homosexual struggler who has never acted on his homosexual temptations can be encouraged that God still accepts him. The homosexual struggler who has acted upon his temptation can also rest assured that God offers him forgiveness and hope for change (1 Cor 6:9-11). The value of a soul does not change based upon one's struggle with a particular sin. The church must not have a higher standard for people than God does. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He ministered to a wide variety of sinners, some who chose to follow and thus were converted and transformed and others who rejected Jesus and were lost. Jesus treated them all with the same standard and offered them the same measure of love.

Second, the Bible declares that homosexual acts are sinful but it does not assert that they are more sinful than other acts. The Scripture teaches that all sin is equal. Homosexuality is a transgression of the law just like adultery, lying and stealing.

And last, the Bible says that homosexual acts can be forgiven and cleansed just like other sins (1 Cor 6:19-20). "Inclusion in the sphere of Christ's lordship, made possible by Christ's atoning death, not only brings about forgiveness from past sin but also mandates transformation away from a past life of moral uncleanness, including the uncleanness of same sex intercourse."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Sexual orientation will be dealt with in greater detail under the heading Homosexuality as an Identity.

⁵⁷ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 338.

Biblical Basis for Church Involvement with Homosexual Strugglers

What does the Bible teach us about ministering to homosexual strugglers?

God desires the church to respond biblically to those in our congregations who struggle with same-sex attraction or homosexuality. God values the soul of every man. This is the starting place for ministry to the homosexual struggler. If God values the souls of men, so should the church. Hill starts his biblical defense for ministry to the homosexual struggler with this very point when he states, “God’s will is that people be saved. Therefore, the goal of every Christian is also to lead people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Condemnation may come (John 3:18-21), but our endeavor is neither to condemn, nor to lead people to condemnation, but rather to lead them to escape condemnation.”⁵⁸ The church is called to minister to strugglers because God desires that all men be saved (2 Pet 3:9). The goal is not specifically deliverance from homosexual temptations and desires but rather every man’s calling to holiness, brokenness and relationship with God and His Church.

Genesis 1:26-27 records that God made man “in His image.” In Genesis 3 man chose to disobey God, but even after the Fall, man is still “in His image (Gen 9:6).” This is recorded after Adam and Eve’s disobedience (Gen 3), after Cain’s murder of Adam (Gen 4), and Noah’s flood, when God destroyed the world, sparing only Noah and his family, because He “saw how great man’s wickedness on earth had become (Gen 6).” God values each and every soul and this includes each and every male homosexual

⁵⁸ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 119.

struggler. People are not valuable because of their righteousness, and they are not devalued because of their wickedness. They are valued because God cares about the souls of men that He made “in his image.”

Since it is God’s will that every man be saved and since He sent His Son to the cross to pay sin’s price, then it follows that that the church has been called to the ministry of reconciliation. Paul writes to the Corinthian church:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (**2Cor 5:17-19**).

This passage speaks to our responsibility to bring people to saving faith in Jesus but it also describes reconciliation as a ministry of transformation (1Cor 5:17). So, regardless of the debilitating sin of the individual, the ministry of reconciliation involves bringing people to Jesus and helping them to reach maturity in Christ so that the old vanishes and the new comes. The change we seek in the lives of male homosexual strugglers in our congregations is a corporate trek toward holiness and this “will come about in response to God’s love, usually mediated through people; perhaps, in part, in response to Holy Spirit conviction, but very rarely will it come about in response to human condemnation.”⁵⁹

The responsibility of each believer is to “love the sinner but hate the sin.” This phrase however, is often offensive to the homosexual struggler. “To many of them, they

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119

feel that what we call ‘sin’ is *who they are*⁶⁰, and thus to hate the sin is necessarily to hate them!”⁶¹ Hill continues by stating that often the struggler believes from personal experience, that the church has succeeded in hating the sin but has failed at loving the sinner. When it comes to the issue of homosexuality, many in the church have failed to grasp the reality that God hates all sin. In essence, we compare our personal sin with that of the homosexual struggler and determine that we aren’t as bad as he is. Isaiah, writing to the nation of Israel states that “...your iniquities have separated you from your God...” (Isa 59:2). It should be stated at this point that God does condemn homosexual behavior but on the same level as He does lying, cheating, or stealing (Rev 21:8). God condemns sin, sin condemns the sinner (John 3:16-18). Homosexual behavior is not a greater sin, although it may have severe health consequences attached to it.

All sin is condemned equally (Rom 3:10-11, 23; 6:23). It was while we were still in our sins that Christ died for us (Rom 5:8), and it is only “by grace that we are saved, through faith ... not by works so that no one can boast.” (Eph 2:8-9). No matter what sin is committed or struggled with, it must be placed on the same level as homosexuality because God condemns all sin. Homosexuality is simply a sub set of “sin in general.” The Lord does detest homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13) but He also detests “idolatry” (Dan 7:25), “crooked men” (Prov 3:32), “a proud look, a lying tongue, murder, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that rush to do evil, a false witness, a heart that

⁶⁰ Homosexual identity will be discussed in greater detail in another portion of this chapter.

⁶¹ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 115.

stirs up dissension” (Prov 6:16), “dishonest scales” (11:1), the acquitting of the guilty and the condemning of the innocent (17:15) and many other sins.

A successful ministry to the struggler begins with an understanding of equality. In God’s eyes, every soul is equally valuable as a result of being created in His image and equally vile as a result of the Fall (Gen 3). Each person is worthy of His investment, time, and sacrifice. It is also true that every person is created equal in value in God’s “economy,” and yet each person is equally vile, having fallen short of God’s glory (Rom 3:10-18). All sin, no matter how distasteful, separates us from a relationship with God. A person who struggles with homosexuality is no less valuable than a person who struggles with lying, and the sin of lying is no less vile than the sin of homosexuality. Grasping both aspects of this biblical principle of equality (equally valuable and equally vile) will create a spirit of humility in the church to minister to all people regardless of their propensity to a particular sin – even the homosexual struggler. A spirit of welcoming in our churches will spring forth from this very spirit of equality.

A successful ministry to the struggler begins with an attitude of empathy and compassion. Jesus’ ministry was characterized by an incredible spirit of welcoming – and He included the most unlikely people. This is evident in His calling the twelve disciples, healing the sick, casting out demons, healing the leper by physically touching him (Mark 1:40-45), healing the paralytic lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1-12), calling Levi (the tax collector), being patient with the proud arrogant self seeking Pharisees and religious leaders, delivering the demoniac of Gerasenes, healing Jarius’s daughter, healing the woman with the issue of blood, helping the Syrophenician woman, and healing the deaf, mute, and blind. His ministry was characterized by empathy and compassion. “Yet,

Christ had the gall to tell others how to live their lives, to insist that His truth was the only truth and to claim that He alone was the way to God.”⁶² Following Jesus’ example, homosexual strugglers in our churches should be regarded as persons created “in His image” they deserve nothing less than our empathy and compassion for the struggle that they face.

It was the profound understanding that Jesus had of each person to whom He ministered that moved Him to compassion and caused Him to reach out to them. The more knowledgeable we are about homosexual strugglers, the more understanding and prepared we will be to minister to them. Prompted by Albert Mohler’s statement, (“Homosexuals are waiting to see if the Christian church has anything more to say after we declare that homosexuality is a sin”)⁶³, Montoya continues, “Homosexuals are hurting people and need more than condemnation; they also need compassion.”⁶⁴ They deserve to have a listening ear as we assist them in their journey of transformation. Davis suggests, “It would seem that a properly balanced response on the part of the church would require at least two key elements: firm biblical teaching and meaningful personal support for the homosexual who seeks to overcome such an orientation.”⁶⁵

A successful ministry thrives when congregations are engaged incarnationally in the lives of strugglers. Churches must honestly examine themselves in terms of their

⁶² Stanton L. Jones, *The Gay Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). 23.

⁶³ Alex D. Montoya, “The Church’s Response to Homosexuality,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 19, no. 2 (2008). 238.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1985). 124.

own actions toward strugglers. Having a caring attitude is biblical, but effective ministry is rarely accomplished by mere attitude; attitude must move us toward caring actions. Churches must reject the sin of homosexuality but be willing and ready to be used of God in the reclamation of the struggler.⁶⁶ The struggler needs not only a safe place to work through his sexual orientation but also a safe group of people who are committed to his transformation. One of the greatest verses of hope for the homosexual struggler is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, which reads:

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.

Notice the use of the past tense in verse 11. Paul is clearly communicating that the Corinthians had quite a sordid involvement with idolatrous sexual behavior including (but not limited to) homosexuality. The key to our study is not the list of vices but rather the hope of transformation that Paul gives in the words, "...that is what some of you were." The believers in Corinth were no longer idolatrous sexual offenders of various sorts; they were transformed. This is the hope that churches should be offering to every sinner who walks into their congregations.

It is obvious that Paul understood this concept, probably from a deep appreciation of the church's accepting him as a new convert. Paul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians took time for the church to overcome (Acts 9:1-31). However,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 124-25.

Paul never forgot his position before God, he referred to himself as the “worst of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). As the church played a critical part in Paul’s transformation, it is critical that the church understand its vital role in the lives of strugglers today. Davis agrees when he comments, Christian fellowships can support people of various kinds of personal brokenness, including this one, as the Spirit of God seeks to transform old behavior patterns.⁶⁷ He continues by stating that “such transformation generally does not occur in a vacuum, but requires the social reinforcement of a group of loving people who offer support along the way.”⁶⁸

The exhortation that Paul gives in his letters emphatically supports the idea that the church is responsible to be involved with homosexual strugglers within her doors. This is just as applicable today, as it was for Paul’s original readers. Listen to Paul’s heart for all types of strugglers in Romans 15:1: “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.” To the Thessalonians he wrote, And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1Thess 5:14). And he encouraged the Galatians in this way: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1-2).

Successful ministries, whether churches or other ministries, are involved in recruitment and education. Ephesians 4:11-16 gives the biblical mandate for the church to

⁶⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

recruit and train its members to do ministry. Far too often pastors are left with the load of ministry of the entire church. Paul gives clear direction that the pastor and leaders are to equip and train members to do the work of ministry. Often times, pastors do not delegate ministry to laity because they have not trained the laity for ministry. In the case of ministering to male homosexual strugglers, the pastor may feel that he is inadequately equipped to help the male struggler; he may then refer the struggler to a trained professional. This leads to a void in the church for the struggler, needs the church body to be aware of, and involved in, the secret areas of his life. If churches instead trained their members for the work of ministry to homosexual strugglers already in their congregations, incarnational involvement can take place, and pastors can avoid burnout. Successful ministries equip the laity to do the work of ministry – and at the same time, they multiply their work force.

The biblical basis for this project is built upon the principles of equality, empathy, engagement, and education – key truths that have been the result of incarnational involvement with male strugglers. My goal for this project is to fully represent Jesus and the church to male strugglers who wrestle alone in silence, waiting and longing to be helped.

Literature Related to the Church Possessing a Caring Attitude and Demonstrating a Caring Behavior Toward Male Homosexual Strugglers.

“Humans disgusted by their self-debasing conduct become good candidates for receiving the gracious transforming power of the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ.”⁶⁹ God’s grace is not reserved for the righteous but for broken people who come to the end of themselves and cast themselves at the feet of Jesus for forgiveness and restoration. This grace covers all vices, sins and addictions including homosexual behavior. “We believe that all of humanity is fractured by the reality of sin, such that we experience many desires and inclinations that are not in accord with how God made us.”⁷⁰ The church must come to recognize that the Fall has corrupted all humanity in a variety of ways. Each of us struggles with issues of one kind or another. We have all types of people within our pews. There is no one outside the power of God’s transforming grace, no matter how self-debasing his sin may be.

The church is to possess a caring attitude and caring behavior toward the strugglers that are within its doors. This is demonstrated by understanding what it means to love. “The greatest act of love would be to help such a person [male homosexual struggler] get to a place of being washed in the blood of Jesus, of beginning the process of being sanctified, and of achieving justification in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Yes, we must do this with patience, kindness, gentleness – indeed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit – but a loving confrontation with the moral teachings

⁶⁹ Gagnon, “Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity.” 263.

⁷⁰ Stanton L. Jones, “A Study Guide and Response to: Mel White's What the Bible Says and doesn't Say About Homosexuality,” (Wheaton, Illinois: Wheaton College, 2006). 7.

of the Bible is a part of what it means to speak in the truth in love.⁷¹ Love is not giving up the moral teachings of the Bible, as liberal churches have done, rather, it is holding firm to those teachings as we hold the struggler accountable to them. To love a homosexual struggler does not mean to accept and accommodate his behaviors. To love him means to lovingly confront him with the truth while walking with him through the process of discipleship – a process that leads to brokenness and a transformed life. There will be failures and setbacks, as with anyone who is involved in a life-dominating sin but we must love strugglers as Jesus patiently loved His disciples and followers as He prepared them for their future ministries.

Confrontation with the truth is important but we must never forget that the greatest act of love is incarnational involvement. This was modeled by God's love for us in sending Jesus not only to live among us but also to die in our place that we might be reconciled to Him. If we are to have effective ministry among the male strugglers in our churches, we must be willing to understand the battle that these men face. The depth of the struggle will vary from simple same-sex temptation to heavy entrenchment of homosexual behaviors, including addiction. Our understanding of the struggler's plight should move us to empathy and compassion that are just as great as the disgust we feel toward his sin. It is the person in the sin and struggle who demands our compassion.

Consider Jesus' attitude and action in healing the leper in Mark 1:40-45. As disgusting as leprosy was in the New Testament culture, Jesus was moved by the plight of the leper – moved to action. He got involved in healing the leper by touching him.

⁷¹ Ibid., 32.

Lepers were considered contagious, dirty, and repulsive, but Jesus healed this leper by touching him. He wasn't concerned about getting the disease; He wasn't concerned about what the Pharisees said. He wasn't concerned about what His disciples might say. He was moved with compassion (attitude), so He reached out and touched the leper, healing him (incarnational involvement). Christian men in our churches who struggle with same-sex attraction or homosexuality are persons made in the "image of God." It is the responsibility of the church to do what Jesus would do to rescue the willing from this plight of sin. For those who have taken steps into homosexual behavior, we must be moved with a heart of empathy and compassion to come alongside them as disgusting as their actions may seem to us. For those men who are fighting same-sex attractions, the church must also have a heart of empathy and compassion, being reminded of our own sexual brokenness and of God's grace in our experience. To minister to strugglers, it is of critical importance that one understands more fully what their struggle entails.

Homosexuality as a Behavior

Homosexuality is often viewed simply as a behavioral lifestyle. However, there are many facets to homosexual behavior, and there is a great difference between same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior. A person who struggles with same-sex attraction struggles deeply with feelings and attractions to other men. Although to many of us this is not normal, we must also remember that it is simply temptation and not sin. Regardless of whether a man is struggling with same-sex attraction or homosexual behaviors, if he is seeking help to be free from these (i.e., if he is seeking to be repentant and accountable) the church should approach him with empathy, humility, and hope.

Unfortunately, there are men in our churches who have made the choice to move from same-sex attraction to same-sex behavior. We must keep these things in mind as we take a much closer look into the homosexual psyche.

Nicolosi, in his book *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*, refers to homosexual behavior as compulsive and addictive.⁷² Before the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association (under political pressure from gay activists) to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnosics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, clinicians freely theorized about the role of parents in the formation of homosexuality.⁷³ “Instead, the ‘born that way’ concept – which ironically, scientists almost universally acknowledge as a fallacy – has been simply assumed to negate earlier developmental theories.”⁷⁴ Ever since that decision by the APA little research, especially in recent years, has been done by clinicians because homosexuality in their minds is genetic, not an illness. This has left a great void in the literature regarding counsel or therapy for the homosexual struggler who desires to leave homosexuality.

The decision by the APA normalized the problem of homosexuality, Since homosexuality is no longer considered an illness. However, the homosexual lifestyle is anything but normal. Many writers have commented on the compulsive and addictive nature of homosexual behavior. Dr. Satinover discusses in great detail the bias and

⁷² Joseph Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1991; reprint, 1997). 123.

⁷³ Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996). 31-40. The author goes into great detail to explain that this decision was one of political pressure that didn't involve science or democracy.

⁷⁴ Joseph Nicolosi, “A Development Model for Effective Treatment of Male Homosexuality: Implications for Pastoral Counseling,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 88.

naiveté that Westerners possess toward the dangers of homosexual behavior. He compares the risks and behaviors of alcoholics with those of homosexual men. The behaviors that lead to health risks for both groups are drastically different, and so are the efforts of the American public in attempting to discourage individuals from these destructive behaviors. For example, the media and health professionals have made great efforts to discourage alcoholism, yet they have been relatively silent about homosexual behaviors. Here is the list of problems that Satinover provides regarding homosexual risks:

- “A significantly decreased likelihood of establishing or preserving a successful marriage
- A twenty-five to thirty years decrease in life expectancy
- Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease – infectious hepatitis, which increases the risk of liver cancer
- Inevitably fatal immune disease, including associated cancers (AIDS)
- Frequently fatal rectal cancer
- Multiple bowel and other infectious diseases
- A much higher than usual incidence of suicide
- A very low likelihood that its adverse effects can be eliminated unless the condition itself is
- An at least 50 percent likelihood of being eliminated through lengthy, often costly, and very time consuming treatment in an otherwise unselected group of sufferers”⁷⁵

Satinover continues to explain,

“As with alcoholism: First, even though its origins may be influenced by genetics, the condition is, strictly speaking, a pattern of behavior; second, individuals who have this condition continue in the behavior in spite of the destructive consequences of doing so; third, although some people with this condition perceive it as a problem and wish they could rid themselves of it, many others deny they have any problem at all and violently resist all attempts to ‘help’ them; and fourth, some of the people with this condition – especially those who

⁷⁵ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 49-51.

deny it is a problem – tend to socialize almost exclusively with one another and form a ‘subculture.’”⁷⁶

There is a drastic difference between identity and behavior. Identity is best understood as the way in which one explains or understands oneself. There are many, like Bob Davies, who claim to have struggled with homosexual identity or same-sex attractions and have not participated in homosexual behavior.⁷⁷ Homosexual behavior is a choice, not a genetic trait, just as alcoholic behavior is a choice. Even if homosexuality is discovered to be genetic⁷⁸, homosexual *behavior* is still a choice.

There are incredible health risks that accompany homosexual behaviors. Satinover lists “two major risk factors associated with homosexuals: anal intercourse and the number of different partners.”⁷⁹ The combination of these two factors leads to the majority of all health problems and diseases among homosexual men. Homosexual behavior is extremely risky behavior. “The typical homosexual is a man who has frequent episodes of anal intercourse with other men, often with different men. These episodes are 13 times more frequent than a heterosexual’s acts of anal intercourse, with 12 times as many different partners as heterosexuals.”⁸⁰ He also reports that 40percent of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁷ Bob Davies and Anita Worthen, *Someone I Love is Gay: How family and friends can respond* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996). Bob Davies brief testimony can be found in the introduction on page 10.

⁷⁸ It is the opinion of this writer that homosexuality will never be proved to be a genetic, as it goes contrary to the creative intent of God. However, obedience to God has nothing to with of whether homosexuality is or isn’t genetic.

⁷⁹ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 54-55.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 55.

homosexuals who participate in anal intercourse do not use a condom.⁸¹ There is clear evidence that this is one of the major reasons why rates of HIV and AIDS infection are extremely high among homosexual men.

James Hill reports in his research findings that persons who engage in homosexual behavior experience vastly higher rates of sexually transmitted disease.⁸² He states that “80% of all sexually transmitted disease is experienced by 2% of the sexually active adult population who engage in homosexual acts. That is a rate of infection that is 200 times as great as it is for heterosexuals.”⁸³ Youth who engage in homosexual acts are 23 times more likely to get a sexually transmitted disease. Lesbians are 19 times more likely to get syphilis, twice as likely to get genital warts and four times as likely to have scabies.⁸⁴ Male homosexuals are 14 times more likely to have syphilis, and hepatitis A is rampant among practicing homosexuals.⁸⁵ “Because of their large number of sexual partners and the sexual practices such as anilingus and anal intercourse, homosexual men are at particularly high risk of acquiring hepatitis B, giardiasis, shigellosis, campylobacteriosis, and anorectal infections with *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*,

⁸¹ Ibid., 56.

⁸² Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 132.

⁸³ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Chlamydia trachomatis, Treponema pallidum, herpes simplex virus, and human papilloma viruses.”⁸⁶

A major contributor to the high risk of disease is infidelity among homosexual partners. Nicolosi reports that out of 156 homosexual couples studied by McWhirter and Mattison⁸⁷ only seven had been faithful to their partner,⁸⁸ even though a large majority (two thirds) “had entered the relationship with either the implicit or the explicit expectation of sexual fidelity.”⁸⁹ As much as homosexuals desire fidelity in their relationships, this lifestyle choice and the longing to have same-sex needs met through same-sex partners does not lend itself to long-term monogamous relationships.

Satinover makes the following summary statement:

A 1981 study revealed that only 2 percent of homosexual relationships were monogamous or semi-monogamous, generously defined as ten or fewer lifetime partners. And a 1978 study found that 43 percent of male homosexuals estimated having sex with five hundred or more different partners and 28 percent with a thousand or more different partners. Seventy-nine percent said that more than half of these partners were strangers and 70 percent said that more than half were men whom they had sex only once.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 68. Citing F.N. Judson, “Sexually Transmitted Viral Hepatitis and Enteric Pathogens,” *Urology Clinics of North America* 11, no. 1 (February, 1984). 177-85.

⁸⁷ D. McWhirter and A. Mattison, *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984).

⁸⁸ Joseph Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1997; reprint, 1997). 111.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 55. Citing the two studies by A. P. Bell et al., *Sexual Preference* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1981) and A. P. Bell and M.S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 308-09.

These statistics are staggering. It is understandable why diseases are rampant among homosexual men. Promiscuity is not desired, but it is expected and accepted among gay couples. These figures also explain why many who have been freed from the homosexual lifestyle refer to their past life as compulsive and addictive.

It is important here to allude once again to the effective approach of Dr. Nicolosi and Dr. Elizabeth Moberly whose reparative therapy approach was described in chapter 1.⁹¹ They are convinced that men who are experiencing same-sex attractions are subconsciously attempting to repair and fulfill same-sex needs that were never met by same-sex parents (or by surrogate same-sex figures) while growing up. Unfortunately, unmet same-sex needs have become sexualized and eroticized during hormonal growth periods during adolescence. When men are involved in compulsive homosexual behavior with multiple partners, it is an attempt to satisfy these unmet needs. “The binding predicament of the homosexual is that he unconsciously seeks to fulfill his masculine identification through relationships with other men, but at the same time defensive detachment leaves him fearful of the masculine and therefore, he never allows himself to take it in.”⁹²

Homosexual behavior is both appalling and staggering. John Batteau states that homosexuals “must not be left with a stern word of condemnation from a distant and repulsed (by a) body of people called the Church; they must be faced with a Church, with

⁹¹ Elizabeth R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1983; reprint, 1996); Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. Both therapists have personally practiced reparative therapy upon clients seeking to leave homosexuality and deal with same sex attractions. Their research and writing is thorough in these two published works and are well worth reading.

⁹² Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. 149.

Christians, with a God who reaches out to bless even through condemnation.”⁹³ As repellent as homosexual behavior is, the church still must remember the value that God places on each soul. As America continues to shift toward a post-Christian world view, the Church and local congregations will have Christian men who have been exposed and involved with this debasing behavior. They will be a part of our churches and they will need the church to express the love of Christ to them as they process and deal with the consequences of their acts. The church needs to be present in defending the truth and in proclaiming the message of transformation even to those whom “God has given over to their sinful desires” (Rom 1:24-26). Homosexual behavior is not an unpardonable sin. A man who has been involved in homosexuality is not beyond the transforming power of God.

Is the Church Homophobic?

The gay rights movement and the openly homosexual are quick to identify and label anyone opposed to homosexuality as being homophobic. Likewise, a person who denies homosexual tendencies is quickly labeled homophobic by the gay community. Homophobia has many definitions in the gay community. Breiner addresses this issue when he comments on the book, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*. Its editor, Warren J. Blumenfeld, “has organized its chapters so that the concepts of homophobia, anti-homosexuality, social and religious prejudice, and treating homosexuality as a complex symptom, are all treated as being a part of the same expression of irrational anti-

⁹³ John M. Batteau, “Sexual Differences: A Cultural Convention?,” *Christianity Today* (1977). 10, as quoted by Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* 124.

homosexuality and homophobia.”⁹⁴ In other words, anyone who does not accept homosexuality as a viable alternate lifestyle will be labeled as homophobic. Tolerance is equated with acceptance and approval; intolerance is equated with bigotry and homophobia.

Unfortunately, this idea of homophobia has been carried into the church by some of the strugglers. Although their genuine desire is to be free from their same-sex issues, they are wary of Christians who try to help them because the message of the church has been so mixed – that is strongly opposed to homosexuality but saying little about the hope that a relationship with Jesus and the church can produce.

One of the many assertions of the gay rights movement is, “Homophobia is the problem not homosexuality.” A phobia is a “fear or dread of someone, something or an activity.” Many Christians are accused of homophobia based upon their convictions and their demonstration of those convictions. Their conviction and passion are often interpreted as an attitude of hatred and intolerance and thus labeled homophobic. In reality, most believers who oppose homosexuality do not dread or fear homosexuals, although there may be a few who do. For the most part, although Christians oppose homosexuality, their feelings certainly do not meet the true definition of a phobia.

Most negative reactions to homosexuals are not caused by a phobia but rather by what Joe Dallas, in his book *A Strong Delusion*, calls “prejudice and convictions.”⁹⁵

“Webster defines prejudice as an ‘opinion against something without adequate basis.’ By

⁹⁴ Sander Breiner, J., “Homophobia: A Scientific Non-political Definition,” in *NARTH Collected Papers*, ed. NARTH (2003). 4.

⁹⁵ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 136.

that definition, there's a great deal of prejudice against homosexuals. They are automatically disliked – despised, even – by people who have formed opinions about them with no rational basis.”⁹⁶ He continues, “By contrast, ‘conviction,’ according to Webster, ‘is a state of being convinced; a strong belief.’ It is entirely possible to have a strong belief about homosexuality without prejudice or phobia.”⁹⁷ Dr. Joseph Nicolosi adds, “Although a phobia is actually defined as an exaggerated, irrational fear, homophobia has recently become a one-dimensional, catchall term to explain any and every negative response to homosexuality.”⁹⁸ Dallas summarizes this issue by saying, “In short, the term homophobia can be used accurately in a very few cases. ‘Prejudice’ describes unfounded negative attitudes toward homosexuals, while ‘conviction’ describes the beliefs of people holding the conservative Christian view of homosexuality.”⁹⁹

Based upon these definitions, opposing homosexuality based on conviction is not homophobia. Preaching or teaching about biblical standards of morality is no longer popular in a post-Christian world but it certainly is not a phobia. However, the manner in which we preach and teach is vital: We can either welcome homosexuals to a life of transformation or we can communicate a condemning attitude that is filled with prejudice. It is vitally important for the church to stand strong on biblical convictions of morality, especially regarding homosexuality. There are too many values at stake, such as a biblical definition and understanding of marriage and family, health issues and benefits,

⁹⁶ Ibid., 136.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 137.

⁹⁸ Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. 137.

⁹⁹ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 138.

as well as a biblical portrait of manhood and womanhood. Jeffrey Satinover writes, “Here is the conundrum we face now that gay activism has burst onto the national scene. On the one hand, we must decide how best to counter the tactics of intimidation and refute the false claims of a group that operates in the hostile mode of raw politics. On the other hand, we must retain the profound compassion and fellow-feeling toward homosexuals that we ourselves need and yearn for from others. We must respect as fellows the very individuals whom we may reject as claimants in the public arena.”¹⁰⁰

If we define our response and attitude by Dallas’s definition of prejudice then the church to a great degree is homophobic. Chad Thompson identifies ten facets of homophobia in his book, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would*.¹⁰¹ He specifically addresses six of them within the context of the church and Christians in general. These facets are caused by misinformation, ignorance and an uncaring attitude toward the struggler in the pew. The first is *infatuation*, or the fear of a homosexual developing a love interest in you, and therefore choosing not to minister to him. The second facet is, *influence*, which deals with the fear that homosexuals are pedophiles, or that homosexuality could be caught. Next is *infection*, or the belief that one could contract AIDS from being close to a homosexual. Fourth is the feeling of *inexperience*, or the fear of not knowing what to do or say to help a homosexual struggler. This fear is so strong that avoidance becomes the coping mechanism. Fifth is *ineligibility*, or the belief that homosexuals are unreachable and unchangeable. And last is *ignorance*, which in reality is

¹⁰⁰ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 21.

¹⁰¹ Chad W. Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004). 75-78.

ignoring the possibility that the problem of homosexuality is present in one's own congregation.

The church has exhibited these facets in its practical theology. They have correctly preached condemning messages against the perversion of homosexuality, and yet have not offered a message of hope for those who want to be transformed. "Few Christians would advocate the virulent phrases – such as 'God hates fags' – that pour from Fred Phelps, the infamous anti-homosexual protestor and pastor. But the rest of the country often confuses Phelps's Day-Glo signs, lifted high by the man wearing a giant name tag that reads 'Pastor, Westboro Baptist Church,' with the mainstream Christian thought and politics."¹⁰² And yet, prejudice in other forms is present within every church. How often have we made an offhanded gay joke? How often have we judged a person without fully taking the time to hear his story or to meet his need? How often have we criticized someone's mannerisms or speech from a distance without hearing his heart? Consider this statement from a homosexual struggler, "Christ is OK; it's Christians I can't stand."¹⁰³

Homophobia can be caused by misinformation, misinterpretation, and a misunderstanding of the facts and the individuals who struggle with homosexuality. The evangelical church has stood firm on the authority of Scripture regarding homosexuality. The Scriptures are clear that homosexuality is an immoral behavior, and they contain

¹⁰² Jody Veenker, "Called to Hate? How Anti-homosexual Crusader Fred Phelps Discredits the Church," *Christianity Today*, 10/25/1999 1999. 89.

¹⁰³ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 30.

strong statements regarding those who participate in the behaviors associated with this lifestyle (Gen 19; Rom 1; 1 Tim 1:10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). Consequently, Christians who desire to defend the doctrines of truth can come across as hateful and judgmental. Thompson writes, “Many lesbian and gay people need Christians to be hateful and ignorant in order to convince themselves that our message is the result of ignorance, homophobia, or some massive right-wing conspiracy.”¹⁰⁴ If the church is to have success in reaching the struggler already in the church it must welcome the struggler and it must address *how* it communicates and *what* it communicates in defense of the truth. The church has much work to do before it can become a safe place for the homosexual to find hope, transformation, and healing. Hill writes, as referred to earlier, “Like it or not, a general instruction in our Christian life is to ‘welcome’ the outsider while he is yet out. The change which we seek will come about in response to God’s love, usually mediated through people; perhaps, in part, in response to Holy Spirit conviction, but rarely will it come about in response to human condemnation.”¹⁰⁵ This includes those in our congregations who do believe in Christ and yet feel that they are outsiders because of their struggles.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” Hill makes these comments based upon the following Scripture passages: John 3:18-21; 3:17; Romans 5:8; Matthew 5:43-48.

Homosexuality as an Identity

“Many Christians view homosexuality as a behavior that can be altered, but most homosexuals view it as an immutable identity.”¹⁰⁶ This is why the gay rights movement is so adamant about having the same political rights as ethnic groups: They perceive homosexuality as an identity rather than a behavior. By contrast, Christians tend to focus on the sinfulness of homosexual behavior (which to them is repellent), rather than of gays’ issues of identity. Both groups have misunderstood the real issue. Christians have forgotten the people behind the behavior, and most haven’t taken the time to really understand the life stories of homosexuals. On the other hand, many homosexuals are afraid to examine the correctness of their “identity.” This is why it is so important for the church to teach unequivocally that homosexuality is sin because the Bible says it is, and that the God of the Bible, not the gay rights movement, is the true authority.

Sexual identity, or orientation,¹⁰⁷ typically refers to a person’s sexual disposition. Few people today choose to have a homosexual identity; rather, they find themselves experiencing same-sex attractions.¹⁰⁸ The homosexual doesn’t accept his identity without a great struggle. Many have wondered all their lives why they always felt different, why they didn’t fit in with the other boys or girls, and why they felt an attraction for members of the same sex. Many have had to hide these attractions and

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 48.

¹⁰⁷ For the sake of consistency in this study the two words orientation and identity will be used synonymously. Identity will be used primarily. The gay rights literature likes to use the word orientation whereas the Christian writers seem to use identity,

¹⁰⁸ Stanton L. Jones, Yarhouse, Mark A., *Ex-gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007). 27.

feelings out of fear of being found out. Others have heard the gay rights message that homosexuality is normal and ‘that homosexuals are you were “born that way.”’

The greatest struggle is for Christians, who have been raised in the church and yet feel “different” and experience these feelings and attractions for members of the same-sex. There are hundreds of stories of men who grew up in good churches who came to the realization that they were attracted to men rather than women. Don Schierer describes their dilemma: “[Strugglers in the church] are faced with heartbreaking spiritual concerns. They usually feel cut off from God, unable to reconcile their ‘gay’ persona with Christianity ... that disapproves of homosexuality. They find themselves set adrift, and all too often they are deserted by the very people who should care the most about their circumstances.”¹⁰⁹ Their struggle is lonely because they believe that they will be condemned and excommunicated from the faith if they seek help. Yet deep these people, he love God and have remained pure. The church’s message is clear: “Homosexuality is wrong and is an abomination to the Lord.” And yet we say that everyone is welcome!

“As the gay rights movement has evolved, the notion of homosexuality being something that one is born with, like gender or hair color, has gained wide approval, especially among gays themselves.”¹¹⁰ Joe Dallas continues by summarizing various studies that demonstrate that the number of homosexuals who believed that their homosexuality is inborn increased greatly from 9 percent in the 1940s and 1970 to 35

¹⁰⁹ Don Schierer, *An Ounce of Prevention: Preventing the Homosexual Condition in Today's Youth* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998). 6.

¹¹⁰ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 110.

percent in 1983.¹¹¹ “Today, most gay leaders, especially in the gay Christian movement, would agree with Mel White’s assertion that homosexuality is ‘a gift from God to be embraced, celebrated, lived with integrity.’”¹¹² Taking this thought a step further, Christian homosexuals believe that God created homosexuality. And, they ask, who are we to argue with God?¹¹³ This is an argument that the church must counter with great care. As a result of political and media influences, many homosexual strugglers have come to believe that their homosexuality is innate. This has become their identity.

A number of studies, trumpeted by the media over the past fifteen years, have claimed to prove that homosexuality is indeed inborn. Unfortunately, many Christian strugglers have naively accepted these findings as truth, which in turn has added great weight to the gay rights movement. These studies have also created additional confusion for those who silently struggle in the church. The church should demonstrate an attitude of empathy and compassion as it educates itself on the issues with which its members struggle.

Since these studies have hit the mainstream there has been a great deal of support given to the “inborn” argument. If the church is to be active in assisting strugglers it should educate itself on the validity of these studies. In the course research, it was discovered that three major studies have been used to validate the inborn theory.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

The LeVay Study

The first of these studies was done in 1991. “Dr. LeVay, a neuroscientist at the Salk Institute of La Jolla, California, examined the brains of 41 cadavers: 19 allegedly homosexual men, 16 allegedly heterosexual men, and 6 allegedly heterosexual women. His study focused on a group of neurons in the hypothalamus structure called the interstitial nuclei of the anterior hypothalamus, or the INAH3.”¹¹⁴ He reported that “this region of the brain to be larger in heterosexual men than in homosexuals For this reason, he postulated homosexuality to be inborn, the result of size variations in the INAH3. . . .”¹¹⁵ “There is also no proof that the size differential (if one exists) is largely attributed to prenatal development of the brain.”¹¹⁶ Gagnon notes, “that LeVay never claimed to have found a genetic cause for homosexuality. LeVay said, upon completing his work, ‘It’s important to stress what I didn’t find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn’t show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work.’”¹¹⁷ It is interesting to also note that many of LeVay’s peers questioned his research including Dr. Kenneth Klivington of the Salk Institute.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 201. The author has included an entire appendix in this book to deal with the ‘born gay’ question. He covers in great detail each of the studies that will be referred to in this research paper.

¹¹⁵ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 110.

¹¹⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 398.

¹¹⁷ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 101.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Joe Dallas in his book, *Desires in Conflict*, lists six reasons why the pro-gay acceptance of LeVay's research is exaggerated and misleading. "First, LeVay did not prove homosexuality to be inborn; his results were not uniformly consistent. On the surface it appears that all of LeVay's homosexual subjects had smaller INAH3s than his heterosexual ones; in fact, three of the homosexual subjects had larger INAH3s than the heterosexuals."¹¹⁹ Second, he did not necessarily measure the INAH3 properly.¹²⁰ Third, it is not clear whether brain structure affects behavior or vice versa.¹²¹ Fourth, he was not certain which of his subjects were homosexual or heterosexual.¹²² Fifth, LeVay was not objective in his approach to the subject.¹²³ "LeVay, who is openly homosexual, told *Newsweek* magazine that, after the death of his lover, he was determined to find a genetic cause for homosexuality or he would abandon science altogether."¹²⁴ He certainly sounds like an objective scientist! His commitment was to homosexuality rather than to scientific evidence. Lastly, the scientific community did not embrace LeVay's study. Numerous scientists were very critical of LeVay's methods and conclusions, including Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling of Brown University who said, "My freshman biology students know enough to sink this study"¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 112.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. 113

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Gagnon adds a few other observations to Dallas's critique regarding the invalidity of LeVay's findings¹²⁶. Scientifically speaking, a study doesn't carry validity unless it can be repeated. In a more careful (blind) study, William Byne, did not find a difference between male homosexual and male heterosexual INAH3s.¹²⁷ LeVay's study was also suspect because it was a single-author study by a scientist who himself, as noted previously, is homosexual, creating a potential bias;¹²⁸ the small sample size is also cause for suspicion.¹²⁹ Gagnon also points out that there isn't any certainty the INAH3 has anything to do with sexual orientation as LeVay and his supporters assume.¹³⁰

*Bailey and Pillard Twin Study*¹³¹

A study on the prevalence of homosexuality among twins was conducted by J. Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard and published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* in December 1991.¹³² This particular study included sets of twins in which at least one twin was homosexual. Out of the fifty-six sets of twins who were studied, twenty-nine sets involved two homosexuals. Based on this information, Bailey and Pillard boldly

¹²⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 396-399.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 398.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 403-06.

¹³² Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 101.

concluded that homosexuality has a genetic cause.¹³³ However, other researchers have criticized the validity of the study and its results. Dr. Satinover states, “Half of the pairs of twins were both homosexual and half were composed of one homosexual and one heterosexual. If accurate, this finding alone argues for the enormous importance of *nongenetic* factors influencing homosexuality, because ...in order for something to be genetically *determined*, as opposed to merely *influenced*, the genetic heritability would need to approach 100 percent.”¹³⁴

Early in his book, *Homosexuality: The Politics of Truth*, Dr. Satinover makes a broader statement regarding twin studies and homosexuality.

“In the smaller number of recent identical twin studies that have been touted as proving ‘homosexuality is genetic,’ concordance rates turn out to be considerably less than 100 percent, less than 59 percent, in fact, even though all the sizable studies to date have examined only twins that have not been adopted away after birth. (In fact, the only study of adopted away twins, which had a very small sample size, showed a concordance rate of zero.) This means that some proportion of the rate of concordance, which is anyway smaller than anticipated, is itself caused not by genes but by something else.”¹³⁵

Joe Dallas lists four reasons why Bailey and Pillard’s findings were misleading and exaggerated by the gay rights movement. First, the findings actually indicate that something other than genetics must account for homosexual orientation.¹³⁶ Second, all the twins in the study were raised in the same household, rather than separate

¹³³ Ibid., 102.

¹³⁴ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 85.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹³⁶ Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*. 114.

homes' giving more credence to the study.¹³⁷ Third, Bailey and Pillard did not approach their work objectively. "Their personal feelings about homosexuality ... certainly do not disqualify them from doing good research on the subject. But their feelings must be, at the very least, considered. Pillard said, in fact, 'A genetic component in sexual orientation says, this is not my fault, and both he and Bailey stated that they hoped their work would disprove homophobic claims.'¹³⁸ And lastly, a later study (1992) obtained different results from Bailey and Pillard.¹³⁹

Hamer X Chromosome Study

"In 1993, Dr. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute studied 40 pairs of non-identical gay brothers and claimed that 33 of the pairs had inherited the same X-linked genetic markers, thus indicating a genetic cause for homosexuality."¹⁴⁰ This study has never been replicated; other researchers have not come close to producing the same results. However, similar studies have been conducted and have found no evidence that the X-chromosomes constitute a marker for homosexuality.¹⁴¹

Overall, there is no strong evidence that indicating that homosexuality is inborn or that there is such a thing as a gay gene. Most of the research that has been done in this area has been done by homosexually oriented scientists or supporters. No real

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 205.

¹⁴¹ Ibid; Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 400.

research has been done on this issue that has moved the idea beyond a hopeful theory. Most unbiased researchers have not dared to enter into this area out of fear of being labeled ‘homophobic’ by their homosexual colleagues. “Although no leading researcher now claims that biology does more than set the stage for homosexual development, still the ‘born that way’ myth persists as an underlying, unchallenged assumption in most of the contemporary clinical literature.”¹⁴² Hamer himself has acknowledged that a gene that determines one’s sexual orientation has not been found.¹⁴³

*The Causes of Homosexual Attractions*¹⁴⁴

Because the gay rights movement boldly claims that homosexuality has solely a genetic origin, it refuses to examine any other possible explanations. There are numerous authors who have written on this topic who believe that the root causes of homosexual attraction go far beyond genetics. We have already read that science has not found a gene that causes homosexuality. We still must ask and answer the question, what causes someone to be homosexual? Why does one member of a family become homosexual while another sibling does not? The literature tells many stories of individuals who have come from homes, backgrounds and environments that have produced both homosexual and heterosexual children. Most of the literature is in

¹⁴² Nicolosi, “A Development Model for Effective Treatment of Male Homosexuality: Implications for Pastoral Counseling.” 88.

¹⁴³ Neal and Blair Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It! A Scientific Look at Sexual Orientation* (Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1999). 209, as referenced by Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 400.

¹⁴⁴ It is my purpose to deal strictly with male strugglers in this paper. The material listed in this section will lean heavily toward the causes of male homosexuality.

agreement that there is not just one cause for homosexuality. It is also clear that individuals respond differently to incidents, situations, environments, and parenting. There seems to be a combination of factors that can possibly affect the sexual development and orientation of an individual often involves the individual's response and or reaction to events, people, or environments.

Dr. Satinover believes that homosexuality can be caused by six traits in the development of a child. In addition to genetics¹⁴⁵, these are innate, familial, biological, environmental and direct (versus indirect traits).¹⁴⁶ In regard to genetics, Satinover strongly objects to the claims that a homosexual gene has been discovered, and doubts its existence. However, he “does not completely rule out the possibility of genetic influence upon homosexuality.”¹⁴⁷

Joe Dallas lists five causes of homosexuality, including biological factors, prenatal influences, perceptions in early childhood, emotional responses to early perceptions, and the sexualization of same-sex emotional needs.¹⁴⁸ He believes that a combination of these factors can lead a young boy, who is still developing, to a place of acceptance or rejection of his maleness.

¹⁴⁵ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 71-81. The author isn't saying that he believes that there is a gene that causes homosexuality. This refers more to Satinover's belief that a person's temperament or personality may lend itself to homosexuality. A person who is sensitive and may be offended easily may react to male peers and feel more comfortable with females, thus never connecting to his male gender, leaving a deficiency.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71-81. These factors are responded to differently by individuals. They can be a dominate factor or there can be a combination of these factors.

¹⁴⁷ Crum, “A Discipler Approach”. 32.

¹⁴⁸ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 95-120.

Bob Davies lists early childhood development, family background, temperament, interests, peer pressure, and sexual abuse as potential factors leading men to question their sexual orientation.¹⁴⁹ Chad Thompson identifies rejection of one's same-sex parent or peers, sexual molestation, temperament, an abnormally close relationship with one's opposite-sex parent, and a lack of identification with one's gender (lack of belonging) as factors leading certain men to homosexual orientation.¹⁵⁰ And Michael Saia narrows his list of contributing factors to rejection – rejection by the father, of the father, of the male gender (or image), of the self, and/or of others. As a result, same-sex needs are left unmet or unidentified, and the young man in early development or puberty begins to sexualize these unmet needs.¹⁵¹

The majority of writers agree that many same-sex needs have not been met during the developmental process, thus throwing these young men into emotional confusion. They don't, or can't, relate to other men because maleness has never been modeled properly to them, or because they don't fit into the culture's definition of maleness. They have, in essence, rejected their male role models, because of failures or abuse by those men who were supposed to model God's design for them. Their maleness has been ridiculed, raped, abused, verbally assaulted, or just plain ignored.

¹⁴⁹ Bob and Rentzel Davies, Lori, *Coming Out of Homosexuality: New Freedom for Men & Women* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993). 43.

¹⁵⁰ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 111-121.

¹⁵¹ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 49-57.

Dr. Elizabeth Moberly and Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, who were discussed earlier, have been proponents and promoters of reparative therapy.¹⁵² According to their writings, homosexuality is an empty attempt to satisfy same-sex needs because same-sex sexual encounters leave men feeling just as empty as before. “The homosexual condition is one of same-sex ambivalence, not just same sex love. The love-need cannot be isolated from the defensive process that has shaped it and caused it to persist unmet.”¹⁵³ Moberly continues by saying, “The homosexual condition implies a problem in the capacity for relating to the same sex, and not merely a desire and facility for so doing.”¹⁵⁴ She writes, “In short, homosexuality is a phenomenon of same-sex ambivalence, not just same-sex love; and it is in itself a relational deficit vis-à-vis the same sex rather than vis-à-vis the opposite sex.”¹⁵⁵ Both Moberly and Nicolosi claim that the problem is a defensive detachment. Men are somehow detached from their gender due to the many factors or traits listed above, and homosexuality is an attempt to repair this defensive detachment. Moberly asserts that the homosexuality is not pathological: “It is quite the opposite; it is an attempt to resolve and heal the pathology. This does not imply that the solution should be acted out sexually, but it does imply that the solution should not be mistaken for the problem.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Moberly, *Homosexuality*; Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*.

¹⁵³ Moberly, *Homosexuality*. 17.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

The cure for homosexuality is not a heterosexual relationship, as has been proposed by naive heterosexuals. Such a relationship does not meet the same-sex deficiencies in the gender-deprived person. In fact, a heterosexual relationship may cause more problems, and may at the same time destroy the life of a heterosexual woman and to say the least any children propagated in the marriage. The goal in counseling a homosexual struggler is not heterosexuality, but holiness. Part of the solution and cure for the struggler within the church is for the church to have a caring attitude demonstrated through caring actions. Attitudes of empathy and compassion should produce comparable action. Listening to the stories of strugglers and understanding that their same-sex attractions and homosexual tendencies are more than just a mere choice, demonstrates to them a caring attitude and action. Most of the literature that advocates a ministry to strugglers starts with potential workers to understand where a struggler is coming from and how they may have gotten to where life has brought them. The world is full of dysfunctional people, including each one of us. The dysfunction is caused by the Fall and is complicated by individual choices and faulty nurturing. When a people understand their own depravity as God sees it, they place themselves on the same plateau as a struggler and then ministry and healing can begin to take place in the lives of the strugglers.

Homosexuality and the Possibility of Change

Is it possible for a homosexual to change? The answer is a resounding yes! Unfortunately, the media and our politically correct, or should we say incorrect, culture still believe the lie that homosexuality is inborn. Davies and Rentzel note, “Once gay,

always gay' is a common sentiment in the homosexual community. Many gays and lesbians feel that they were born homosexual. They do not remember making a conscious choice to be sexually drawn to members of their own sex. So, the common logic says that homosexuality must be genetic or hormonal, and there is nothing that can be done about it."¹⁵⁷

As previously discussed, there is no scientific proof that homosexuality is genetic or inborn. If that is the case, we must ask, is it possible for homosexuals to change? The church must come to a clear position on this issue if Christians are to engage themselves in the ministry of reconciliation with strugglers. Strugglers need the church to provide them with the hope that their situation, no matter how dark and desperate, is not beyond the realm of hope.

There is a plethora of literature that has been put into the mainstream that claims that homosexuality is immutable. Edwin Hanson implies that change is not possible when he states that "The welcoming congregation is very clear in its belief that the heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual orientations found in human beings are a natural part of God's creation."¹⁵⁸ Tozer and McClanahan state "It is our position that the theory and practice of conversion therapy violate numerous ethical guidelines of psychology, such that both explicit and implicit acceptance of such practices is

¹⁵⁷ Davies, *Coming Out of Homosexuality*. 20.

¹⁵⁸ Edward J. Hanson, "Welcoming Ministry for All God's Children," *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3/4 (2001). 160.

untenable.”¹⁵⁹ This statement lends one to believe that it is wrong to even attempt to help someone who desires to change.

Douglas Haldeman in a 1994 article, quotes the APA *Fact Sheet on Reparative Therapy* “No scientific evidence exists to support the effectiveness of any of the conversion therapies that tries to change sexual orientation.”¹⁶⁰ He continues by saying “A review of the literature makes it obvious why this statement is made. Psychologists are obligated to use methods that have some empirically demonstrable efficacy, and there is a paucity of such evidence relative to conversion therapy.”¹⁶¹

In 2001, Robert Spitzer, who encouraged the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from the *DSM*,¹⁶² initiated a study of 200 participants; entitled *Can Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation?*¹⁶³ In an article printed in 2003¹⁶⁴, he concludes that change is possible. This resulted in quite a rift among the psychological thinkers of the day causing outrage and betrayed colleagues

¹⁵⁹ Erinn E. and McClanahan Tozer, Mary K., “Treating the Purple Menace: Ethical Considerations of Conversion Therapy and Affirmative Alternatives,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 27, no. 5 (1999). 722.

¹⁶⁰ D. C. Haldeman, “The Practice and Ethics of Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapy,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 62 (1994). 226.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Douglas LeBlanc, “Therapeutically Incorrect,” *Christianity Today* 49, no. 4 (2005). 94.

¹⁶³ Robert L. MD Spitzer, “Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32, no. 5 (2003). There are numerous places in this article that give clear indication that Spitzer’s was surprised or shocked at the results. He lists on page 404, numerous other studies that suggested that there was a possibility for change in one’s sexual orientation, although he warns that this may be unhealthy.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

refusing to discuss or debate his research on the basis of lack of scientific evidence.¹⁶⁵ In the past several years, there has been more research that has at least opened the door to rethinking the possibility of change. Spitzer's shift – from advocating the removal of homosexuality as an illness from the *DSM* to 30 years later, admitting that there may be the possibility of some change – is testimony to the persistence of those who believe that homosexuality is not immutable.

Increasing numbers of proponents are proclaiming that change is, and has been proved to be a possibility as well as a reality, and the literature is reflecting this shift. “Critics have attempted to explain away reports of change in sexual orientation in one of two ways. (1) So-called homosexuals who have changed to heterosexuals were really not true homosexuals to begin with, but at most only bisexuals. (2) True homosexuals who think they have changed are kidding themselves, for they have only momentarily suppressed homosexual urges through ‘internalized homophobia.’”¹⁶⁶

James Hill believes from his research that there is a strong possibility of change for the homosexual struggler.¹⁶⁷ “Reviews of numerous studies by various scholars clearly show that change in conduct and ideation, or orientation, is common

¹⁶⁵Gary Greenberg, “Gay by Choice?,” *Mother Jones* 32, no. 5 (2007).

¹⁶⁶Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 424.

¹⁶⁷As noted earlier, a homosexual and a homosexual struggler are significantly different individuals with different battles. The struggler is not accepting his homosexual attractions and is looking for help. He may or may not be involved in homosexual behaviors. The homosexual is a person who has embraced his identity and no longer makes excuses for his orientation, having accepted the lie that “change is not possible because I was made this way.”

(Whitehead & Whitehead, 1999; Nicolosi, 1993; Whited, 1992; NARTH 2000).¹⁶⁸

“Masters and Johnson found that, after a six-year follow-up, those reporting conversion from homosexuality (or, reversion) to heterosexuality were more than 70%.”¹⁶⁹ Satinover claims that conversion rates for some programs are close to 100 percent.¹⁷⁰ There are many ex-gay ministries that are having considerable success in reaching out and helping men and women who want to be free from homosexuality. Many of these ministries, like Exodus International, are run by ex-gay Christians who have found change through a relationship with Christ.

In Gagnon’s case for the biblical position against all homosexual practices (any sexual practice outside of the marriage of a male and a female), he explains Paul’s theological argument from Romans, all people are condemned before God and in need of Jesus. He builds a case that Paul continues to talk about the transformation of all who come to Christ.¹⁷¹ The goal of faith is transformation. If a thief can be transformed then why can't a homosexual? The theology of Scripture is clear.

Hill writes, “I have known many folks from fifteen to eighty-five, who were, and in some cases still are, in homosexual struggles. Those who truly wanted out are out. Those who wanted Christ are out. The struggle was usually hard, but richly rewarding for

¹⁶⁸ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 118. Hill references these studies in this article. The writer was unable to locate these resources at this time but will do so for future research.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. Cited from William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, *Homosexuality in Perspective* (Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1979).

¹⁷⁰ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 51.

¹⁷¹ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 337-39.

those who persevered. Those who found the struggle too hard and most wanted to end the discomfort of their struggle are still in. But their struggle is not ended; they just think it lies without and not within.”¹⁷² The church must, for the sake of the hurting, present itself as a minister of grace if it is going to help the struggler along the long journey to biblical manhood and womanhood. It must present the hope that is in Christ Jesus. The Bible clearly condemns homosexual behavior, but it also clearly communicates that it is curable.

Since 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from the *DSM*, there has been an ever-decreasing amount of scientific or psychological research on methods and treatments that assist homosexual strugglers who desire to be free from homosexuality. Since researchers no longer consider homosexuality an illness, there is no need to develop treatments or therapy strategies.

The political agenda of the gay rights movement didn’t stop with having homosexuality removed from the *DSM*. “In 1994 the Board of Trustees of the APA decided to consider altering the code of ethics. The proposed change (presented by one man who is a prominent and vocal gay activist psychiatrist and chairman of the APA’s Committee on the Abuse and Misuse of Psychiatry) would make it a violation of professional conduct for a psychiatrist to help a homosexual patient become heterosexual *even at the patient’s request*.”¹⁷³ Fortunately, many psychiatrists and ex-gays were able to speak up, and the measure was never passed. There is, however, a fear among

¹⁷² Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 118.

¹⁷³ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*. 35-36.

psychiatrists that this measure will one day pass and that anyone who helps homosexuals change or treats them with the goal of change could lose their licensure and their membership in the APA. This has resulted in a dearth of research and research material. However, there is a biblical solution for those who do desire to change, and there are a few psychiatrists who are researching and treating homosexuality.

In 2007, Dr. Stanton Jones and Dr. Mark Yarhouse, published their ground breaking work *Ex-gay? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*.¹⁷⁴ The goal of their research was to investigate “the claim, widely made today, that sexual orientation, homosexual orientation in particular, cannot be changed, that it is immutable.”¹⁷⁵ Karl Popper over a half century ago became the proponent of “falsification” as the fundamental rule of adjudicating scientific claims.¹⁷⁶ The APA boldly claimed that homosexuality is not changeable in 2005,¹⁷⁷ and Jones and Yarhouse’s goal is to bring falsification to the APA claim. The study went outside the psychological world of APA research and found a large group of homosexuals who were seeking help in dealing with or attempting to change their sexual identity from a religious perspective. The authors identify this source as the “Exodus Project”.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Jones, *Ex-gays?*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* The author’s site that in April 2005 the APA public website under the tab ‘Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality’ boldly proclaimed that homosexual orientation was unchangeable. It is interesting to note that when accessed on 6/22/09, that claim is no longer posted. This is probably one of the results of Jones’ and Yarhouse’s research and published results.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15. The sample is described in greater detail in Chapter 5 of the book.

Jones and Yarhouse approached their research with six core characteristics.¹⁷⁹ The study was first of all longitudinal which means it followed participants over a period of time rather than through a onetime evaluation or test. It was also prospective, in that the participants themselves initiated the change process, and the participants were observed as the change process was occurring. The study also used a representative sample of those who were seeking change, rather than a sample that had been gathered by someone else for a different purpose. Further, the study gathered data directly from the person in the change process rather than from a counselor or pastor. Last, the study was designed to examine a large sample: Ninety-eight elected to participate, and a total of seventy-three completed the study.¹⁸⁰

In an effort to produce a study that would be scientifically valid among all researchers, Jones and Yarhouse were determined to use all the scientific assessments approved by the psychological research field. The authors gave detailed explanations for every assessment and method used and providing reasons why other tools were not used. In their words, “This study is prospective and longitudinal, studies a large and representative sample of individuals seeking sexual-orientation change via religiously mediated means through a broad sample of religious ministries seeking to support such a change, and uses a wide range of the best available psychological measures of sexual orientation and of psychological distress to examine the resulting outcomes. The study,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 106-7. Chapter 4 gives an in-depth analysis of their methodologies.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 145-46.

although not above criticism, is significantly stronger than any other existing study. Our results demand careful attention.”¹⁸¹

When speaking of the possibility of change, it is important to understand that not everyone changes. A variety of factors come into play, including motivation, discipline, effort, desire, focus, and resources (or lack of resources). However, the study was designed to prove that change was possible; the idea that if one person doesn’t change then change is not possible for anyone is a great defect in gay rights thinking.¹⁸² The Exodus Project demonstrated some incredible results. Overall, 42 percent of the participants experience some type of positive change.¹⁸³ Of those who identified themselves at the beginning of the study as “truly gay,” 52 percent self-reported a positive portrayal of change. This was also among the sample least expected to show any change.¹⁸⁴ There were 12 individuals out of the total sample (16 %) that acknowledged a change in sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual.¹⁸⁵ This may seem to be a low number but considering the stronghold that this behavior and identity represent, this is a remarkable change.

Jones and Yarhouse created six workable or qualitative categories that provide meaningful descriptions of the outcome of the religiously mediated sample in the project. These categories are as follows with the representative percentages of the sample group:

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 143.

¹⁸² Ibid., 236.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 242.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 245.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 246.

conversion (to heterosexuality) 15 percent chastity (commitment to biblical purity) 23 percent, continuing (those who are still battling their desires but are not moving in either direction) 15 percent, confused (no significant sexual orientation change and have given up trying) 4 percent, and gay identity (no change and have given up on the process and reengaged gay identity) 8 percent.¹⁸⁶

The outcome of this study is outstanding compared to other psychology - based studies. The authors compared the results of their study to the results of a study on depression. Combining the two categories of conversion and chastity, the Exodus Project had a 38 percent success rate. A recent study on a depression treatment, deemed as a Gold Star success by the APA, only received a 33 percent success rate. Using the same types of testing measures, the Jones and Yarhouse study “provide grounds for viewing the Exodus ministry as representing a reasonably effective intervention into the life concerns of those presenting change...”¹⁸⁷

In concluding the results of their study they state, “The general picture that emerges from our analysis of these data is that, on average, this population has experienced significant change away from homosexual orientation. By empirically derived standards of effect size, the average movement away from homosexual orientation may be termed as medium to large, and the average shift toward heterosexual

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 279-ff. They also provide personal stories of some of the sample under each category. These stories are quite moving as they explain the change that they have experienced through Exodus International programs.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 283-84.

orientation is small.”¹⁸⁸ These results are encouraging. They should motivate not only the struggler who desires help, but also the church that seeks to walk with strugglers in the journey of holiness, healing, and restoration.

In 2005, Jones and Kwee published an article on significant developments regarding the gay rights agenda and related faulty research, giving updates on other studies that do demonstrate that change is at least possible.¹⁸⁹ Throckmorton wrote about ex-gays who have found help through various ministries; change is taking place, although the levels of change are quite varied.¹⁹⁰

It is very easy for heterosexual Christians to argue that change is possible when they haven’t experienced the temptations of homosexuality. It can be very easy to claim that everything is possible. “Christians should not be surprised by the difficulties encountered by some in overcoming their former lusts, nor should they give up in their efforts to disciple them into new life in Christ.”¹⁹¹ Gagnon writes, “The good news is that God is on the side of believers in sparing no effort to transform them into the image of Jesus.”¹⁹² Change is indeed possible.¹⁹³ However, change requires that the church reach all

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 275.

¹⁸⁹ Stanton L. Jones, Kwee, Alex W., “Scientific Research, Homosexuality, and the Church’s Moral Debate: An Update,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24, no. 4 (2005).

¹⁹⁰ Warren Throckmorton, “Initial Empirical and Clinical Findings Concerning the Change Process for Ex-gays,” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 33, no. 3 (2002).

¹⁹¹ Montoya, “The Church’s Response to Homosexuality.” 240.

¹⁹² Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 238.

¹⁹³ Others have done valuable work as well as in approaching the issue of change. See also Throckmorton, “Initial Empirical and Clinical Findings Concerning the Change Process for Ex-gays.”; Warren; Welton Throckmorton, Gary, “Counseling Practices as They Relate to Ratings of Helpfulness by

strugglers who are willing to move toward transformation, especially those already in our midst – men who claim to be believers but desperately need to understand that they are valued and, that change is possible through the gospel and discipleship. The possibility of change is the hope that we can offer every struggler that God brings through our church doors. Hope is a message that needs to be voiced and incarnationally exhibited as the churches reach out to male strugglers in their congregations.

Helping the Homosexual: The Steps to Change

“For the sake of the many hurting souls who yet remain in the grip of the demonic, [cultural and internal]¹⁹⁴ lie that homosexuality is just another choice or just a normal variation, the church must do what it can. It can offer Christ. Yes, in Christ, it must offer truth, but, in Christ, it must also offer grace. Without love, we are but a tinkling bell or a clanging cymbal. Neither the effete bell of the ‘liberal church’ nor the clanging cymbal of the ‘legalist church’ will lead lives to Christ and freedom.”¹⁹⁵ Change is possible through the inspired, authoritative Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the church. The goal is holiness for each of Christ’s disciples. The Word is the guide to the center of God’s will. The Holy Spirit is the teacher as He guides, convicts and leads His children through the truth. The Church serves as the arms

Consumers of Sexual Reorientation Therapy,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24, no. 4 (2005); Mark A. Yarhouse, Brooke, Heather L., ““Gays, Ex-gays, Ex-ex-gays: Examining Key Religious, Ethical, and Diversity Issues”: A Follow-up Interview with Douglas Haldeman, Ariel Shidlo, Warren Throckmorton, and Mark Yarhouse,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 24, no. 4 (2005); Christopher H Rosik, “Conversion Therapy Revisited: Parameters and Rationale for Ethical Care,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 1 (2001).

¹⁹⁴ Brackets indicate addition of my words.

¹⁹⁵ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 118.

of Christ, embracing the prodigal struggler. Truth isn't abandoned, but honored. Grace is displayed as we set aside our naiveté, ignorance, and fear to exhibit an attitude of empathy and compassion in order to walk with a struggler in his journey to holiness. This is nothing short of biblical discipleship.

Since change is possible, the church needs to understand that are strugglers “need to know that there are people in our churches (if not the entire congregations) with whom they can share their struggle. There is a need for men ... in our churches who are prepared and willing to come alongside those who are struggling. We all need to recognize the prison that homosexuality is and enter that prison with our brothers ... We need to enter the isolation and pain of those who agonize over homosexual longings and behavior.”¹⁹⁶ The church needs to understand the darkness that entraps strugglers, the motivation that drives them to seek help, a plan or pattern of spiritual growth to walk them through and the importance of a strong heterosexual presence to model biblical manhood.

The church must first of all be a place of safety as it journeys with the struggler through the process of healing and discipleship. The literature is full of the stories of strugglers describing their childhood and teen years as they attempted to come to grips with same-sex attractions and the church. Although the typical evangelical church has been a bastion of truth, it has not been a safe place where strugglers who desire holiness have felt comfortable sharing their struggle. When it comes to listening,

¹⁹⁶ David Crum, “A Discipled's Approach For Ministering to People Who Struggle With Homosexuality” (DMIN Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000). 49.

the church has not been the ear, voice or hands of empathy and compassion. One Christian struggler described his struggle in a *Christianity Today* article: “Why haven’t I told my story to my church friends? Why is my identity anonymous? Because, despite all the claims by my heterosexual friends to ‘love the sinner and hate the sin,’ I do not trust them. I do not believe that they could know this about me and still want me to be their congregational president, their youth group leader, their son’s coach. I wish I could believe it but I don’t.”¹⁹⁷ The question of allowing a struggler to be in a leadership position will need to be determined by each individual situation but the need for the church to serve as a safe place for the struggler is a critical part of moving from an attitude of care to incarnational care.

The church member, friend or counselor must be comfortable with all the mess that a struggler will pour out in the process of discipleship. The journey is long but it is rewarding. The counselor must be ready to listen and to accept (but not accommodate). When a struggler feels safe, that security will allow him to begin processing God’s will and to begin to confront the hurt and confusion in his life. “To really feel Christ’s compassion for those caught up in homosexuality, it is extremely important for us to understand that great human suffering is frequently reflected in the lives of these people. There is often great pain in such people’s background – pain which entails abuse and emotional abandonment resulting in a profound sense of rejection.”¹⁹⁸ If

¹⁹⁷ Anonymous, “No Easy Victory: An Anonymous Plea from a Christian Husband and Father who, Day by Day, Resists his Homosexual Desires.,” *Christianity Today*, March 11, 2002 2002. 52.

¹⁹⁸ Schierer, *An Ounce of Prevention: Preventing the Homosexual Condition in Today's Youth*. 5-6.

the struggler has moved from same-sex attractions to homosexual behaviors or lifestyle, there is an even greater cost. He must wrestle through such issues as identity confusion, depression, family and social exile, stormy and intense same-sex relationships, blood-borne diseases, and (in some cases) drug and alcohol abuse, in addition with spiritual identity and guilt problems.¹⁹⁹

Joe Dallas explains: “This battle is waged against a unique combination of desires in conflict: the desire to love God obediently versus the desire to be loved in a way that God prohibits, the desire for a normal sex life versus the desire to satisfy feelings that seem normal but aren’t, the desire to be honest about your feelings versus the desire to be safe from embarrassment. It’s not just a sexual sin you’re fighting, but a deeply ingrained way of responding which seems immune to good intentions.”²⁰⁰

The struggler must be ready to fight the battle of a lifetime and the church and counselor must be ready, armed to assist. The condition of the struggler can be overwhelming depending on the depth of choices that have been made. Nevertheless, the church needs to be armed with empathy and compassion regardless of how awful the struggler’s story may be. When a struggler comes to the point of desperation and shares the darkness of his brokenness with someone he determines to be trustworthy, the church, counselor, or friend must be ready to listen, because this is one of the biggest steps a struggler can take. Once he shares his story, it is a biblical obligation and responsibility to

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰⁰ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 22.

respond with compassion and empathy. The church has been called to be incarnationally involved with broken people, including male homosexual strugglers.

Jeff Konrad, in his book *You Don't Have to Be Gay*,²⁰¹ demonstrates through his letters to a fellow struggler the reality of the battle facing each person who is trapped in homosexuality. Change involves much more than simply ending homosexual behavior. This battle is deeply imbedded in the nature and identity of the person struggling. Konrad shares many lessons as he walks his friend through the long journey out of homosexuality and into the heterosexual world. Much of his writing consists of building the foundation of spiritual disciplines that direct his friends to freedom. As a former struggler, Konrad took the time to listen, to be incarnationally involved, as he counseled his friends to build healthy relationships with heterosexual men in masculine places like the gym and church. He encouraged his friends to connect to a good church and begin growing in his spiritual life.

Motivation

As the church becomes more proactive in ministering to male homosexual strugglers it is important to discern the motivation of each individual struggler seeking assistance. Michael Saia, in his book *Counseling the Homosexual*,²⁰² does a wonderful job of laying the foundation and building a biblical model for victory over homosexuality.

²⁰¹ Jeff Konrad, *You Don't Have to be Gay: Hope and Freedom for Males Struggling With Homosexuality or For Those Who Know of Someone Who Is*, Revised Edition ed. (Hilo, HI: Pacific Publishing House, 1987; reprint, Fourth).

²⁰² Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*.

Coming out of homosexuality does not result in immediate deliverance. Anyone who has struggled with any type of sexual sin understands the bondage of a homosexual, and it is a greater bondage for those who have chosen to act out their homosexual orientation. With this combination we begin dealing with thought patterns, emotions, habits, and an addiction cycle that is very deeply rooted. In essence, as with other compulsive and addictive habits, homosexuality is nothing more than idolatry.

Many homosexual strugglers have tried time and time again to be free from their feeling and behaviors. They have begged God to deliver them. They have made pacts with God, and many have asked God to take their lives. Dallas warns the counselor about the struggler's motives and motivation: "The fact that someone wants to do the right thing doesn't mean that he wants to do it for the right reason."²⁰³ Any reason other than pursuing God's perfect will for their lives is not a good reason to change. Wrong motivations and expectations will limit a person's commitment and perseverance in the long process toward biblical healing and maturity. Proper motivation is the first step to being set free.

The Three R's

A second step to freedom is elaborated by Saia, who lists three conditions that are critical in aiding a homosexual to be free from his lifestyle: repentance, reconciliation, and restitution.²⁰⁴ Repentance is foundational for any type of growth. It is a godly sorrow

²⁰³ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 43.

²⁰⁴ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 85-94.

over offending God. Repentance produces fruit that is evident to everyone. Saia elaborates on five elements of biblical repentance, as follows: conviction of sin, brokenness over sin, humility, renunciation of sin, and a continuation in a life that pursues holiness.²⁰⁵ All of these characteristics are evident in David's confession in Psalm 51.

One of the characteristics of repentance that is often overlooked by believers today is the forsaking of the sin we are repenting of. In the case of the homosexual, he must be willing to break off all ties with the homosexual community and with lovers, friends, books, videos, and other things that will hinder his growth in Christ. As he walks away from this lifestyle, the church must fill the void. The Scriptures are very clear regarding the putting on /putting off principle of repentance (Rom 6; Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:5-9).²⁰⁶

Repentance must also be understood in light of the struggler's setbacks. It is inevitable that through the journey to holiness and wholeness, the struggler will fall. There are a couple of crucial things that need to take place. First of all, the struggler needs to repent of his setback into sin. Secondly, it is absolutely critical that the church respond correctly – that is, that the church communicates a commitment to walk with the struggler through this journey. This is one of the most important times to be compassionate while not sacrificing the truth. The church must remember that all sin is

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 83-87.

²⁰⁶ Davies, *Coming Out of Homosexuality*. 55-65. This chapter is entitled 'Saying good-bye.' The author deals with issues of leaving a community that embraced and understood the inner feelings and thoughts of homosexuality. He describes the process of leaving as much like a divorce or a death. It is vital that the church understand the necessity to be close emotionally for these strugglers.

equal. What effort would the church take to assist a repetitive but repentant liar or gossip? Would the church take the same effort if a liar had a setback?

Reconciliation, Saia says, is “the process of restoring two parties to friendship when they were once enemies.”²⁰⁷ If the characteristics of repentance have taken place in a person’s life then restoration to God is the result. There will be no reconciliation unless there is repentance. Many homosexuals have left families behind, and those families were devastated by their relative’s choice to adopt the homosexual lifestyle. Consequently, when a person comes out of the gay lifestyle, there are many relationships that need to be reconciled.

Saia believes that for some there will be a need for restitution for losses or damages that may have occurred through these broken relationships or through the homosexual relationships that are often violently broken. The Old Testament Scriptures are very clear about the importance of restitution, whether it be with property or finances.

All three of these conditions – repentance, reconciliation, and restitution – place the homosexual struggler at a great starting point, ready for the Lord and His church to assist in the transformation of the heart. The conditions demonstrate pure motives and an incredibly teachable heart.

²⁰⁷ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 87.

Knowing God through the Spiritual Disciplines

“The homosexual is very complex. He has many needs, desires, aspirations, dreams, problems, faults, failures and sometimes, sins.”²⁰⁸ Sounds like a typical Christian! Everyone has the problems listed here, and those issues come wrapped around idolatrous habits. Whether it is food, gambling, smoking or sex, these sins engulf our lives and are strongholds that need to be torn down. Saia continues, “To try to reduce the problem of homosexuality to a single aspect of the homosexual’s life, and then apply one methodology to the problem, will not affect sufficient change. What the homosexual needs is a complete restructuring of his life, and to accomplish this, the counselor will have to treat the counselee as a complete person, applying different solutions to different aspects of the problem.”²⁰⁹

The best place to start is to set goals with the struggler. As the counselor or the discipler, you are partnering with God and with the homosexual struggler to accomplish God’s agenda for his life. If this is the approach, we must ask what God’s desire is for the struggler. Many think that the goal is to make him heterosexual. This would be a good goal, but it is not the highest goal. Holiness is God’s desire for each of us. If we can help a struggler pursue holiness, then he will be disciplined enough to refrain from homosexual behavior because it is unholy and displeasing to God. Holiness comes from holy habits.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 95.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Saia recommends a fourfold approach: “The troubled person needs to (1) know God, (2) understand himself, (3) resist the enemy, and (4) relate properly to other members of the body of Christ.”²¹⁰ This is discipleship through and through. The key is a teachable heart and a patient, compassionate, and yet persistent discipler. This, in essence, is incarnational involvement and ministry. Isn’t this what the church is supposed to be?

Once the church has established itself as a place of safety, it positions itself to move the struggler through the steps of discipline and obedience. The first step of obedience is knowing God. This is accomplished by getting the struggler established in basic spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, Bible study, memorization, prayer, church loyalty, biblical fellowship, and accountability. One-on-one discipleship or involvement with a small discipleship group is the best way to assist a struggler with these elements of the Christian life. The discipler must be willing to work with a homosexual struggler without the fear of his disciple having a “man crush” on him. He must be willing to model biblical manhood as well as the disciplines of the faith.

Knowing God also involves learning the real meaning of the “fear of God.” Many homosexuals have the wrong concept of God, the result of poor same-sex modeling or poor bonding with their earthly fathers. They need to develop a new and correct understanding of God. He is caring, loving, personal, near, and not just a distant kill joy.

Davies mentions that the spiritual disciplines also renew the mind from sinful thought patterns. The intake of God’s Word will transform both negative thought patterns

²¹⁰ Ibid., 97.

regarding the self and the lustful thought patterns and sexual fantasies that previously had been ruling the struggler's actions and feelings.²¹¹ A regular intake of Scripture will help combat and replace addictive thought patterns and behaviors. Developing a consistent habit of Bible study is one of the most crucial factors for a Christian coming out of homosexuality.

Another critical aspect of knowing God is prayer. Prayer allows a person who is consistent in Bible study to learn to really know God in a personal way. It allows him to take what he is learning through Bible study and apply it in prayer and worship. One of the practical things that Saia has clients do is pick an attribute of God and worship Him every day with that attribute in mind.²¹²

There are many other disciplines that both Saia and Davies recommend in the process of transformation. The disciplines that move a struggler to a better knowledge of God and a transformation of the mind, will, heart, and actions all come from a Christian who is highly committed to God's agenda for the struggler. As the struggler grows in the disciplines, the deep-seated need(s) of his life will begin to rise to the surface and can be dealt with in the order in which they arise. The struggler will need to develop a biblical understanding of himself, and he must eventually learn to handle homosexual such issues as temptations, feelings of rejection,²¹³ negative perspectives of the church, lust, old

²¹¹ Davies, *Coming Out of Homosexuality*. 66-92.

²¹² Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 103-4.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 123-146. The author deals extensively with the rejection issues that a struggler may have with self, peers, same-sex parent.

thought patterns, and old acquaintances or lovers. The discipler can help with all of these issues by applying Scripture and by walking through each problem area with the struggler. All of these issues have biblical answers. Discipleship is the key to life transformation of the homosexual struggler.

The Homosexual Struggler and Same-Sex Needs

A critical area of need for the homosexual struggler is the need to develop same-sex friends who are secure in their maleness. Homosexual strugglers, as discussed earlier, have deep same-sex deficits that became erotized or sexualized during the developmental process of growing up. Thompson writes, “More than a hundred years of psychological research and the attempts of science to provide a biological explanation for homosexuality have continued to support a developmental theory; that is, homosexual orientation is developed during the formative years of life as a response to both internal and external circumstances.”²¹⁴ He continues, “Research has found that when a child’s needs for same sex affirmation and identification are met, the child’s need to identify with his or her same-sex counterparts will lessen.”²¹⁵ Anything that creates a sense of disconnection between a child and his or her gender can cause homosexual attractions. Along the same lines, it has been found that anything that creates a sense of connection or reconciliation with one’s gender can eliminate homosexual attractions.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 112-13.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 125. Thompson has experienced this himself as recorded in his book. I have had the opportunity to correspond with the author both by email and by phone. He shared with me several things

Many homosexual strugglers have drifted back toward homosexuality in an attempt to have same-sex needs met.²¹⁷ Healing and transformation come as heterosexual men enter into the lives of homosexual strugglers and include them as “one of the guys.” The research reveals that men who struggle with homosexuality have had unmet same-sex needs, a defensive attachment from the same-sex parent, and at times a same-sex detachment from their peers.²¹⁸ Not all of these characteristics are present for each struggler, but usually one is a potential cause. Many homosexual strugglers are ashamed to admit in a “macho” culture that they need same-sex love from other men. Joe Dallas writes, “If they feel alienated from peers of the same sex, they will feel especially strong needs for attention and approval from the very ones they feel alienated from.”²¹⁹ Michael Saia states it this way:

Most of the desires of the homosexually oriented person are the same basic human longings that all people have – the desires for communication, friendship, intimacy, affection, understanding, etc. He needs other Christians as fellow believers and as humans, so it is not strange that he should expect to get his needs for companionship and friendship met in the body of Christ. He will continue to have the needs; if he does not get his needs met in the Christian fellowship, he will eventually go somewhere else to fulfill them. Just how he will meet his needs becomes an important issue to the person with a homosexual preference.²²⁰

that he has personally experienced along these lines. Much of the emotional healing that is taking place has come from positive connection with same-sex events.

²¹⁷ It is worth noting that Drs. Moberly and Nicolosi deal extensively with this in their explanation of reparative therapy.

²¹⁸ Crum, “A Discipler Approach”. 44.

²¹⁹ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*. 99.

²²⁰ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*. 171.

Chad Thompson's need for connection was met by heterosexual men in three different ways: nonsexual touch, surrogacy (substitute parent), and camaraderie.²²¹

Konrad encouraged his friend, in letters, to find a good church, join a men's Bible study, and join a gym where heterosexual men work out, so that bonding in a nonsexual manner can take place.²²² Moberly supports these ideas when she says, "Homosexuality is the kind of problem that needs to be solved through relationships... The male homosexual needs a male helper... It is the provision of good same-sex relationships that helps to meet unmet same-sex needs, heal defects in the relational capacity, and in this way forward the healing process."²²³

It is David Crum who suggests that the best model for this is a discipleship relationship, with the discipler being aware of the disciple's struggle with homosexuality. When heterosexual men disciple homosexual strugglers, same-sex needs are met in an environment that develops trust, understanding, communication, and camaraderie for the struggler. Crum also suggests that older men and peers be involved in the discipleship process, thus developing peer and surrogate bonding as well as spiritual accountability and growth.²²⁴ There should be no safer place on the planet for a struggler who desires to pursue holiness and freedom from same-sex attractions or homosexual behaviors than a good church – a church with a strong male presence, an attitude of equality, and actions of empathy and compassion, all anchored in an understanding of biblical truth. To quote a

²²¹ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*. 125-148.

²²² Konrad, *You Don't Have to be Gay*.

²²³ Moberly, *Homosexuality*. 42.

²²⁴ Crum, "A Discipler Approach".

colleague who teaches Christian Ethics at Liberty University, “The church is supposed to be a place for broken people on the mend, where people should feel safe to share their brokenness and be supported by follow saints in the process of being perfected.”²²⁵

Literature Related to the Church Providing Change Agents to Equip Churches to Minister to Homosexual Struggler.

One of the purposes of this project is to encourage churches to get involved with the homosexual strugglers within their congregations by providing them with key insights from churches that are already effectively ministering to this group. In the process of doing research, it became increasingly difficult - nearly impossible - to find churches that were involved in assisting strugglers who desired help in getting victory over homosexual temptations or behaviors. Quite frankly, there is a dearth of churches doing any type of ministry, and consequently there is a dearth of information. There are numerous para-church organizations that are leading the way, and there is a good amount of material, mostly by ex-gays describing what led them out of homosexuality. Truthfully, the lack of church involvement in this arena is quite disconcerting considering that the church has been given the ministry of reconciliation. On the other hand, it is also understandable.

There are numerous reasons why the church has been inactive in ministering to the strugglers within their doors. The vast amount of literature perused over the last five years leads this researcher to summarize the reasons as follows.

²²⁵ Dr. Will Honeycutt, Associate Professor, Liberty University. This is a statement that he makes to all of his students in the Christian Ethics class that all incoming freshman are required to take at the University. Dr. Honeycutt and I are old friends. He shared this statement with me over lunch as we were discussing my research and development of the survey for this dissertation.

First, most churches struggle with an imbalance between judgment and grace. Churches and individual believers struggle with how to protect and proclaim the doctrines of truth and yet demonstrate attitudes and actions of empathy and compassion that leads to involvement.

Second, the lack of sound scientific research has resulted in a lack of information as to how to assist a struggler who desires to change. Gagnon refers to the APA decision of 1973 as the “Big Chill”. As indicated earlier the decision to remove homosexuality from the *DSM* means that less research has been conducted in assisting homosexuals toward change. He states, “Unfortunately, most of the significant research was done prior to the ‘Big Chill’ brought on by militant gay rights activism in the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association.”²²⁶ He provides detailed proof of the shortage of research in a footnote, “The ‘big chill’ is most dramatically illustrated in the sharp decline in articles in medical and psychological journals as listed in the Medline database: from 1,021 for the years 1966 to 1974; to 42 for the years 1975 to 1979; to a paltry two for the years 1992 to 1994.”²²⁷ This lack of research combined with the militant gay-rights activism of today has produced a church that is politically active in a fight against homosexuality but extremely passive in the ministry of reconciliation of strugglers.

Third, the strong pull of the gay-rights movement and the political activism of evangelical Christianity have produced an attitude of insecurity among churches. This

²²⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. 421-22.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 422.

insecurity is what homosexuals describe as homophobia. This was discussed earlier in greater detail but is worth mentioning again. The lack of information (mentioned previously) and misinformation has caused the church to approach this volatile issue with an arrogant and unwelcome attitude that inevitably isolates the very people who most need the churches' incarnational involvement. The evangelical church in America struggles greatly with a certain level of homophobia. This has caused the church to keep strugglers at arm's length and communicate that they are not welcome. Homophobia is caused by a lack of correct information.

Fourth, the lack of information has also produced insensitivity in the church. What Christians don't understand often is ignored or criticized. When an uninformed person doesn't understand why a struggler is tempted, the result can be an insensitive attitude. The church is correct in strongly opposing the gay-rights movement. However, the church has been uninvolved in providing change methods for strugglers who desire holiness. If the church thinks that it can redeem people by political means it is sadly mistaken. People are redeemed through the incarnational involvement of redeemed people who introduce all strugglers to Jesus the Redeemer. This insensitivity is also produced by an incorrect perspective – the idea that homosexuality is a greater sin than other sin. The very first thing that Jesus addressed in the Sermon on the Mount was that whoever desired to be a part of His Kingdom must be “poor in spirit” (Matt 5:3). Believers will be better equipped to help strugglers when they see themselves as totally destitute before God. Liar and homosexuals are equally destitute without Jesus. Once the church can grasp this principle, it will demonstrate a sensitive spirit and a heart of empathy and compassion toward strugglers of all types.

Fifth, the lack of church involvement is directly related to isolation. With the rise of psychology and professional counseling over the past fifty years, it is the opinion of many, including this researcher, that the evangelical and liberal churches alike have abdicated their responsibility to minister to their members by referring the tough cases of counseling to ‘professional counselors.’ Combine this with the effects of the ‘Big Chill’ and the church has been isolated from the very people it has been called to help. It is encouraging that para-church groups are taking the initiative to serve strugglers, but where is the church?

Lastly, ignorance of same-sex attractions and homosexuality has contributed to the lack of church involvement with strugglers. The literature has shown that greater understanding of the struggle and plight of the struggler produces more individuals who are willing to journey with the struggler. A full understanding of the struggler’s battle will produce a church that longs to be involved in the ministry of reconciliation for those wrestling with same-sex attractions or battling with homosexual behaviors.

James Hill adds great insight to this entire issue of churches involvement with strugglers when he asks, “What do we need to welcome sinners to Christ?”²²⁸ In other words, how do we prepare our congregations and individuals to have a ministry to homosexual strugglers, homosexuals, or any other group or individual struggling to get out of idolatrous and addictive behavior? He suggests nine things.²²⁹ First of all, we need Christ. You cannot give what you do not have. Second, you must have a love for people –

²²⁸ Hill, “Love the Sinner: A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality.” 124.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

both the loveable and the unloved. Third, the congregation must be sold on two points: Christianity is a social religion, and you cannot do this ministry as a loner. Fourth and fifth, you must love and respect your congregation. You will not be able to challenge them to this demanding ministry if they do not sense both these qualities in you. Sixth, if they do not love, work on them. Seventh, preach on outreach – everyone, not just certain target groups. Eighth, have discipleship programs to disciple everyone in the church, not just new believers. And last, offer specific programs or opportunities for people with special problems to get the specific help and counsel that they need to become fully devoted disciples of Jesus.

Although there is a lack of literature that directly describes churches that have been successful in welcoming and discipling strugglers or literature that deals directly with church programs that have been successful, there is a good amount of literature that can be used to develop ministry to homosexuals. It is important to remember that if a church is not welcoming in attitude and action toward strugglers, then it is likely that no matter how good the program, it will not succeed. An individual who struggles with same-sex attraction or homosexual behaviors will be very unlikely stay in a place where he is not loved and valued or where people are not willing to be incarnationally involved in helping him journey through his struggles.

Anyone who is committed to being involved in the change process of a male struggler in a local congregation has a massive job ahead just to educate himself on this particular struggle. The best way to learn is by getting personally involved with a person who is struggling with same-sex attractions or homosexual behaviors but yet desires to walk with God. The education takes place “on the job” but is well worth the effort. As the

person opens his life to the counselor, the counselor will be driven to search the Scriptures and to read other literature in the process.

Dr. David Crum's doctoral dissertation²³⁰ presents one of the few workable models for recruiting and training church members in the ministry of discipling male homosexual strugglers. His plan could easily be implemented in most churches. It involves both the leadership of the church as well as willing members. His model includes ideas on enlisting, training and assigning volunteers to do the ministry.

The training program that Crum designed includes five training sessions totaling ten hours of classroom training. The focus of his training is discipleship. This means that those who are assigned to this ministry must first be committed disciples of Jesus Christ themselves. The design of his model is to recruit and train heterosexual disciples and partner them with a struggler. They are encouraged to develop a heterosexual friendship with the struggler and to walk him through his struggles using the discipleship model as the pattern. In the training, volunteers were given reading assignments to help them grasp the issues that a struggler is facing. Those assigned to this ministry would be paired with another trained volunteer to walk alongside the struggler in a journey that focused upon discipleship, holiness and wholeness. Crum's personal

²³⁰ Crum, "A Discippler's Approach For Ministering to People Who Struggle With Homosexuality". Chapter three gives a full description of the program design and training elements including the required readings given to the volunteers.

evaluation of the implementation of his design was very positive; he noted positive results in the lives of strugglers.²³¹

The churches that will be successful will be those that recruit and educate volunteers from the congregation and provide resources for those incarnationally involved in ministering to the male struggler. For those who are seeking to learn, (and willing to do some research) there is a gold mine of resources that will prepare them for ministry. The church needs to prepare the congregation by providing resources in a variety of areas. Congregations that have been in isolation need to be educated on the political agenda of the gay-rights movement. Dallas²³², Jones and Yarhouse²³³, and Satinover²³⁴ provide the church with great information in their books that paint the full picture of what is behind the political agenda and goals of the gay-rights movement.

Since the gay-rights movement has been successful in pushing its agenda, increasing numbers of “Christians” and churches have made efforts to reinterpret Scripture to eliminate any negative connotations toward homosexuality, attempting to make homosexuality a legitimate lifestyle for believers. Dallas approaches each biblical text from an ex-gay perspective, bringing insight that helps with understanding the degree to which a struggler may go to argue the sin of homosexuality away. Philip Ukleja

²³¹ Ibid. Chapters four and five focus on the feedback of his program design and results. He includes an excellent outline of the training materials in an appendix.

²³² Dallas, *The Gay Gospel?*

²³³ Jones, *Ex-gays?*

²³⁴ Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth*.

provides a more in-depth look at the key biblical texts in his dissertation.²³⁵ And Gagnon²³⁶ provides the most extensive, hermeneutical explanation and defense of the traditional view of the biblical text to date. It is an academic masterpiece. This is a must read for those who are serious about defending the truth and reaching the struggler. His approach is a balance between judgment and grace.

There are numerous stories of those who have come out of homosexuality. Their stories testify to the power of incarnational involvement and to the commitment of those who walk them through the process of healing. Joe Dallas²³⁷, Frank Worthen²³⁸, Bob Davies²³⁹, Chad Thompson²⁴⁰, Jeff Konrad²⁴¹, and many other all give testimony to the possibility and probability of change. They each make statements as to the importance of personal faith and the positives aspects of being loved by a group of people in a church. This provides great hope for those who struggle. If the church could grasp the underlying principles that each of these testimonies emphasize, it would have a long-lasting impact upon male strugglers. These testimonies would also provide hope for those who are overwhelmed with the battle to be normal, and they would also motivate church members

²³⁵ Philip Ukleja, "A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement" (Descriptive, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982).

²³⁶ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*; Gagnon, "Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity."

²³⁷ Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*.

²³⁸ Anita Worthen and Bob Davies, *Someone I Love is Gay: How Family and Friends Can Respond* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

²³⁹ Davies, *Coming Out of Homosexuality*.

²⁴⁰ Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals*.

²⁴¹ Konrad, *You Don't Have to be Gay*.

to invest in this ministry. These resources also explain the process that each man went through to come out of homosexual behavior and lifestyle. Davies and Thompson each explain the process that they went through to overcome same-sex attractions.

Churches need to provide resources to their congregations to educate them in understanding some of the causes of homosexuality. The best resources available are by Joseph Nicolosi²⁴² and Elizabeth Moberly²⁴³, who both propose that homosexuality is caused by a gender detachment from a father or a significant male role model. The National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality²⁴⁴ also espouses this position. The general overview of the conservative literature will also support this particular cause as one of many. All three of these resources are excellent places to begin for interested or involved counselors, friends, and helpers. All three of these sources support reparative therapy, which is best defined as therapy that is designed to assist the male homosexual struggler to repair those gender deficits that were lost or never received during the critical developmental stages of his life. Subsequent research has validated the principle of reparative therapy.²⁴⁵ Saia also provides an extensive list of causes for male same-sex attractions and homosexuality in his book *Counseling the Homosexual*.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*.

²⁴³ Moberly, *Homosexuality*.

²⁴⁴ NARTH, (accessed 7/3/09); available from <http://www.narth.com/>.

²⁴⁵ Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*; Joseph Nicolosi, *Healing Homosexuality: Case Studies of Reparative Therapy* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993); Nicolosi, "A Development Model for Effective Treatment of Male Homosexuality: Implications for Pastoral Counseling."

²⁴⁶ Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families*.

Pastors, elders and leaders are critical to the process of equipping their members to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). This includes equipping them to minister to the male struggler. Those who equip must also believe that change for the struggler is possible, and they must trumpet both the biblical prohibitions against homosexuality and the message of hope that strugglers can one day say, as Paul did of the Corinthians, “And that is what some of you were.” (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Most of the work of reparative therapy or conversion therapy is being conducted by para-church ministries such as Exodus International²⁴⁷, Harvest USA²⁴⁸, Love in Action²⁴⁹, Living Hope Ministries²⁵⁰, and Love Won Out²⁵¹. Each of these ministries provides a plethora of resources to assist the church in equipping members for work with the male struggler. Most of the resources available can easily be applied to the church setting.

As referenced earlier, H. Newton Maloney stated, “Practical theology is about what the church does in its practice. It is concerned with the behavior of the church as an organization; of the church as the people of God; and of the church in the programs it offers, of the church as individual persons whose lives are being changed by God’s grace

²⁴⁷ <http://www.exodus-international.org>

²⁴⁸ <http://www.harvestusa.org>

²⁴⁹ <http://www.loveinaction.org>

²⁵⁰ <https://livehope.org>

²⁵¹ <http://www.lovetwonout.com>

and who embody that for which the church exists.”²⁵² Churches must be ready to meet the issue of homosexuality with biblical truth and love. The church must be prepared to help homosexual strugglers out of this obsessive lifestyle and walk with them as they grow into disciples of Jesus Christ. It is more than just saying, “Love the sinner, and hate the sin.” The church must love as Jesus loved. Maloney writes, “They [the church] exist to meet the human need for the grace of God. Like any other organization, what they say, what they produce, and how their members behave is the essence of their ‘practical theology.’”²⁵³

According to Maloney, practical theology is evident in three ways. First of all, it is seen in the church’s proclamations – in worship, in announcements, and in statements of purpose. Second, it is evident in the programs that are planned, produced and offered to the public. And third, it is seen in the behavior of church members, in relationship to one another and in their individual lives.²⁵⁴ The practical theology of a “welcoming church” moves broken and fallen people through the process of transformation, so that they may experience radical life change as they are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and learn to abide in His will.

In conclusion, homosexual strugglers are real people with real needs. The church has the answers in the person of Jesus Christ, and through His resources the church can live up to its responsibility to stand firm on the truth of God’s Word, the

²⁵² H. Newton Maloney, “A Practical Theology of “Welcoming,”” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001). 143-44.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Bible, and to love the sinner as Christ does, regardless of his sin. A welcoming church will understand its biblical responsibility to reach the male struggler in its midst. The welcoming church will possess a caring attitude of empathy and compassion toward the male struggler. The welcoming church will demonstrate care through a listening ear and through incarnational involvement modeling biblical manhood. The welcoming church will be committed to equipping members with change agents that produce change in the lives of the struggler and the counselor. Success in welcoming true strugglers will be determined by understanding biblical equality, biblical empathy, biblical engagement and biblical education.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

Design of the Study

A growing number of men worshipping in our churches are genuinely confused and are seeking a safe place to discover healing from same-sex attractions and homosexual behavior. The interest in this project came out of the growing number of Christian men who are struggling with these problems, understanding that these desires and behaviors are in violation of biblical truth. These men are craving a place of safety where they can receive care while growing in their relationship with the Lord resulting in victory over unwanted temptations, feelings and behaviors.

This research project will seek to determine whether the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within her doors is in line with her biblical responsibilities. We will endeavor to discover the answer by asking the question, ‘Is the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within her doors in line with her biblical responsibilities?’ It is the contention of this researcher that if the church is living out her biblical responsibilities, then male homosexual strugglers have an incredible opportunity to feel safe as they wrestle through their thoughts, feelings, and temptations as they progress in discipleship.

The student will administer a case study methodology of selected churches presently ministering to male homosexual strugglers by applying a private written survey of questions given to male homosexual strugglers and church members pertaining to the

hypotheses proposed. This will be done in order to evaluate how the selected churches have implemented their biblical responsibility toward male strugglers. What have these churches done to become a place where male strugglers feel safe? The goal of the methodology is to develop a valid basis for ministry toward the struggler that other churches might use to effectively live out biblical truth and provide hope for male homosexual strugglers in their congregations. The results of this could be used in this vital ministry of caring, mentoring and discipleship.

Difficulty of the Study

The most challenging portion of this project has been finding churches that engage in ministry to male homosexual strugglers. After searching for several years by means of the Internet, contacting para-church ministries such as Exodus International, Harvest USA, and Living Hope Ministries, and interacting with ministry colleagues across the country, the researcher was directed to the three churches participating in this study.

In the process of looking for these churches, the definition for effective became very broad. For the purpose of this project the definition of an ‘effective church’ will be a church that is actively engaged in ministering to the male homosexual strugglers. First, there appear to be very few evangelical churches that are openly involved in ministering to male strugglers in an organized manner. Churches both large and small were found that were or had ministered to select individuals. Several large churches were relegating these discipleship opportunities to the Christian counseling centers and professionals in their communities, which prevents church members from being fully involved in ministering to the male strugglers. Several churches had formed

struggler support groups designed to assist strugglers with their temptations. These groups however were very disconnected from the larger church body, and the majority of the participants were from other churches.

A second difficulty is the fact that few churches announce or publicize that they have a ministry to strugglers out of an obligation to protect participants from those who do not understand their struggle. There is also a desire to protect strugglers from gay rights activists or individuals who may see it as their mission to persuade strugglers from seeking sexual reorientation.

Another difficulty was securing commitment from churches to be a part of this research project. One evangelical church in particular, located in a college town in the Bible Belt, chose not to participate because the Christian university in the city boasts a large psychology department that has had several doctoral research studies completed recently using their same-sex strugglers support group. The counseling pastor was reluctant to allow his strugglers to be the focus of yet another research project.

It was imperative that the participating churches be strong evangelical churches particularly in their conviction regarding the inerrancy of Scripture. Any church compromising on inerrancy could easily be swayed to change its position based upon a cultural shift in the country. Standing firm upon Scripture would provide a solid foundation to help disciple and rebuild the life of a struggler. I desired to examine churches that were committed to the Bible as a major source of discipling and shepherding a struggler back to a position of health.

The small pool of churches to recruit from was quite disconcerting and delayed the completion of this project by a year. Simply ignorance and some naiveté

among evangelical churches as to the number of strugglers in their congregations contributed to the small number of churches active in ministering to strugglers. It also demonstrates a lack of knowledge, desire or ability among evangelical churches to be actively engaged in a ministry to strugglers in their congregations. Hopefully that this project will help to motivate evangelical churches in the future.

Finally, after identifying and securing a partnership with the churches, a difficulty arose from among the strugglers. Several strugglers from one church wrestled with signing the consent form attached to the survey. Each struggler's identity was known only to a group of trusted individuals within their congregation so they were fearful that the knowledge of their struggle would be open to others outside the safe realm of their church. The original goal was to gather a minimum of fifteen surveys from strugglers and fifteen surveys from church members from each participating church, and compare the strugglers' answers to the church members' answers from each church, then compare the results from church to church. Unfortunately, only a total of fifteen strugglers' surveys from all three churches were able to be gathered. As a result, the researcher was only able to compare the struggler's results with the church member's results from all three churches combined.

Participating Churches and Administration of the Survey

A two-year search led to the three churches in this study, each having agreed to partner in this endeavor after lengthy email correspondences followed by an in-depth phone conversation. It was decided early on that the nature of the study would have to be anonymous in order to recruit churches and to protect the strugglers who were to

participate in the survey. The participating churches are located in Virginia, Indiana, and Texas.

The survey was graciously administered by a pastor or assigned to a trusted elder in each congregation. The surveys were not administered in a group setting, because the churches had designed their ministries around total church involvement rather than designated support groups. Each church has worked very hard to involve the entire congregation in ministering to the struggler. There are few strugglers' gatherings or meetings in the case-study churches. The ministry in each church calls for the connecting of strugglers with mature heterosexual men as part of the discipleship process.

Each participant was to read and sign the Respondents' Informed Consent form (Appendix A) that granted permission to use the information their answers provided. The informed consent gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, which is making the church the primary focus of the survey to find information that would assist churches to biblically minister to male homosexual strugglers. It included the personal definition of a male struggler for the purpose of the research study. It provided a short explanation of the critical nature of gathering the information for preparing churches to assist homosexual strugglers. Finally, included was a brief thank-you for being willing to participate in the project. A few general-information questions were provided at the bottom of the consent form in order to determine how long each participant had been a believer, attending the selected church and how often they attended the selected church.

Each struggler's survey was personally handed to him a pastor or elder in privacy with the explanation that it should be completed privately at a separate time. This

would avoid any possible outside influence by other strugglers or persons and encourage complete honesty in order to determine which factors made these churches safe places for strugglers. The church member's surveys were administered in like fashion by each respective pastor or elder. The surveys were handed to committed members of each congregation by a pastor or elder to be taken in private, again providing for unhindered personal perspective. When the participants had completed the survey, they would turn it back into the pastor or elder who had given it to them.

The collecting of the survey was handled by the assigned pastor or elder at each church. Two of the churches mailed all of their surveys, both from the strugglers and the members, to the author in one package. The third church was having difficulty collecting the surveys from the strugglers so the pastor mailed them to this author as he received them.

Focus of the Survey

The main object of this project is to determine if the response of effective churches is in line with their biblical responsibilities. Therefore, the focus will be upon the church rather than the individual struggler. In essence, the church will be under the microscope, evaluated as to why it has a successful ministry to male homosexual strugglers. The diagnostics tool will come in the form of a survey to two separate groups of people in each congregation. The hypotheses in this study center on the total attitude and actions of the church body. In order to get a full picture of each participating church, a strugglers' survey was needed reflecting their perspective of how their church was living up to its biblical responsibilities toward them. It was also necessary to get a survey sample of the church members regarding their perspective of how they are living up to

their biblical obligations. Together both groups should provide a clear picture as to how these churches are doing. This should provide us with some ideas as to why these churches have been effective in assisting strugglers to victory over same-sex attractions and homosexuality.

The survey was designed with the struggler in mind, so the wording of questions was changed slightly for the church member. So, for the struggler, questions were phrased like: “As a struggler, do you feel ...” but for the church member they read as follows: “Do you feel that strugglers” The surveys were printed on different color paper to help distinguish who took the survey when the results were returned.

Layout of the Survey

The survey was built around the four hypotheses of the project. Each hypothesis has different learning objectives that will determine if the hypotheses and research problem are answered.

Survey Questions Related to Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis is that effective churches are effective because they understand their biblical responsibilities toward male homosexual strugglers in their congregations. It is my belief that each of the churches is effective because they do understand and take their biblical responsibility seriously. It was expected that the church member surveys would produce a more positive result than the struggler surveys based upon the fact the strugglers are in the midst of this personal battle whereas the members are not.

There are several core beliefs the author believes are essential in effective churches. First of all, an effective church is a welcoming and safe place for male homosexual strugglers. Strugglers will be welcomed as a part of the church while feeling safe in their struggle to find healing and help for their personal battle with same-sex feelings, temptations and behaviors. The learning objective was to ascertain if the selected churches understand what it means to be a place of safety for everyone, regardless of sexual struggles or sin.

In this chapter are listed the struggler's version of questions. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the questions are rephrased for the church member in order to get their perspective. The full version of the strugglers' survey can be found in Appendix B and the church members' version in Appendix C. To determine whether a church is welcoming and safe, five questions were formulated for the survey that would provide some insight.

As a struggler, to what level do you feel that your church is a safe place for you to acknowledge and process through your sexual issues?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unsafe

Extremely safe

To what level do you feel that your church would welcome you after a momentary or prolonged relapse?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unsafe

Extremely safe

As a struggler, to what extent do the printed materials and announcements communicate that your church is a place of safety for you and other strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Extremely well

As a struggler, to what level do you feel that you are welcome at your church as a follower of Jesus Christ, although your personal struggle is with same-sex sin/temptations?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwelcome

Extremely welcome

As a struggler, to what extent do the printed materials and announcements communicate that '1st Church' is a place of safety for you and other strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Extremely well

Secondly, the author maintains that an effective church affirms that every person is equally valued in the sight of God based upon being created in the image of God. This would mean that everyone understands and lives out this equality regardless of someone's sexual identity, struggles, or sin. The members of these churches would exhibit and express value to male strugglers that they are created in God's image and are thus as valuable as any other member of the congregation. They would communicate the belief that each sin, regardless of cultural interpretation, is equally condemned. The church's responsibility is to exude the humble belief that all are on the same level in need of God's grace and are equally valuable as a result of being created in His image. Anticipation is that effective churches communicate value and equality. The learning objective was to ascertain if these churches were effective because they understand that all people are created equal and valued as the objects of His affection regardless of sin propensity or present/past level of involvement.

To determine if the selected churches possessed this value of equality, the following questions were formulated for the strugglers' survey (see Appendix C for the church members' version).

As a struggler, to what level do you feel that your church believes that you are the object of God's affection regardless of your past or present sexual struggles?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Weak belief Strong belief

As a struggler, to what level does your church treat you equally as a believer who is pursuing Christ?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely unequal Extremely equal

As a struggler, to what level does your church' treat your sin/struggle as a "greater evil" than other sins/struggles people face?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Greatest evil Another evil

Also expected was that the people in an effective church possess an uncompromising faith that God has the ability to transform each person regardless of sin or struggle, whether past or present. Effective churches aggressively preach and teach that no one is out of the reach of God's grace, power and ability to transform. It is through a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ that each person can experience God's transformation in his life. It was significant to ascertain if the selected churches were effective because they possessed the belief that God desires to transform, deliver, and change all people to be conformed to the image of Christ regardless of sin. The only thing that limits a person from this transformation is the individual's willingness to be obedient to the principles of God's Word. To determine if the selected churches possessed this value of transformational hope, the following questions were formulated for the strugglers' survey.

As a struggler, to what level do you believe that your church is committed to seeing you transformed, delivered, and changed so that you are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Highly uncommitted Highly committed

As a struggler, to what level, do you believe that your church understands its biblical responsibility to see God transform you into the image of Christ as a result of her ministries?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Low understanding

High understanding

Looking at the available resources (support groups, discipleship groups, reading and studying materials, willing church members, etc.) that your church offers you as a struggler, to what level do you believe that your church is committed to your transformation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Highly uncommitted

Highly committed

Survey Questions Related to Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis of this project is that the selected churches are effective because they possess a caring attitude needed to minister to male homosexual strugglers. It is presumed that each of the selected churches is successful and effective because they do possess a caring attitude toward male homosexual strugglers. It is expected that the church members' surveys will produce a more positive result than the strugglers' surveys based upon the fact the strugglers are in the midst of this personal battle as the recipients of the ministry, whereas the members are the givers in this ministry.

There are several core attitudes that seemed essential if a church was to be effective. First of all, effective churches will have an attitude of empathy toward the men who struggle with same-sex attractions, feelings or behaviors. This is best modeled as an attitude of compassion toward the struggler regardless of how deep the struggle or frequent the behavior. The learning objective was to ascertain if the selected churches possess a visual, genuine, heartfelt, action-moving compassion for the struggler. To

determine if the churches possessed this attitude the following questions were formulated:

As a struggler, to what level do you feel that the people of your church demonstrate a heart of compassion for you.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Uncomfortable with me

Involved with me

As a struggler, to what degree is your church different from other churches in regards to a caring attitude for those who struggle with homosexual attractions or behaviors?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less caring

More caring

To what degree do the people at your church really care about you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Uncomfortable with me

Deeply care about me

The second attitude that seemed effective churches would possess is humility.

The goal here is to determine how members of the church regard their personal sin compared to homosexuality. This attitude would be exhibited in the way people conduct themselves in light of another person's sin. Do the members of the selected churches conduct themselves in a manner that says "I am equally wretched needing the same grace as strugglers, and relying totally on Jesus for help?" People with this type of humility will not see homosexuality as a greater sin than their own. It was important to learn if the members of the selected churches conducted themselves as needing the same grace as strugglers. If so, they would exhibit a greater empathy toward male strugglers. To determine if the selected churches possessed this attitude of humility, the following questions were formulated:

As a struggler, to what level do the people at your church see their need for God's intervention regarding their own struggles with sin?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less than my sin

Greater than my sin

As a struggler, when you look at the general overall attitude of people at your church toward sin, where would they rate your struggle as compared to other sin(s)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Greatest sin

Less than other sins

Looking at the people at your church in general, how would they rate their sin compared to your struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less sin

Greater sin

The third attitude that effective churches would possess is hope. Hope is a positive attitude that stems from a deep conviction that God has the ability to transform the wicked person, regardless of past or present sin. It was significant to ascertain if the members of the selected churches possessed a positive outlook for life change for the homosexual struggler regardless of his level of involvement in homosexuality. It was important to learn if the members of these churches communicated an attitude of transformational hope that God has the ability and the desire to transform the lives of homosexual strugglers. The following questions were formulated:

As a struggler, how well does your church communicate that God has a purpose and plan for everyone regardless of sin or propensity to particular sin?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely poorly

Extremely well

As a struggler, to what level do the people at your church believe that there is hope for strugglers to have their situations transformed by God's truth and power?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unlikely

Certain hope

From your perspective, to what level do the people at your church believe that God has provided everything we need for life transformation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Nonexistent

Absolute certainty

Survey Questions Related to Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis is that selected churches are effective because they demonstrate caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers. People will not know how much you care until you show them how much you care. Talk is cheap but actions communicate a lot. It's important for a church to have a correct understanding of its biblical responsibilities and possess the biblical attitudes needed to minister to hurting people but it is only when the church engages incarnationally with the male strugglers in its midst that its ministry becomes effective in a tangible way. It has been said that "ninety percent of ministry is just being there." Correct beliefs and correct words are all good but "putting feet" to our words is where the difference is made.

The presumption is that the selected churches have effective ministry to the male strugglers in their congregations because they demonstrate caring behavior. They have transferred their theology to attitude and their attitude to actions thus becoming incarnationally involved with the men who struggle. It is expected that the church member surveys will produce a more positive result than do the struggler surveys based upon the fact the strugglers are in the midst of this personal battle as the recipients of the ministry whereas the members are the givers in this ministry.

So what does caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers look like? First of all, caring behavior involves listening. There is a difference between hearing and listening. Listening involves a willingness to understand and an openness to hear the

good and the bad in a person's life. When a male homosexual struggler desires change and comes for help, he needs someone to help him biblically work through all the confused thoughts, temptations, feelings and actions that consume his struggle. This means that the person who listens will have his innocence violated, in that he will hear details that will expose him to thoughts and behaviors that were previously unimaginable but are real experiences for the struggler. If a male struggler can have this safe place to share he will be open to the biblical instructions that lead to change, because someone was engaged incarnationally with him in the most secret and private parts of his life.

Thus, incarnational involvement starts with listening. It is important to discover if the members of the selected churches demonstrate a willingness to actively listen to the struggler's story for the purpose of walking with him through his struggle. To ascertain this, the following questions were formulated for the struggler's survey:

To what degree have individuals (besides a pastor or counselor) at your church been willing to listen to your story including the dirty details, in a way that demonstrates genuine care and concern?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling

Extremely willing

To what degree have individuals at your church been willing to listen and walk with you after a temporary or extended relapse?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling

Extremely willing

How eager and willing are the people at your church to listen, hear and understand your story in order to walk with you through your struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling

Extremely willing

How patient are the people at your church with you as you have begun processing through your struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely impatient

Extremely patient

Caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers should include personal involvement from members of the entire congregation. This will communicate a safe environment for the struggler in the congregation. Personal involvement is also incarnational. The more the entire congregation, particularly heterosexual men, get involved in the lives of the strugglers the more strugglers understand that they are loved and that the church cares for them. Spiritual growth is a community project and in the case of male homosexual strugglers it is important that the people in the caring process go beyond the pastor and counselor. The researcher's belief is that caring churches have a variety of people involved in the caring process, which produces an environment that is safe and welcoming to strugglers. To determine whether the selected churches have this level of caring, the following questions were included in the strugglers' survey:

How involved are the people (apart from counselors and pastoral staff) at your church in your life and growth process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Highly uninvolved

Highly involved

How important is physical touch (hug, handshake, etc.) from the heterosexual men at your church in the healing and transformation process of your life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unimportant

Extremely important

How involved are the heterosexual men at your church in the ministries, counseling and activities that relate to your struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely uninvolved

Extremely involved

The third aspect of caring behavior that was evaluated in this project is the intimate involvement of heterosexual men with male homosexual strugglers in the selected churches. It is presumed that the effective churches surveyed would have a high

level of heterosexual male involvement in the change process of male strugglers in their congregations. The previous sets of questions were asked to determine the overall level of involvement of men in the selected churches. This next set of questions will determine how many men are deeply involved in counseling and discipling of male struggler. As the literature review demonstrated, heterosexual male involvement has been determined to be critical in the change process of the male struggler. It was important to ascertain if heterosexual men in the selected churches were involved in the counseling and discipling of strugglers thus creating opportunities to model biblical manhood. To ascertain this, the following questions were included in the survey:

How well do the men at your church model biblical manhood in a way that inspires you in the transformation process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely poorly

Extremely well

How clear is an understanding of biblical manhood at your church?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unclear

Extremely clear

How well does your church do in providing you with willing and active role models of biblical masculinity?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

No role models

Countless role models

The last aspect of caring behavior that was to be evaluated was the acceptance of the male strugglers into the body of the church. It is important to understand if the selected churches ignored blatant sin. Church discipline is not to be ignored but followed when a struggler commits sin worthy of biblical discipline. The conviction is that effective churches include the struggler into the total body of the church. Strugglers should be encouraged to participate in the church-wide events and total program of the

church. There should be nothing that makes them feel left out or made to feel ‘different.’ Yes, there are certain aspects of serving or public ministry that they may not be qualified to do but there is no reason why strugglers should not be a vital part of the body. It is important to find out whether the strugglers were encouraged to be a part of the body or if they were treated as an outside group (an outreach effort). The following questions were included to learn about the strugglers’ inclusion into the total body of the church:

To what degree do you feel that ‘1st church’ is your family?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Completely

As a struggler, to what level do you feel that your church will allow you to get involved?

How connected are you at your church?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 never rarely somewhat moderately often usually always

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally unconnected

Totally connected

Survey Questions Related to Hypothesis Four

The final hypothesis for this project is that the selected churches have change agents in place to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers. It is expected that the selected churches are successful because they have (a) intentionally initiated involvement from the congregation in the change process of the strugglers and (b) they have educated members in how to minister to strugglers. They have done this by providing change agents that have moved their members to the ministry of assisting male homosexuals in the journey toward wholeness and healing. A church that is involved with male strugglers is a church that intentionally started this ministry. The ministry may have

started based upon a need that was indentified; but effective churches would have more focus and intentionality than a haphazard approach.

The first thing to be learned from the survey is whether the selected churches have a mission statement and a vision for working with homosexual strugglers. A mission statement, whether a verbal or written, is a change agent that is foundational to a church's becoming a safe and welcoming place for strugglers, because it will move people to fulfill the stated mission. It is expected that an effective church will cast vision to minister to all people including homosexual strugglers. It was significant to ascertain whether the male strugglers in the selected churches believed that the church had a vision or mission that involved recruiting volunteers to minister to strugglers. To determine this, the following questions were asked in the strugglers' survey:

How committed is your church to the recruitment and training of heterosexual men to walk with you through your journey?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely uncommitted

Extremely committed

How effective are the pulpit announcements, bulletins, program announcements, training courses in recruiting people to assist homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely nonexistent

Extremely effective

How clear is your church's mission statement relating to assisting and moving people to assist homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unclear

Extremely clear

A logical way to reinforce a mission statement regarding a ministry toward male strugglers is to provide resources to train people how to minister to them. Providing resources to people is another change agent that will equip a church in ministry. There are

so many unique issues that are intertwined with a struggler that it will take a good amount of training and resources to equip another man to reach out incarnationally. It was important to learn if the selected churches were providing such resources for people to be trained to counsel and disciple male strugglers. Available resources would include books, articles, classes, or conferences that would help church members understand the male homosexual's struggle. These materials would also train willing church members in how to work with a struggler as he journeys through the discipleship and healing process. It is believed that the selected churches are effective because they provide the necessary resources and because they are proactive in training their members to become involved with male strugglers. To determine whether the selected churches were making resources available to train people in this ministry, the members and strugglers were asked the following questions:

How effective has your church been in training people to minister to homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely ineffective

Extremely effective

How adequate are the training resources (books, classes, articles, literature) at your church in helping people understand the issues that strugglers wrestle with ?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely inadequate

Extremely adequate

How well does your church mentor new volunteers in understanding and ministering to homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely nonexistent

Extremely well

Last, the power of a personal invitation can be a very powerful change agent for the mission of the church. Personal recruitment of volunteers can change the course of

a church and enhance a ministry. There are some unique challenges in ministering to the male struggler. The homosexual struggler will need heterosexual men who are sound in their manhood to come alongside the struggler in his journey. These volunteers will need a firm understanding of biblical truth and grace and a solid personal relationship with Jesus Christ. From the volume of literature that has been reviewed it is believed that most men will shy away from such an overwhelming task. It is presumed that the effective churches are actively recruiting men to train for this ministry. To determine whether the selected churches were active in recruiting volunteers for ministry to the strugglers among them, strugglers and members were asked the following questions:

How often are the sermons and teaching times geared toward moving members to assist people with all kinds of struggles?

1	2	3	4	5
never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always

How effective are the sermons in encouraging people to assist strugglers in the transformation process?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Extremely ineffective			Extremely effective			

How well do the sermons and teachings at your church equip people with a proper understanding of the homosexual strugglers needs?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Extremely poorly			Extremely well			

Limitations of the Study

There are some rather obvious limitations to this study. The greatest limitation of this study is that the author is approaching this research as an outsider, not a member of any of the sample churches. In fact, the author never attended any of the sample churches due to their locations. The desire was to have local churches that could be used

as case studies. The nearest church in this study is a four hours away by car, while the other two are twelve hours away (in opposite directions). Due to the current economic downturn and with responsibilities as a pastor, the author was unable to travel to visit or to administer the survey. It is important to note, however, that a visit to the sample churches probably would not have been long enough to determine the validity of my hypotheses. The nature of a welcoming church for men who struggle with same-sex attractions or behaviors is better determined through a survey two groups – those who know the mission of the church, hear the pastor’s sermons, and participate in the training classes and programs, and those who have been the recipients of the caring attitudes and actions of church members. This study is dependent upon the honest survey feedback of these two groups.

A second limitation is that this is a survey rather than a series of private interviews. Although the researcher is certain that the surveys will generate enough information to prove or disprove my hypotheses, a survey does not allow interaction, follow up questions are not possible. The author is convinced that personal interviews would provide a wealth of information. The survey was the chosen-method of research for several reasons. First, most men who struggle with same-sex attractions or homosexual behavior are not going to open up to a complete stranger. It would take an extended amount of time to build that relationship to the point of earning trust. Second, having worked with same-sex strugglers, the desire of the writer was to avoid making the struggler the focus of the study. It was important for the struggler to be able to answer questions without the pressure of a face to face interview. If this study had been approached with an interview methodology, churches or strugglers willing to participate

may not have been found. Third, due to the geographical distances to my churches, it would have been nearly impossible to conduct interviews in a timely fashion.

CHAPTER 4

SURVEY RESULTS

It has been the author's desire and purpose to examine selected local churches that have made it a part of their mission to bring biblical reconciliation and discipleship to same-sex strugglers and homosexuals who desire to be freed from the life dominating struggle that has deep-rooted control in their lives, in order to provide a model that other churches can emulate. The author strongly believes that the local church should be the most active organization and group of people ministering and counseling the struggler, particularly those who are already part of its congregations. This study has focused upon the strugglers and church members of a few churches that are effectively ministering to male homosexual strugglers.

The research question has been, "What makes the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within her doors in line with her biblical responsibilities?" To discover the answer, the question was asked, "Is the response of the selected churches toward male homosexual strugglers within her doors in line with her biblical responsibilities?" If the church is living out her biblical responsibilities, then male homosexual strugglers have an incredible opportunity to feel safe as they struggle through their thoughts, feelings, and temptations and progress in discipleship.

Four hypotheses were presented, each focusing upon a different element of the concept of safety in the church for the struggler. Each concept was developed as a result of reading, research and interaction with male homosexual strugglers. Three separate

churches participated in this study producing a total of fifteen strugglers and thirty-six church members who signed the consent form and answered the survey questions. Each of the survey participants in the survey is highly involved in his church. One question that was asked of all participants related to how often they attended their church's services and events. All participants (100%) responded with "always," indicating that they are present when there are services or special events.

All of the answers were compiled into two groups: the strugglers and the average church members. In this chapter we will examine the results of each group as we attempt to prove or disprove each hypothesis. The expectation has been that each group, because they are a part of an effective church ministry to strugglers, will be positive in their answers. It was, however, expected that the church members' answers would be more positive than the strugglers. This assumption was based upon the fact that strugglers deal with the ongoing turmoil of their same-sex attractions, temptations and behaviors. The average church member may not have a full understanding of how difficult or deep this issue is in the hearts of strugglers.

Survey Results for Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis is that the effective churches understand their biblical responsibility toward male homosexual strugglers in their congregations. These churches are effective because the members understand that their church should be a place where all people feel safe as they struggle in their journey of holiness, regardless of their sin or their propensity toward a certain sin. Again, these churches do not turn a blind eye to sin but feel that one of the first things strugglers need is a place where they can be safely

disciplined toward understanding, forgiveness, healing and holiness. So, the first learning objective was to ascertain if the selected churches understand what it means to be a place of safety for everyone, regardless of sexual struggles or sin.

The results were eye-opening. The author expected the scores from both groups to be on the higher end of the scale (7) and the church member scores to be higher than those of the strugglers. Remarkably, although both groups rated their church a place of safety for male homosexual strugglers (as well as strugglers of any type), the strugglers scored their church higher than the church members did. When asked, “To what level do you feel that your church is a safe place for you or for strugglers to acknowledge and process through sexual issues?” (Question 2), 86 percent of the strugglers answered “extremely safe” (6 or 7 rating), compared to 80 percent for church members.

When asked, “To what level you feel your church would welcome you or a struggler after a momentary or prolonged relapse?” (Question 6), 83 percent of the strugglers answered “extremely safe” (6 or 7 rating) compared to 77 percent of church members. When asked, “To what level do you feel that you are welcome at your church as a follower of Jesus Christ, although your personal struggle is with same-sex sin/temptation?” (Question 10), 93 percent of strugglers answered “extremely well” (6 or 7 rating) compared to 86 percent of the church members. When asked, “To what extent do the printed materials and announcements communicate that your church is a place of safety for you and other strugglers?” (Question 14), 60 percent of strugglers answered “extremely well” (a 6 or 7 rating), compared to only 38 percent of the church members.

Last, when asked, “To what extent do the sermons communicate that your church is a place of safety for you and other strugglers?” (Question 41), 80 percent of strugglers answered “extremely well compared to 77 percent of church members. Each of these questions centered on the issue of the church being a safe place for strugglers, the strugglers viewed their church as a greater place of safety than the church members did, although both were on the higher (positive) end of the scale.

Each of these questions centered on the church being a place of safety for all people to process through their struggles with sin especially those who struggle with same-sex attraction or homosexuality (Fig. 1). It is believed that strugglers will not begin to process through these issues at a church that does not provide a safe environment. Strugglers are already dealing with confusion and guilt and are looking for a place that will stand on the truth but also provide an atmosphere of acceptance (not enabling). It was encouraging to see from the responses to this set of questions that the selected churches are safe places for the struggler process through their sexual issues. The participating churches are communicating that they are places of safety for the strugglers.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 2, 6, 10, 14, 41), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores on church safety for strugglers (see Table 1). There is not a significant difference ($t = -0.82$, $df = 20$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.99) and post-test scores (mean = 6.19). The assumption was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is no significant difference.

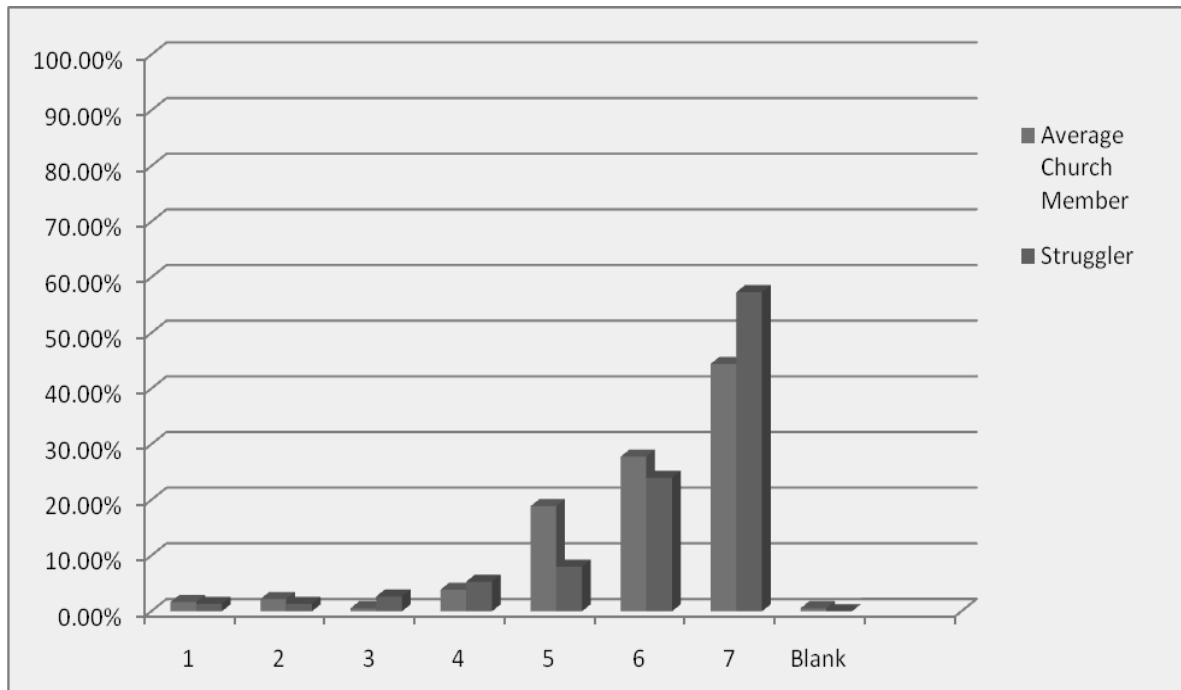


Figure 1. Percentages of Responses Related to Church Safety for Strugglers.

Table 1. *t*-test of Responses Related to Church Safety for Strugglers.

<i>t</i> -test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members for average scores on Church Safety for Male Strugglers (Hypothesis One Learning Objective One)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	5.99	6.19
Variance	0.34	0.74
Observations	36	15
df	20	
t Stat	-0.82	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.21	

Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, the learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do indeed possess an environment or culture that is welcoming to male strugglers who desire to process through their struggles biblically. The results also demonstrate that the participating churches communicate that male strugglers are welcome as followers of

Jesus Christ. The participating churches are successful because they provide a place of safety for struggling people of all types without compromising the truths of Scripture.

The second learning objective was to determine whether the participating churches conducted themselves in such a way as to convey that their member, too, need the same grace as strugglers. The author was hoping to discover if the average church member in the participating churches saw his sin on the same level as the struggler's sin. The overall results to these survey questions were also totally unexpected. The answers from both groups were expected to be on the lower end of the scale, with the average members' answers to be lower than the strugglers. This was not the case. The church members' answers displayed an attitude of equality and an understanding of their own depravity. The church members viewed strugglers as equal and valued objects of God's affection regardless of their propensity to same-sex attractions or behavior. When asked, "To what level do you feel your church believes that you are the object of God's affection regardless of your past or present sexual struggles?" (Question 15) 93 percent of the strugglers answered "strong belief" (a rating of 7) compared to 88 percent of the church members. The strugglers clearly sensed that church members recognize struggler's value before God in spite of their struggle with same-sex attractions and behaviors.

When asked, "To what level does your church treat you equally as a believer who is pursuing Christ?" (Question 19), 86 percent of strugglers answered "extremely equal" (a rating of 7) as compared to 47 percent from the church members who answered "extremely equal." It was just as surprising that the majority of strugglers answered positively as it was that the smaller percentage of church members answered positively.

The strugglers feel that their churches are treating them on an equal level, but, the church members are not as convinced.

When asked, “To what level does your church treat your sin/struggle as a greater evil than the sins/struggles other people face?” (Question 23), 82 percent of strugglers felt that their sin was treated as “another evil” (a rating of 4, 5, 6, or 7). Only one struggler answered (with a rating of 2) that his was treated like a “greater evil” than other sins. The church members overwhelmingly responded in the 4 to 7 range – 89 percent – indicating their conviction that the strugglers’ sin/struggle is just “another evil”; only 11 percent answered that it is a “greater evil” (2 people responded with a rating of 3 and 2 others with a rating of 2).

Overall, the church members scored more positively than expected. It appears that church members within the participating churches understand their biblical responsibility to care for and treat all people equally regardless of one’s propensity to a certain sin, no matter how grievous that sin may be to them. Strugglers need a safe place where they can wrestle through their sexual issues as they pursue holiness. The participating churches are safe places because they treat the strugglers as equally valued objects of God’s affection.

Each of the above questions centered on the church’s understanding that all people are created equal and are valued as the objects of God’s affection regardless of their propensity for a certain sin, or their past or present involvement in that sin (Fig. 2). Both surveyed groups responded positively but the strugglers viewed their church as more advanced in this area than the average church member did. Clearly, the

participating churches are effectively communicating that every person is equally valued as the objects of God’s affection.

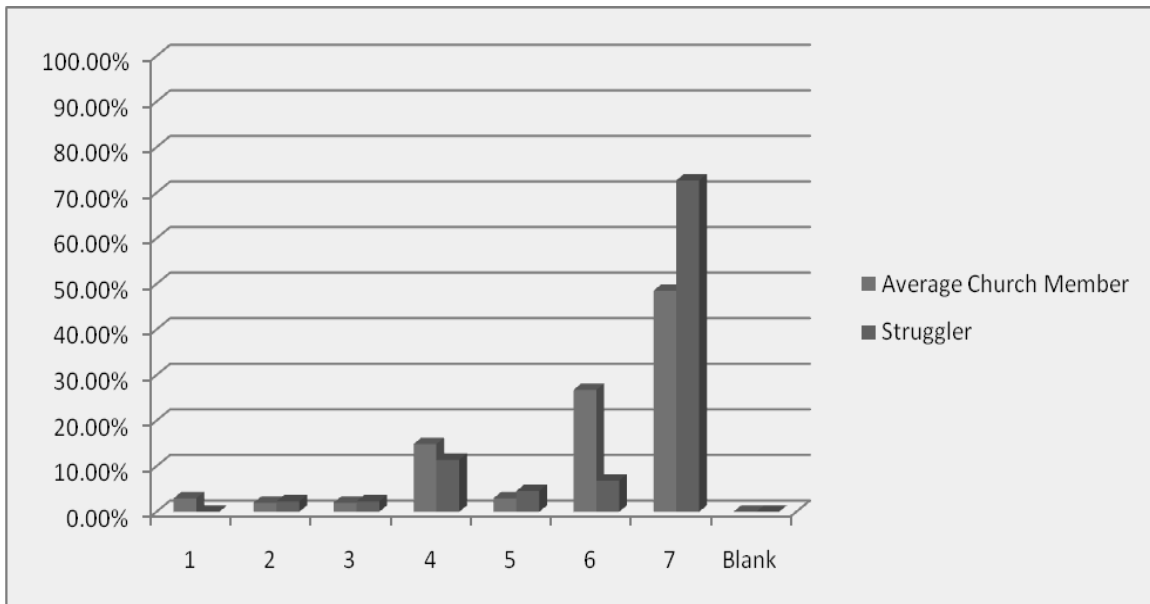


Figure 2. Percentages of Responses Related to Being Equal Objects of God’s Affection.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 15, 19, 23), a *t*-test was applied measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores on being equal objects of God’s affection (see Table 2). There is not a significant difference ($t = -1.60$, $df = 31$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 4.69) and post-test scores (mean = 4.78). The expectation was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is no significant difference. Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, the author is confident that the learning objective was accomplished.

The third learning objective was to determine if the selected churches understand that God desires to transform and deliver all people, regardless of their sin,

and that He wants to conform everyone to His image. The author wanted to discover if the average church member believed that it was the church’s responsibility to help people become transformed into the image of Christ even if these people struggle with same-sex attractions or behaviors. The overall expectation for this set of questions was to find out whether the selected churches understood their biblical responsibility as an avenue of God’s grace in the transformation process and if they demonstrated a high level of commitment to assisting strugglers in the transformation process. The author maintains that the survey results confirmed the objective.

Table 2. *t*-test of Responses Related to Being Equal Objects of God’s Affection.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members on Strugglers for average scores on being treated equally as the Objects of God’s Affection (Hypothesis One Learning Objective Two)			
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>	
Mean	5.86	6.31	
Variance	1.03	0.75	
Observations	34	15	
df	31		
t Stat	-1.60		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.06		

When asked, “To what level do you believe that your church is committed to seeing you (strugglers) transformed, delivered, and changed so that you are conformed to the image of Christ?” (Question 28), 73 percent of strugglers answered “highly committed” (a rating of 7) compared to 77 percent of church members. Both groups believed that the church is highly committed to the ministry of discipling strugglers.

When asked, “To what level do you believe that your church understands its biblical responsibility to see God transform strugglers into the image of Christ as a result of her ministries?” (Question 32), 86 percent of strugglers answered that their church had a “high understanding” of this responsibility compared, to 53percent of church members. It is encouraging that the strugglers are experiencing the ministry of transformation from their churches. The low score of the church members could indicate that members do not believe that enough is being done or that they are unaware of everything that is being done for the strugglers. In any case, the strugglers believe that their church is fulfilling its ministry.

Finally, when asked to look “at the available resources (support groups, discipleship groups, reading and studying materials, willing church members, etc.) that your church offers strugglers, to what level do you believe that your church is committed to your transformation?” (Question 36), 66 percent of strugglers believed that their church was “highly committed” (a rating of 7) to assisting strugglers in the growth and change process as compared to only 25 percent of church members. Another 25 percent answered “committed” (a rating of 6) for a total of 50 percent responded with either a 6 or 7. The church members’ percentage is still quite a bit lower than the strugglers’, but since the question was centered on materials available for the strugglers, it was expected that the strugglers would have a better understanding of what resources were available to help them. The average church member might not have had the opportunity to know what was available unless he was personally counseling or discipling a struggler.

Each of these questions centered on the church’s understanding that God desires to transform all people into the image of Christ, regardless of the nature of their sin (Fig. 3). Strugglers and church members alike viewed their church as understanding this principle. The strugglers did view their church more highly than the church member did, although both groups were on the higher (positive) end of the scale. The participating churches do possess an understanding of God’s desire to bring transformation to all people.

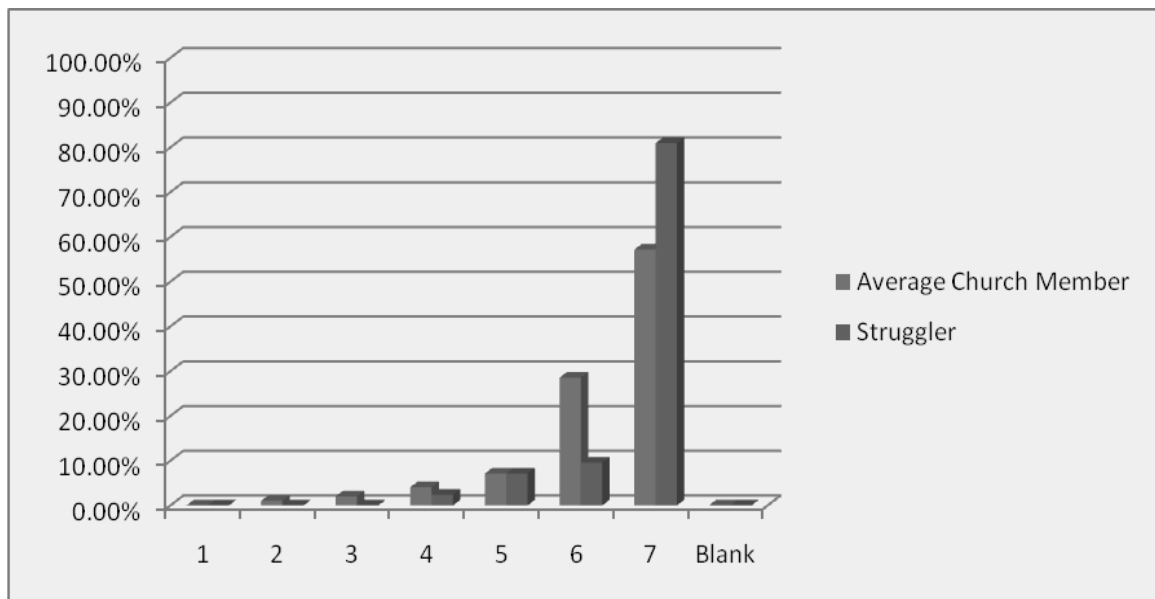


Figure 3. Percentages of Responses Related to Understanding God’s Desire for Transformation.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 28, 32, 36), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores on being equal objects of God’s affection (see Table 3). There is a significant difference ($t = -1.97, df = 29, p < .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 6.35) and post-test scores (mean = 6.69). The

expectation was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher and the *t*-test reports that statistically there is significant difference.

Table 3. *t*-test of Responses Related to Understanding God’s Desire for Transformation.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members on Strugglers for average scores on understanding God’s desire for transformation (Hypothesis 1 Learning Objective 3)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	6.35	6.69
Variance	0.39	0.26
Observations	36	14
df	29	
t Stat	-1.97	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.03	

It is extremely encouraging to know from these findings that effective churches understand that God desires to transform and help all people regardless of their propensity to a particular sin especially the sin of homosexuality or even the continuing battle with same-sex attractions. Churches who desire to have a successful ministry to men who struggle with homosexuality or same-sex attractions need to understand that God desires to bring about life transformation to each and every person including the struggler.

From a purely statistical perspective, the first hypothesis was not validated because the church members’ responses were expected to be much higher than the strugglers’ responses. However, from a practical perspective there is nonetheless a great likelihood that the participating churches are effective in ministry, because the data suggests that they do understand the biblical responsibility they have been given to care for the male homosexual strugglers who are in their realm of influence. From the surveys

it appears that the members of these churches see themselves on the same level as the strugglers, both of equal value in God's eyes and both needing God's grace to bring about life transformation. This is important because many strugglers do not feel safe in church. Churches that understand that God their God-given ministry of redemption and reconciliation and that communicate that mission effectively well-equipped to sustain a ministry to male homosexual strugglers.

Survey Results for Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis is that the selected churches are effective because they possess the caring attitude needed to minister to male homosexual strugglers. The previous hypothesis dealt primarily with churches' understanding of God's plan for the church, its mission, and people. This second hypothesis deals with overall attitude, and how that is communicated by the church (and its members) to the struggler. It is one thing to believe something but quite another to begin living that belief out. It is expected that effective churches will possess a caring attitude toward homosexual strugglers.

The initial screening was to determine if the selected churches possessed a genuine, heartfelt compassion for male homosexual strugglers. If strugglers could be in a place where they were cared for, then they would feel safe to begin processing through the events of their lives as they follow Jesus into holiness. Without a caring attitude the church would not be a place of safety.

Questions were formulated that would help discover if the selected churches did possess a heartfelt compassion for male strugglers. When asked the first question, "To what level do you feel that the people of your church demonstrate a heart of

compassion for strugglers?” (Question 3), 80 percent of strugglers answered that the people in their churches were “involved with them” in healthy and vibrant ways (a rating of 7), while the other 20 percent answered on the upper end of the scale as well. The opposite end of the scale gave the choice of “uncomfortable with me.” The percentages were somewhat lower for the church members yet still on the upper end of the scale, with 33 percent responding “involved” (a rating of 7) and another 44 percent responding with a 6 rating, showing that 77 percent of church members believed that people were willing to get involved with the strugglers in their churches.

When asked, “To what degree is your church different from other churches in regards to a caring attitude for those who struggle with homosexual attractions or behaviors?” (Question 7), 86 percent of the strugglers answered that the people in their church were “more caring” than other churches (a rating of 7), while 55 percent of church members believed the same. This result lends credence to the thought that people will not join a church if they do not feel that the people care about them. Based upon the responses to this question, the strugglers feel that the people in their churches are more caring than people in other churches. The members, who are the caregivers for the strugglers, still believe that their church is caring but they do not perceive the same degree of caring that strugglers describe. The lower responses from the church members were a bit confusing at first, but they may demonstrate a healthy attitude of humility that allows the members to embrace and care for the struggler.

When asked, “To what degree people at your church really care about you?” (Question 11), the answers for both groups were lower than for the previous question.

While no struggler believed that the people in his church were “uncomfortable with him”, only 40 percent answered that the people “deeply cared” about them (a rating of 7), although another 40 percent answered one step down the scale (6). The church members answered this question in similar proportion with 47 percent giving a rating of 7 and 41 percent giving a rating 6. Although, strugglers believe that their church is more caring than other churches that they have experienced, their answers to this question do not seem as confident as their responses to the previous question. Nonetheless, the answers on both questions for both groups were on the upper end of the scale, indicating that strugglers experience loving care to a greater degree in their home churches than in other churches.

Each of these questions centered on churches’ possessing a visual, heartfelt, active compassion for the male struggler (Fig. 4). As a result of this survey, it can also be concluded that the participating churches do possess an attitude of heartfelt compassion for the strugglers in their ministries.

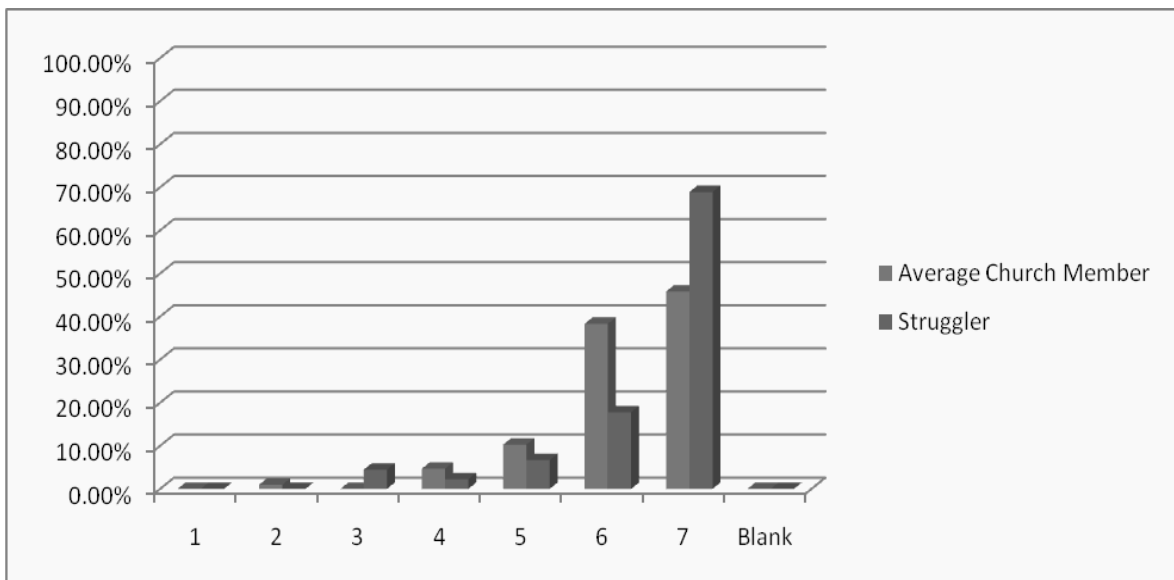


Figure 4. Percentages of Responses Related to Churches Heartfelt Compassion toward the Male Struggler

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 3, 7, 11), a *t*-test was also applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores on the churches heartfelt compassion toward male struggler (see Table 4). There is not a significant difference ($t = -0.82$, $df = 20$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 6.23) and post-test scores (mean = 6.44). The research expectation was that the average church members' scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is no significant difference. Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, the author that the stated learning objective was accomplished.

Table 4. *t*-test of Responses to Churches Heartfelt Compassion toward the Male Struggler

	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	6.23	6.44
Variance	0.42	0.84
Observations	36	15
Df	20	
t Stat	-0.82	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.21	

The second learning objective was to determine if the members of the selected churches conducted themselves as people who need the same grace strugglers do. Because of the nature of same-sex attractions and homosexual behaviors, many strugglers already carry a heavy load of guilt. Many of them have been rejected by peers, friends, and even family; they have been the focus of jokes and the objects of hostility and

homophobia. Too many of Christians have viewed their struggle as a greater sin than our own. It is believed that if churches could approach those who struggle with homosexual attractions on level ground, we would be much more successful in assisting them on their journey to holiness. If they could see, hear, and experience in heterosexual believers a humility that communicated a personal need for God's grace, the strugglers could begin to understand that their own sin is not the greatest sin, but just another sin. This levels the playing field of grace. The author maintains that effective churches are successful because their members understand that their need for God's grace is just as great as the strugglers' need.

In order to gather information regarding this learning objective, the first question was, "To what level do the people at your church see their need for God's intervention regarding their own struggles with sin?" (Question 16) The strugglers' scores were expected to be lower than the members' scores due to the guilt associated with homosexuality, with the majority of answers expected to fall around the middle mark (4); indicating a conviction that all sin is equal and in need of God's grace on an equal level. The result was just the opposite: While only 20 percent of the strugglers answered "greater than my sin", a rating of 5, 6 or 7, 36 percent of church members rated their own struggle with personal sin "as greater than" the sin of the struggler. In essence, over one-third of the church members surveyed believed that their sin was greater than the sin of homosexuality while only one fifth of the strugglers believed that the people in their church saw their own sin as greater than homosexuality. Overall, the majority of answers on this question from both groups were on the positive side of the scale, with 86

percent of strugglers answering above the middle mark (4-7) and 91 percent of church members answering above the middle mark (4). The scores from both groups demonstrate that the church members surveyed see their own sin as needing more grace than the sin of the strugglers. This reflects a real attitude of humility and a genuine understanding of personal depravity.

Another question asked was, “When you look at the general overall attitude of people at your church toward sin, where would they rate your struggle as compared to other sin(s)?”(Question 20) The majority of both groups answered this question in the center of the scale (4). On the lower end of the scale we have “greatest sin” and on the upper end of the scale “less than my sin.” Seventy-three percent of the strugglers’ answers were in the middle of the scale, compared to 63 percent of the church members’ answers. It is noteworthy that 27 percent of church members responded from the lower side of the scale, indicating that they perceived their own sin as greater than the sin of the strugglers.

Finally, both groups were asked, “Looking at the people in your church in general, how would they rate their own sin compared to your struggle?” (Question 24) Again, it was expected that the majority of answers would be in the middle of the scale. Eighty-six percent of strugglers and only 55 percent of church members answered in the middle of the scale (4) overwhelming reflecting the strugglers’ strong belief that the people in their church saw their own personal sin as equal to the sin of the strugglers. Of the church members who did not answer in the middle of the scale, 19 percent answered that their sin was a lesser sin than homosexuality while 25 percent answered that their

personal sin was a greater sin than that of the struggler. Thus, a total of 80 percent of the church members surveyed believed that their own sin was equal to or greater than the struggler's sin. This is remarkable.

Each of these questions centered on the issue of church members and strugglers alike needing the same grace (Fig. 5). The strugglers communicated that they viewed the members of their as conducting themselves in a manner as needing grace for their own sin and struggles. From the perspective of the strugglers, church members were treating their own personal sin either on the same level as the strugglers' sin or as a greater sin than the strugglers' sin. The author anticipated the majority of responses would be at the midpoint of the scale, and that is exactly what was found (Fig. 5). To a great degree, the church members demonstrated incredible humility with their overall answers. The participating churches are conducting themselves as those who need the same grace as strugglers.

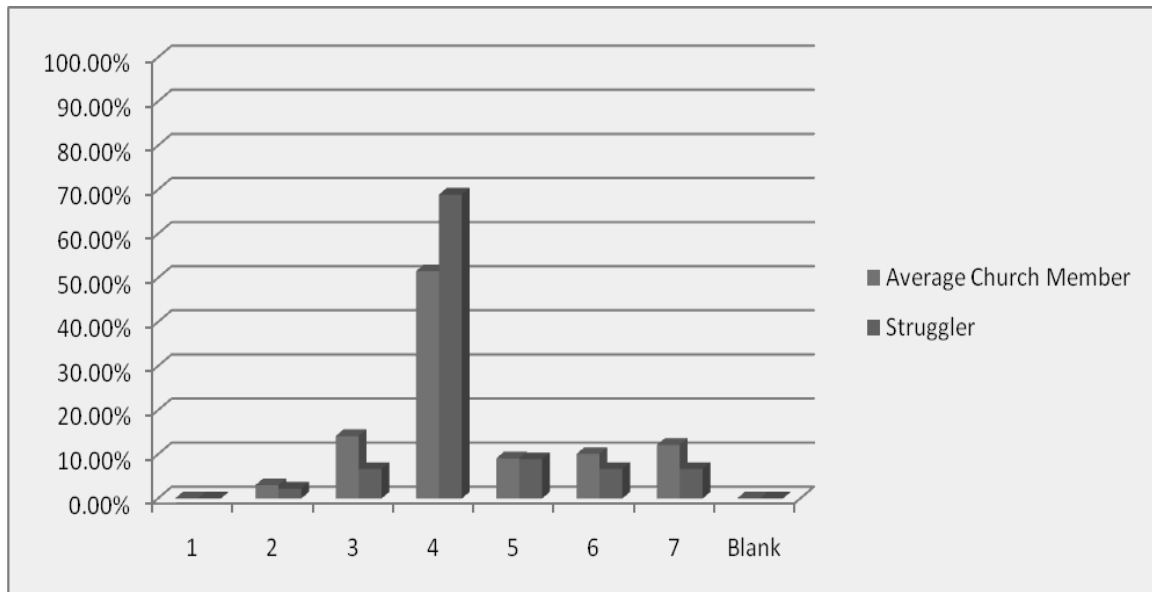


Figure 5. Percentages of Responses Related to Churches on Equality of Sin.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 16, 20, 24), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding personal perspective of their own sin compared to the sin of the struggler (Table 5). There is a no significant difference ($t = 0.61$, $df = 32$, $p < .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 4.42) and post-test scores (mean = 4.31). It was expected that the church members' scores would have been higher or more positive than the strugglers' scores, and this is the first case where the church members' scores were found to be higher. This suggests that the church members do not see the strugglers' sin or struggle as greater than their own.

Table 5. *t*-test of Responses Related to Churches on Equality of Sin.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members on Strugglers for average scores on equality of sin (Hypothesis 2 Learning Objective 2)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	4.42	4.31
Variance	0.43	0.29
Observations	34	15
df	32	
t Stat	0.61	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.27	

The third learning objective for this hypothesis was to discover if the participating churches possessed a positive outlook for life change for homosexual strugglers regardless of the level of their involvement in homosexuality. There are many levels and facets to life-dominating sin, and some are affected more deeply than others. For the person who struggles with same-sex attractions and temptations the struggle, may not be quite as dominating as it is for those who have taken the next step and have

participated in homosexual behaviors, habits or relationships. The author posits that an effective church ministry to male homosexual strugglers will demonstrate a positive outlook for the life change for each and all strugglers, regardless as of their level of involvement or behavior.

In order to determine this, the question was asked, “To what level do the people at your church believe that there is hope for strugglers to have their situations transformed by God's truth and power?” (Question 29) The answers from both groups were extremely positive, with 86 percent of the strugglers and 80 percent of the church members stating that there was certain hope that God’s truth and power could transform the struggler’s life (a rating of 7). In addition, 100 percent of both groups answered this question on the positive side of the scale, with a rating of 6 or 7. Both groups felt that their churches were strongly committed to belief in God’s ability to transform the lives of strugglers. This is hope.

The second question asked, “How well does your church communicate that God has a purpose and plan for everyone regardless of sin or propensity to particular sin?” (Question 33) On this point, 93 percent of strugglers responded, “extremely well” (7), compared to 50 percent of church members. Although the church members’ scores were lower than the strugglers’ scores, 100 percent of their answers were still on the positive side of the scale. However, from this question we can see in the strugglers’ responses, that there is a message of purpose being communicated through the members of these churches. It is very good to hear both the hope in the answers of the strugglers and humility in the responses of the church members. The church members understand

that their church has not “arrived” in this ministry and that they still have plenty of work to do.

The final question related to this learning objective was, “To what level do the people at your church believe that God has provided everything we need for life transformation?” (Question 37) This question produced positive results from the strugglers as 80 percent responded by answering “absolute certainty” (7), compared to 63 percent for the church members. Once again, the struggler’s perspective of the church members is higher than the church member’s view of themselves.

Each of these questions centered on the churches’ possessing a trusting, positive outlook for life change. The strugglers viewed their church as possessing a more positive outlook than the church members themselves did, although both were on the higher (positive) end of the scale (Fig. 6). Clearly, the participating churches are communicating a positive, caring attitude of hope to the strugglers in their ministries.

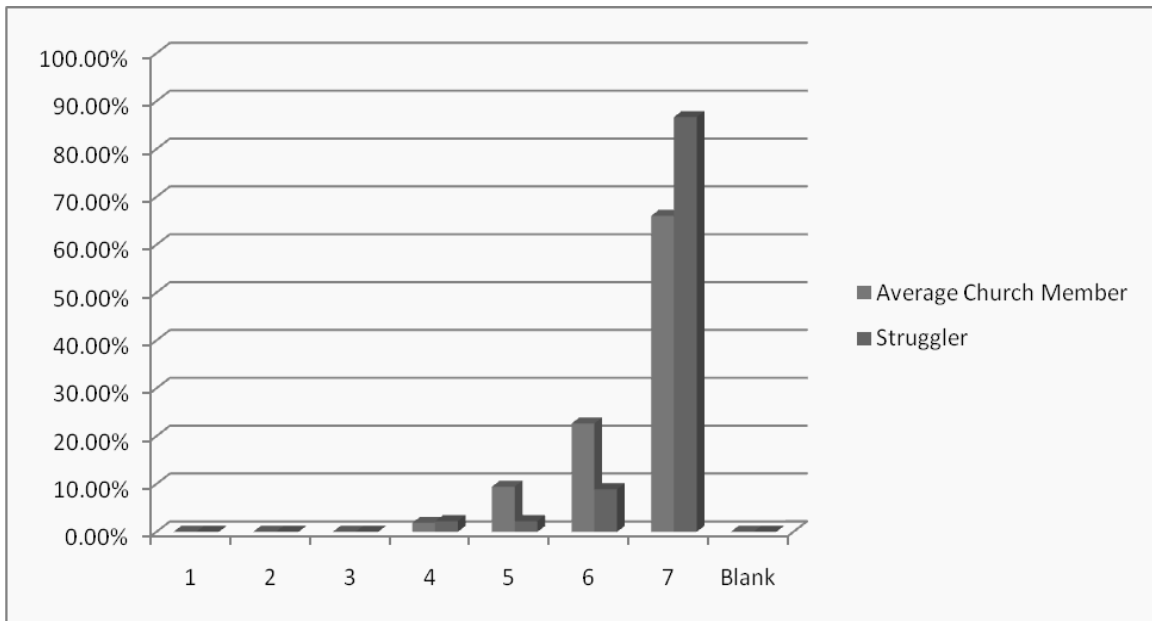


Figure 6. Percentages of Responses Related to a Positive Outlook for Life Change.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 29, 33, 37), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding possessing a positive outlook for life change for the homosexual struggler regardless of the level of involvement in homosexuality (Table 6). There is a significant difference ($t = -1.66$, $df = 26$, $p = .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 6.54) and post-test scores (mean = 6.80). The expectation, however, was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were proved to be significantly higher than the church members' scores.

Table 6. *t*-test of Responses Related to a Positive Outlook for Life Change.

<i>t</i> -test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members and Strugglers for average scores on a positive outlook for life change (Hypothesis 2 Learning Objective 3)			
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>	
Mean	6.54	6.80	
Variance	0.27	0.27	
Observations	36	15	
df	26		
t Stat	-1.66		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.05		

Thus, although the *t*-test does statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite result of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church members and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do indeed possess a positive outlook for life change for the homosexual struggler regardless of the level of involvement in

homosexuality. The results also demonstrate that the participating churches do communicate that there is hope for life change through the resources of God's truth and power.

From a purely statistical perspective, the second hypothesis was not validated since the church members' responses were expected to be much higher than the strugglers' responses. However, from a practical perspective, the data collected suggests there is a great likelihood that the participating churches are effective because they do possess the caring attitude that is needed to minister to male homosexual strugglers. We can glean from the surveys that the members of these churches demonstrate a visible, genuine, heartfelt compassion for those who are homosexual strugglers. They see themselves as needing the same grace as strugglers, and they communicate a positive outlook for life change for strugglers. Churches that are effective have a great deal of empathy for the men who are battling same-sex attractions or homosexual behavior, and the participating churches demonstrate an attitude of empathy toward the strugglers in their realm of influence. Churches that understand their God-given ministry of compassion are at a great place to begin and sustain a ministry to male homosexual strugglers, because these churches are safe and welcome places.

Survey Results for Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis is that selected churches are effective because they demonstrate caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers. The first hypothesis dealt primarily with a church's understanding of its biblical responsibility to implement God's plan for the church, particularly in relation to male homosexual strugglers. The

second hypothesis dealt with how that mission is communicated to the struggler by the church member. This third hypothesis deals with the overall behavior of the church members toward the strugglers, as demonstrated by caring actions. The author's position is that an effective and safe ministry toward male homosexual strugglers starts with a caring attitude and a solid understanding of the church's biblical responsibilities. Flowing naturally from these would be the corollary that safe churches are effective because they demonstrate caring behavior toward male strugglers. It is one thing to understand biblical responsibilities and possess a biblical attitude but it is quite another to demonstrate caring behavior toward strugglers. It is expected to find that the participating churches in this study are effective because they do demonstrate effective behavior toward the strugglers in their ministries. It is also expected that the church members' answers would be more positive (higher on the scale) than the strugglers' just because it is easier to be the one listening than the one sharing the messy details of a same-sex attraction or homosexual story.

The first learning objective was to discover if the members of the selected churches demonstrate a willingness to actively listen to the strugglers' story with the purpose of walking with them through their struggle. Listening to a struggler's story demonstrates one of the foundational actions of caring. To determine whether the participating churches do demonstrate the ability to listen, it was asked, "To what degree have individuals (besides a pastor or counselor) at your church been willing to listen to your story including the dirty details, in a way that demonstrates genuine care and concern?" (Question 4) Although the majority of the responses were above the midpoint,

only 46 percent of the strugglers answered “extremely willing” (a rating of 7) compared to 30 percent of church members. Overall, 86 percent of strugglers and 97 percent of church members answered above the midpoint, with 66 percent of strugglers and 63 percent of church members answering on the high end of the scale (a rating of a 6 or a 7). Since this question included a reference to the element of listening to “dirty details,” it may have produced some hesitation in both groups. Among the strugglers, there could be a reluctance to share the details out of fear of rejection or concerns about confidentiality; the church members might be afraid to listen to details that would be offensive, shocking, or disgusting to them, due to their innocence of the homosexual world. Whatever the reason, we still gain the idea that listening is a key component to demonstrating caring behavior toward strugglers.

The next question presented to the participants was, “to what degree have individuals at your church been willing to listen and walk with you after a temporary or extended relapse?”(Question 8) This question was designed to give information on how caring the church was toward those who may have slipped in their journey toward holiness by having a relapse of some proportion. Most of us understand that dealing with a life-dominating sin often includes a few steps backwards. But were the participating churches successful in continuing on the journey with someone who had either a small relapse or significant one? The answers to the question were very surprising. Answers from both groups were expected to be at the midpoint. However, 53 percent of the strugglers answered “extremely willing” (a rating of 7) and another 26 percent answered with a rating of 6, for a total of 80 percent responded on the high end of the scale (a 6 or a

7). The strugglers felt that the church members in their churches were very willing to listen and walk with them, even after a relapse. The church members' responses were more as expected somewhat nearer the midpoint. While 38 percent answered "extremely willing" (a rating of 7), 25 percent responded with a 6, and 30 percent responded with a 5. There was one struggler and one church member who left this question blank. This was a tough question compared to the others on the survey, and it highlights the difficulty of caring through listening especially after a relapse.

When asked, "How eager and willing are the people in your church to listen, hear and understand your story in order to walk with you through your struggle?" (Question 12), the responses were similar, with 40 percent of strugglers answering "extremely willing" (a rating of 7), and 26 percent responded one step lower (a rating of 6), for a total of 66 percent on the upper end of the scale. The church members' scores were similar, with 27 percent answering "extremely willing" (a rating of 7) and 38 percent responding one step lower (a rating of 6) for a combined total of 56 percent on the upper end of the scale. Only one struggler answered below the midpoint (3) while all the church members answered above the midpoint. The overall response showed that the participating churches are indeed willing to listen to the struggler's story in detail.

The final question asked for this learning objective was "How patient are the people at your church with you as you have begun processing through your struggle?" (Question 40) Eighty percent of the strugglers answered "extremely patient" (a rating of 7) compared to only 41 percent of the church members. Another 22 percent of the church members answered one step lower (a rating of 6) for a total of 63 percent who responded

with either a 6 or 7. The strugglers' answers were expected to be lower on the scale and than those of the church members, so it was encouraging that these scores were actually on the high end of the scale. The strugglers in the participating churches have experienced patience from the members of their churches as they process through same-sex or homosexual struggles. This should be an encouragement to pastors as they prepare their people to minister to strugglers.

Each of these questions centered on the church's willingness to actively listen to the strugglers' stories with the purpose of walking with them through their struggles (Fig. 7). The participating churches are communicating a positive, caring attitude of hope through listening to the strugglers and they are demonstrating caring behavior by patiently listening to the struggler's stories.

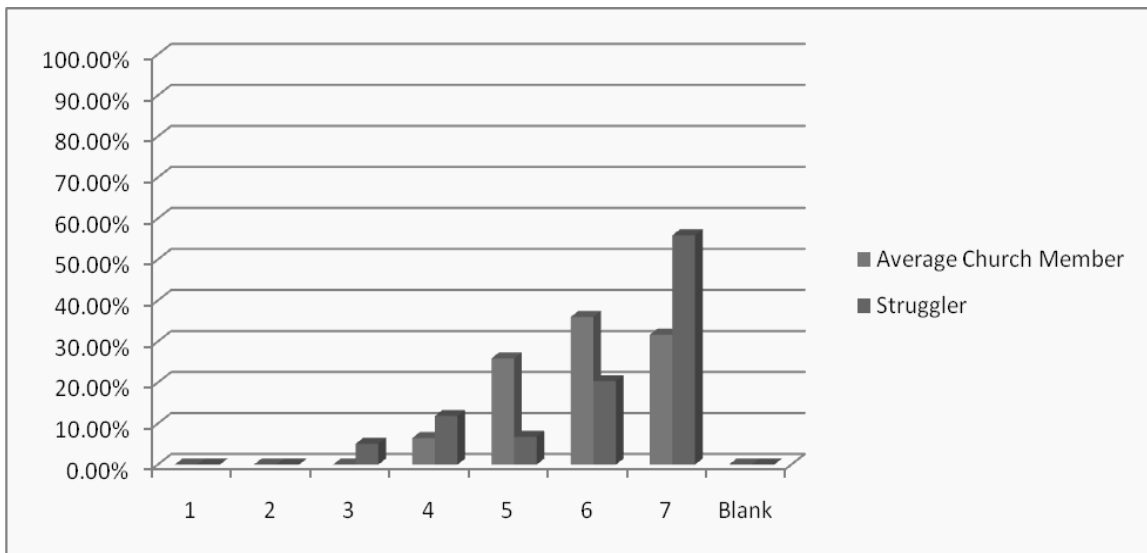


Figure 7. Percentages of Responses Related to Demonstrating a Willingness to Listen.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 4, 8, 12, 40), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding demonstrating a willingness to

actively listen to the strugglers' stories (Table 7). There is not a significant difference ($t = -0.41$, $df = 19$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.94) and post-test scores (mean = 6.06). Expected was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the t -test found no significant difference.

Table 7. t -test Responses Related to Demonstrating a Willingness to Listen

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members and Strugglers for average scores on demonstrating a willingness to listen (Hypothesis 3 Learning Objective 1)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	5.94	6.06
Variance	0.47	1.24
Observations	35	15
df	19	
t Stat	-0.41	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.34	

Although the t -test does not show a significant difference, it does show what was expected. The author maintains that the learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do demonstrate a willingness to actively listen to the strugglers' stories with the purpose of walking with them through their struggle. From these results, it is clear that the participating churches are demonstrating to a great degree a willingness to listen.

The second learning objective is to determine whether the participating churches have a variety of people involved in the caring process. As explained in the literature review (chapter 2), much has been written about the need for a variety of people to be involved with the homosexual strugglers in the journey toward wholeness and

holiness. In order to determine if the selected churches were effective, the survey posed this question: “How involved are the people (apart from counselors and pastoral staff) at your church in your life and growth process?” (Question 17) The strugglers’ responses to this question were fairly widespread across the scale: The majority (66%) of answers were on the upper end of the scale (5-7, or “highly involved.”), but 26 percent responded with a 5 or a 6. The church members’ scores (66%) were primarily centered on the middle of the scale (a rating of 4 or 5).

When asked “How important is physical touch (hug, handshake, etc.) from the heterosexual men at your church in the healing and transformation process of your life?” (Question 21), 66 percent of strugglers answered “extremely important.” Only one struggler responded that physical touch was “extremely unimportant.” The majority (93%) answered on the upper end of the scale (5-7). The church members’ answers were mostly (66%) on the upper end of the scale (5-7), while 22 percent left the question blank. This last percentage, those who did not answer the question, makes sense if we understand that heterosexual men in general want to be cautious with strugglers in order not to send a wrong or confusing signal. Some people, especially men, are also just uncomfortable touching other men. In any case, the strugglers’ responses indicate that physical touch is important in the transformation process.

The last question related to this learning objective is “How involved are the heterosexual men at your church in the ministries, counseling and activities that relate to your struggle?” (Question 25) The struggler’s responses cover every option from “extremely involved” (a rating of 6 or 7) to “extremely uninvolved” (a rating of 1 or 2).

Using the midpoint (4) as a marker, 53 percent answered above the midpoint (5-7), 25 percent answered below the midpoint (1-3), and 20 percent were at the midpoint. The church members' responses were also widely dispersed out among the options: No one answered "extremely uninvolved" (1), but 5 people did not answer the question. Using the midpoint (4) as a marker, 52 percent answered above the midpoint (5-7), 16% answered below the midpoint (2-3), and 16 percent were at the midpoint marker. Looking at the percentages above the midpoint for both groups, the results show that a little more than half of the strugglers and church members believe that there are heterosexual men involved in counseling and related activities that help the struggler.

Each of these questions centered on the church demonstrating caring behavior by having a variety of people involved in the church's ministries toward the strugglers. Both groups communicated through their answers that there is a level of involvement from heterosexual men and others in these effective church ministries but not to the expected degree (Fig. 8).

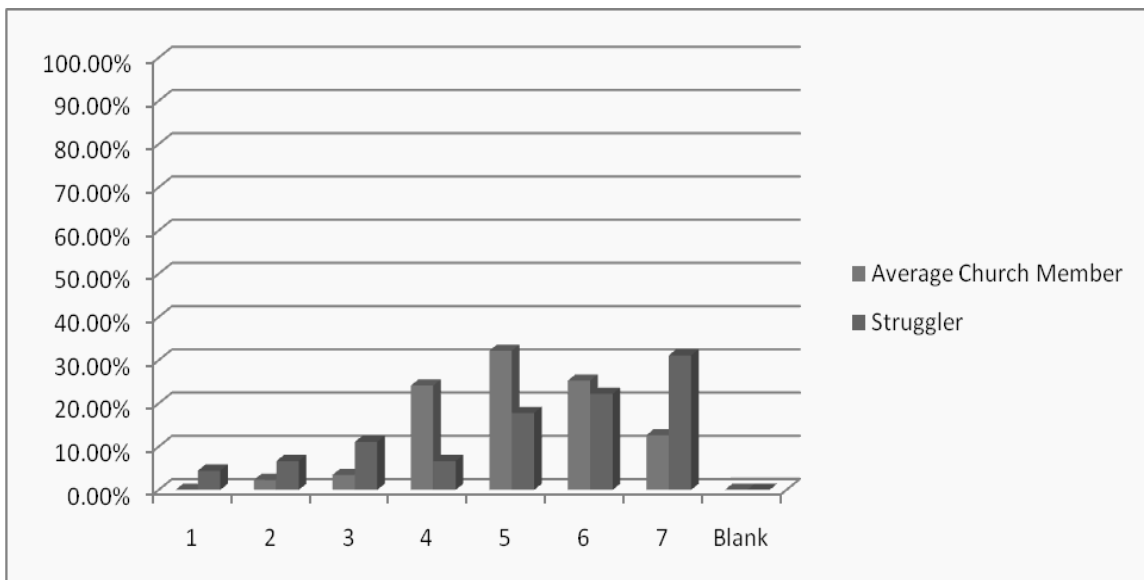


Figure 8. Percentages of Responses Related to a People Involvement.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 17, 21, 25), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding a variety of people involved in the caring process (Table 8). There is not a significant difference ($t = -0.19$, $df = 21$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.12) and post-test scores (mean = 5.18). The expectation was that the average church members' scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is not a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were higher than the church members' scores.

Table 8. *t*-test of Responses Related to a People Involvement.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Church Members and Strugglers for average scores of the variety of people involved (Hypothesis 3 Learning Objective 2)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	5.12	5.18
Variance	0.51	1.00
Observations	30	15
df	21	
t Stat	-0.19	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.42	

Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do have a variety of people involved in the ministries toward male strugglers. The author was expecting survey numbers to be higher for both groups, but from these results it is clear that the participating churches do

have a variety of people involved in ministering to strugglers, - although not as high as expected.

The third learning objective was to determine if heterosexual men in the participating churches were involved in counseling and discipling of strugglers, thus modeling biblical manhood. As explained in the literature review (chapter 2), much has been written about the validity and necessity for heterosexual men, solid in their own heterosexuality, to invest in homosexual strugglers in their journey toward wholeness and holiness. In order to determine this both groups were asked, “How well do the men at your church model biblical manhood in a way that inspires you in the transformation process?” (Question 30) While only 63 percent of the church members responded “extremely well” (a rating of a 6 or a 7), strugglers were much more positive with 93 percent responding with a 6 or a 7. The strugglers’ answers to this question demonstrate that the general membership of the church may not be aware of the extent to which heterosexual men are involved in helping.

When asked, “How clear is the understanding of biblical manhood at your church?” (Question 34), 66 percent of the strugglers answered “extremely clear” (7) and another 26 percent responded one step down the scale. The church member responses were somewhat lower, although still on the upper end of the scale, with 44 percent answering “extremely well” and another 33 percent responding one step down the scale. Both groups indicated that their churches had a clear understanding of biblical manhood.

The last question related to this learning objective “How well does the participating church do in providing you with willing and active role models of biblical

masculinity?” (Question 38) The majority of responses from both groups were on the positive side of the scale, with 93 percent of the strugglers answering that their church did provide willing and active male role models for them. Ninety-one percent of the church members agreed by responding that their church did provide these role models for the male strugglers.

Each of these questions centered on the church providing male heterosexual role models who were willing to help and be actively involved in counseling and discipling strugglers, thus modeling biblical manhood. Both groups surveyed communicated that there was a high level of involvement from heterosexual men in the ministry to male homosexual strugglers (Fig. 9). The responses met the expectation for why these churches are effective in their ministry to strugglers.

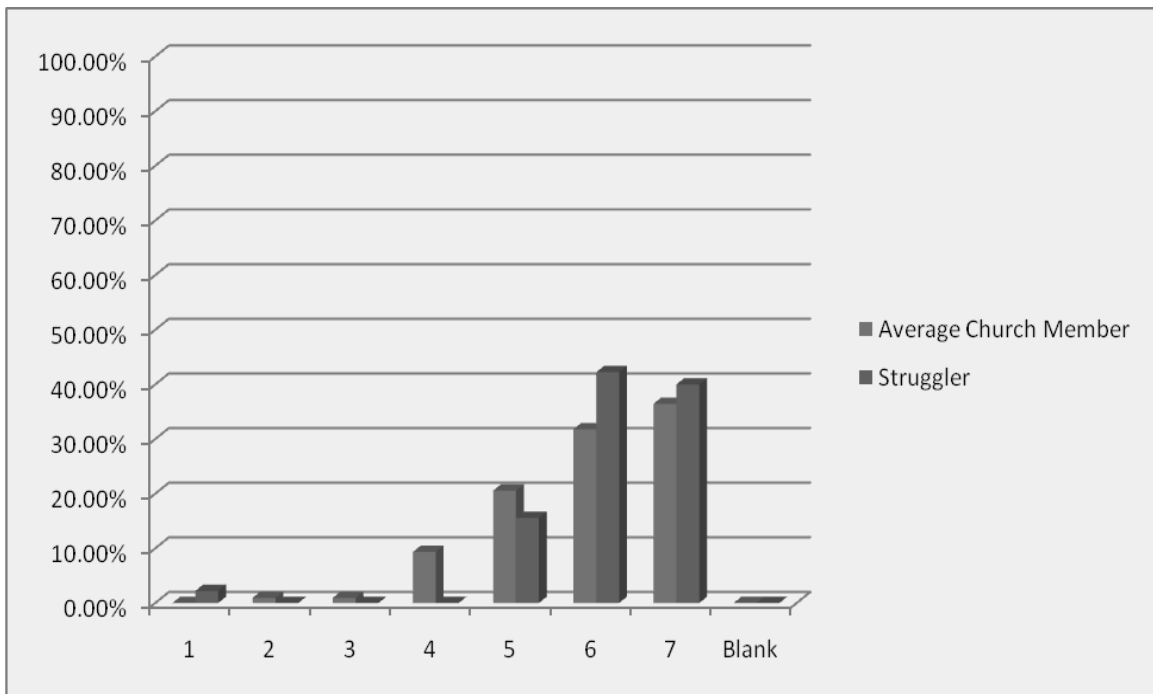


Figure 9. Percentages of Responses Related to Heterosexual Men Modeling Biblical Manhood.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 30, 34, 38), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding the involvement of heterosexual men modeling biblical manhood in the caring process (Table 9). There is not a significant difference ($t = -1.00$, $df = 33$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.90) and post-test scores (mean = 6.13). Expected was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is not a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were higher than those of the church members.

Table 9. *t*-test Responses Related to Heterosexual Men Modeling Biblical Manhood

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Members and Strugglers for average scores regarding heterosexual men modeling biblical manhood (Hypothesis 3 Learning Objective 3)			
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>	
Mean	5.90	6.13	
Variance	0.79	0.50	
Observations	36	15	
df	33		
t Stat	-1.00		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.16		

Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished anyway in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male struggler show that the participating churches do provide men who are sound in their heterosexuality as role models for male strugglers. Though survey numbers were lower than expected for both groups, it seems evident from these results that the

participating churches do have heterosexual men involved in ministering and modeling biblical manhood to the struggler.

Finally, the author wanted to learn if the strugglers were encouraged to be a part of the total church body or if they were just considered part of an outreach group or ministry of the church. In the process of looking for effective churches to participate in this study, it was apparent that most of the churches who claimed to have a ministry to male homosexual strugglers had outreach ministries to strugglers that would meet apart from the church, so that the strugglers were not really a part of the total body of believers and the church body was not really involved in assisting the strugglers. After much reading and research, this author came to the conclusion that effective ministries involve the struggler in the total church and encourage the body to be involved in the lives of the strugglers. The total church body and program of the church is critical in providing hope and help to those who are struggling with homosexuality, is a total church effort. This series of questions was asked to determine if this is indeed the case in the selected churches.

The first question asked was “How connected are you (or strugglers) at your church?” (Question 1) The results were surprising. It was expected that the majority of scores would have been at the higher end of the scale (“totally connected”). The scores proved to be more diverse than expected, with 46 percent of the strugglers responding “totally connected” and another 26 percent answering “connected” (5). Two of the respondents answered “unconnected” (2) or “totally unconnected” (1), both at the lower end of the scale. The church members’ responses were also lower than had been

expected, but still on the upper end of the scale, with the majority (66%) answering “connected” (a rating of 5 or 6). There were several members who answered below the midpoint. Overall, both groups responded that strugglers were connected to the total body of the church.

When asked, “To what level do you feel that your church will allow a struggler to get involved?” (Question 27), 80 percent of the strugglers responded “always”(7) and the remaining 20 percent responded “usually” (6). The church members’ responses were spread out on the upper end of the scale, with 30 percent answering “always” (7), 19 percent “usually” (6), and 22 percent “often,” while 22 percent left the answer blank. It is interesting that the strugglers feel that their churches have allowed them to get involved while some of the church members (22%) just did not know. However, the church members who did respond believe that the strugglers are allowed, or would be allowed, to get involved in the church. This question was intended to be generic rather than focused upon what, specifically, they were allowed to do. What was sought was a general feeling of whether these churches welcomed the strugglers’ involvement as these men were processing through their struggles. The intention here was not to determine what the participating churches would allow the struggler to do or where they would allow them to serve, but for the general feeling of being connected to the life and mission of the church.

The final question asked, “To what degree do you feel that your church is your family?” (Question 42) The author wanted to ascertain if the strugglers felt they were part of the church family. Seventy-three percent of strugglers responded

“completely” stating that they felt at home and part of the family at their churches. The other four respondents hovered around the midpoint (3-5). The church members all responded above the midpoint; they believed that the strugglers in their churches felt that they were part of the family, with 58 percent responding “completely” and another 25 percent answering one step lower (6). Overall, both groups believed that their church was functioning as a church family for strugglers.

Each of these questions centered on the male strugglers’ perspective on their church accepting them as a part of the church, rather than as a separate church-operated ministry (Fig. 10). Both groups communicated that male homosexual strugglers were not only encouraged to be a part of the life of the church but that they were experiencing that life. The responses met expectations, and explained why these churches are effective in their ministry to strugglers.

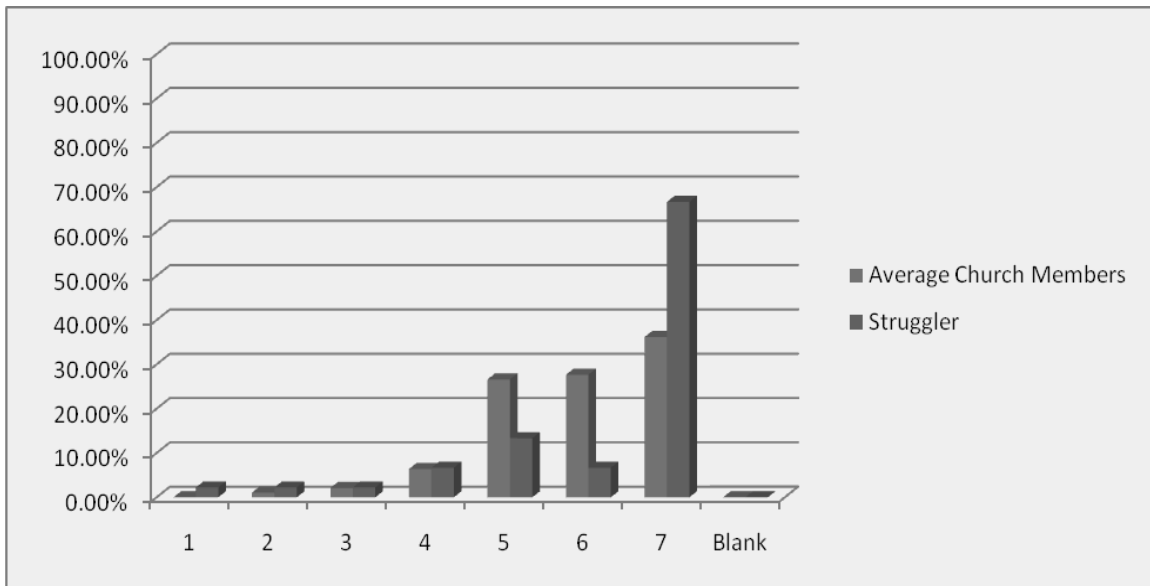


Figure 10. Percentages of Answers Related to Participation of Strugglers as a Part of the Church.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 1, 27, 42), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding the participation of strugglers as a part of the church (Table 10). No significant difference was found ($t = -0.971$, $df = 19$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.87) and post-test scores (mean = 6.13). The expectation was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is not a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were higher than the church members.

Table 10. *t*-test Responses Related to Participation of Strugglers as a Part of the Church.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Members and Strugglers for average scores regarding participation of strugglers as a part of the church (Hypothesis 3 Learning Objective 4)			
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>	
Mean	5.87	6.13	
Variance	0.34	0.92	
Observations	33	15	
df	19		
t Stat	-0.971		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.172		

Although the *t*-test does not statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church members and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do encourage the strugglers to be a part of the total mission and community of the body. Though survey numbers were expected to be higher for both groups, it is clear from these results that the participating

churches do encourage strugglers' involvement which adds to the feeling of welcome and safety as they process through their struggles.

From a purely statistical perspective, the third hypothesis was not validated since the church members' responses were expected to be much higher than the strugglers' responses. However, from a practical perspective, we can say from the data collected that there is a great likelihood that the participating churches are effective because they are demonstrating caring behavior. The surveys demonstrate willingness among the churches to actively listen to the strugglers' stories and to provide godly, heterosexual role models for them. The participating churches demonstrate an attitude of care by having a variety of people, particularly heterosexual men, involved in caring and ministering to the strugglers in their realm of influence. Effective ministry is incarnational, that is, it involves people being engaged in the lives of the people to whom they are attempting to minister. Churches that understand that God has given them a ministry of incarnational caring are at a great place to begin and sustain a ministry to male homosexual strugglers because these churches are safe and welcome places.

Survey Results from Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis is that the selected churches are effective because they have change agents in place to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers. The first hypothesis dealt primarily with whether a church understands its biblical responsibility its mission in relationship to male homosexual strugglers. The second hypothesis dealt with the caring attitude that churches need to minister to the male struggler and how that is communicated to the struggler from the church member. The

third hypothesis dealt with a church's caring actions toward the struggler. This final hypothesis deals directly with whether a church has provided change agents to prepare its members to minister to male strugglers in its congregations. The author believes that if effective churches understand their biblical responsibility, possess a caring attitude toward homosexual strugglers, and demonstrate caring actions toward them, they will also be involved in training church members to understand the homosexual struggle. This may include literature, training classes, and mentors to prepare people to minister in tangible ways. The expectation was the answers from both groups surveyed to be on the higher end of the scale with the church members' scores higher.

The first learning objective was to find out whether the male strugglers in the selected churches believed that the church had a vision or mission statement that involved recruiting volunteers to minister to strugglers. This research began by asking both the strugglers and church members, "How clear is your church's mission statement relating to assisting and moving people to assist homosexual strugglers?" (Question 5) The majority of the strugglers' scores (93%) were above the midpoint (4), with 46 percent answering "extremely clear" (7), indicating that they believed that their church had a clear vision and that the church was clearly communicating its vision including recruiting volunteers to minister to strugglers. The majority of church members' responses (77%) were also above the midpoint with 19 percent answering "extremely clear" (7) and another 19 percent responding one step lower. The largest percentage (22%) answered at the midpoint (4), and 19 percent answered below the midpoint, indicating some degree of "uncertainty". The strugglers' scores were higher than the church members' scores,

indicating that they believed that the vision and mission of the church was clearer to them than among the regular church members. It had been expected that the vision would be clearer among the church members than it proved to be. This is not a negative observation but rather a positive one, in that the strugglers are indicating that their church is doing a better job than it realizes.

The next question was related to church communication, asking, “How effective the pulpit announcements, bulletins, program announcements, training courses are in recruiting people to assist homosexual strugglers?” (Question 9) Once again, the majority of the strugglers (81%) responded above the midpoint (4), stating that their church was effective in this area. Only 33 percent responded on the highest end of the scale (6 or 7) saying the church was “extremely effective.” The church members’ responses are quite varied, from the top to the bottom of the scale. Forty-four percent answered above the midpoint (4), answering “effective” to “extremely effective”, while 38 percent answered below the midpoint (4), answering “ineffective” to “non-existent.” Another 19 percent were neutral, responding at the midpoint. Again, the strugglers’ responses indicate that their church is doing a better job than the church members themselves believes it is doing.

The final question asked, “How committed is your church to the recruitment and training of heterosexual men to walk with you through your journey?” (Question 13) The strugglers responded that the church was “committed” to “extremely committed” (81%) to recruitment and training of volunteers, compared to 88 percent of church members. Both groups believe that their churches are committed to recruiting and

training volunteers to this ministry. These questions did not produce some of the higher scores that other areas of the survey produced, but however, the bottom line is that there is a positive belief among both strugglers and church members that their churches are committed to developing people who are committed to the mission of ministering to homosexual strugglers.

Each of these questions centered on the commitment of the selected churches regarding their vision and the mission of the church in communicating, recruiting and training volunteers to minister to male homosexual strugglers. Both groups surveyed communicated that the church was committed and effective in recruitment of volunteers (Fig. 11). Although it was expected that church members' ratings would be higher than the strugglers', the responses meet the author's expectation for why these churches are effective in communicating their vision to minister to strugglers.

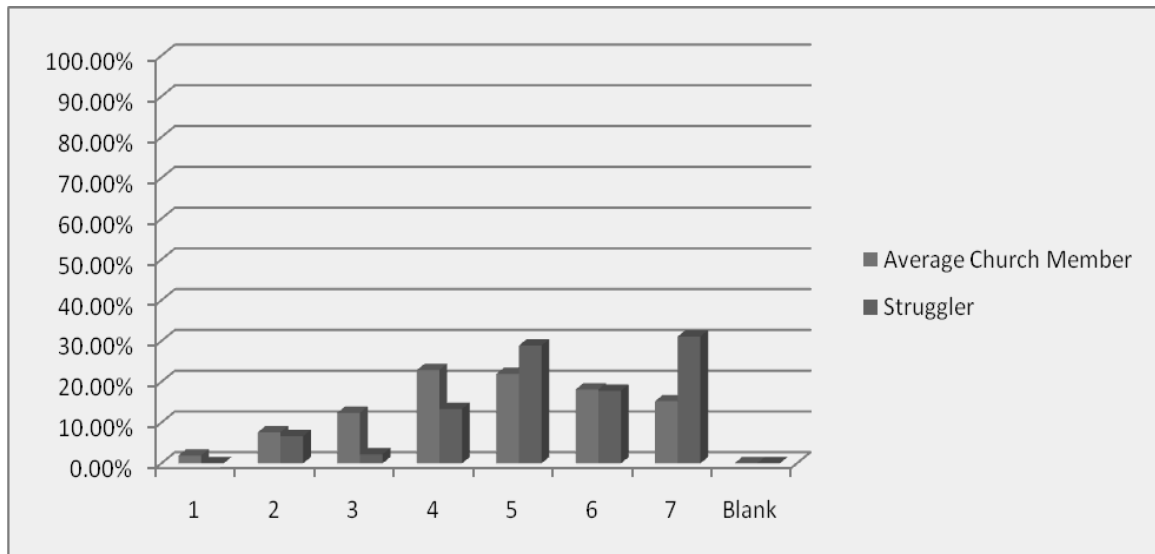


Figure 11. Percentages Of Responses Related To Vision And Mission To Recruit Volunteers.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 5, 9, 13), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding the vision and mission to recruit volunteers (Table 11). There is a significant difference ($t = -1.99$, $df = 23$, $p < .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 5.87) and post-test scores (mean = 6.13). The author's expectation was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test indicates that statistically there is a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were higher than the church members.

Table 11. Responses Related To Vision And Mission To Recruit Volunteers.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Members and Strugglers for average scores regarding vision and mission to recruit volunteers (Hypothesis 4 Learning Objective 1)		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	4.70	5.42
Variance	1.11	1.48
Observations	35	15
df	23	
t Stat	-1.99	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.03	

Although the *t*-test does statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished however, in that the survey results from both the average church members and the male strugglers show that the participating churches do have and do communicate a vision and mission to recruit volunteers to ministry to male strugglers. Even though survey numbers were expected to be higher for both groups, it is clear from these results that the

participating churches do possess and communicate a vision to recruit volunteers to minister to the male homosexual strugglers.

The second learning objective was to determine if the selected churches were providing resources for their volunteers – the people being trained to counsel and disciple male strugglers. The previous set of questions focused upon the vision and commitment to recruit volunteers, whereas this learning objective focuses on whether these churches were providing the resources for the volunteers to be adequately trained. The survey asked, “How effective has your church been in training people to minister to homosexual strugglers?” (Question 18) Because the participating churches were selected based on the fact that they were effective, it was expected that the answers from both groups would be fairly high on the scale. The author was surprised to find that the strugglers’ answers were higher on the scale than the church members’. The majority of the strugglers (68%) responded above the midpoint (4), with 61 percent leaning toward the “extremely effective” (a rating of 6 or 7). Only 55 percent of the church members responded above the midpoint (4), 22 percent answered at the midpoint while only 22 percent answered “extremely well” (6 or 7). The church members’ responses were expected to be higher, but these results show that the strugglers do perceive their church as being effective in training volunteers.

The second question asked was, “How adequate are the training resources (books, classes, articles, literature) at your church in helping people understand the issues that strugglers wrestle with?”(Question 22) This question relates to the quality of training materials provided to assist volunteers in understanding and preparing them for ministry

to strugglers. Eighty percent of strugglers responded that the materials were “clear” or “extremely clear” (a 6 or 7) compared to only 33 percent of church members; another 33 percent of the church members responded at or below the midpoint (4). Again, the high scores from the strugglers were surprising. Those ministering to them must at least come across as having adequate resources to minister to them. The church members’ responses were surprising in that they seem uncertain about the adequacy of their training materials, yet they are doing an effective job.

The final question asked was, “How well does your church mentor new volunteers in understanding and ministering to homosexual strugglers?” (Question 26) This question related to preparing people for ministry by those who are experienced in ministering to male strugglers. The results from both groups were spread across the scale (1-7), with 33 percent of strugglers and 25 percent of members not answering the question. While 30 percent of strugglers responded “extremely well” and 43 percent responded in the upper end of the scale (a rating of 6 or 7), 40 percent chose the midpoint response or below (1-4), with two responding “extremely nonexistent”. The church members’ responses were more toward the midpoint with 55 percent choosing (answered 3, 4, or 5). Only two answered above the midpoint, while five responded below the midpoint. It seems that although these churches are effective to a degree, they could possibly be more effective if they were to develop a way for experienced mentors to train new volunteers while continuing in this vital ministry.

Each of these questions centered on the availability and quality of resources available to assist the new volunteers for ministry to the male homosexual struggler. Both

groups surveyed communicated that the resources available were adequate but they left room for improvement (Fig. 12). Although this researcher expected the church members to score higher than the strugglers, the responses did meet the expectation for why these churches are effective in communicating their vision to minister to strugglers.

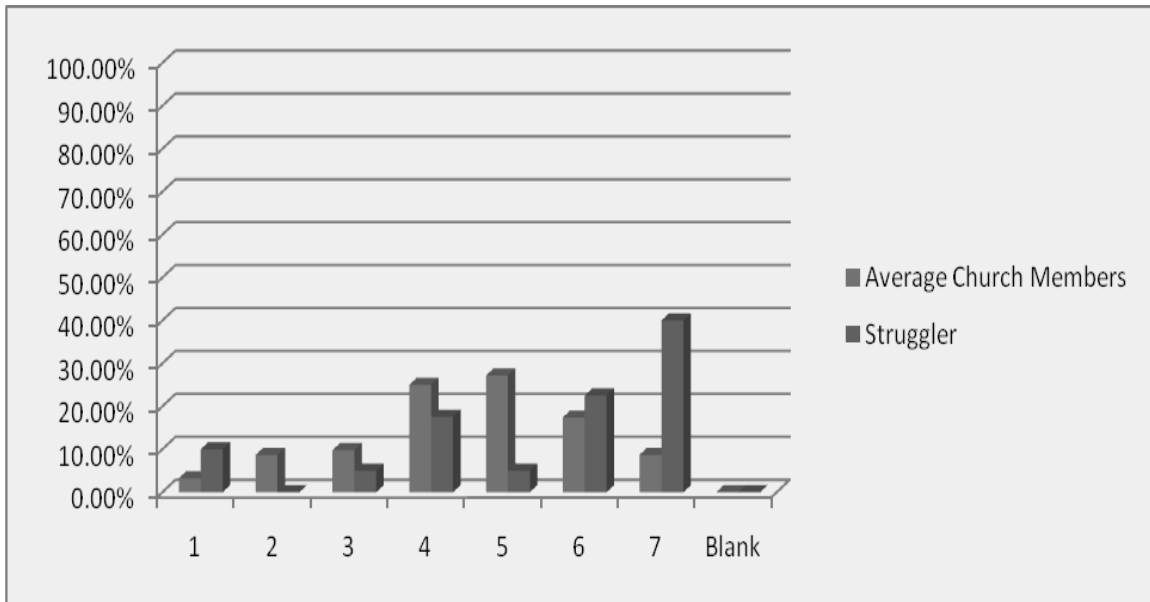


Figure 12. Percentages Of Responses Related To The Availability And Quality Of Training Materials For Volunteers.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 18, 22, 26), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding the availability and quality of training materials for volunteers (Table 12). There is a significant difference ($t = -1.68$, $df = 22$, $p = .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 4.58) and post-test scores (mean = 5.41). The author's assumption, however, was that the average church member scores would be significantly higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is a significant difference but the difference is that the strugglers' scores were higher than the church members' scores.

Table 12. Responses Related To The Availability And Quality Of Training Materials For Volunteers.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Members and Strugglers for average scores regarding the availability and quality of training materials for volunteers		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	4.58	5.41
Variance	1.84	2.88
Observations	34	15
df	22	
t Stat	-1.68	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.05	

Although the *t*-test does statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. Nonetheless, the learning objective was accomplished in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male struggler show that the participating churches do have some training material available for new volunteers. However, it seems that either the material is inadequate or that some are unaware of what is available. The most urgent need seems to be mentors to model how to minister in this area.

The final learning objective was to determine if the selected churches were active in recruiting volunteers for ministry to strugglers. The previous two learning objectives dealt with a vision to recruit volunteers and the provision of adequate training materials for new volunteers. The following questions are related to the actual recruitment of volunteers. Are these churches actively recruiting?

The first question asked related to “How often the sermons and teaching times were geared toward moving members to assist people with all kinds of struggles?” (Question 31) This question focuses not specifically upon the recruitment of volunteers

for homosexual strugglers but on a more general call to the entire church to reach out to all types of strugglers. This question used a different scale, ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (5). The strugglers’ answers ranged from “sometimes” (3) at 26 percent, to “usually” (4) at 40 percent, to “always” (5) at 33 percent, compared to the church members’ responses of 22 percent, 44 percent, and 22 percent, respectively. Both groups indicated that the recruitment of volunteers to help strugglers of all types occurs naturally through the sermons and teaching times of their churches.

The next question was more specific, asking “How effective are the sermons in encouraging people to assist strugglers in the transformation process?” (Question 35) While 73 percent of strugglers answered above the midpoint (4) (that is, that the sermons were effective in calling people to assist strugglers), only 55 percent of the church members felt the same. One church member answered “extremely ineffective” (1). Overall, however, both groups were on the upper end of the scale indicating that there are a number of occasions when the pastor is calling the congregation to come alongside strugglers and walk with them on their journey to wholeness and holiness.

The final question that asked of both groups was, “How well do the sermons and teachings at your church equip people with a proper understanding of the homosexual strugglers’ needs?” (Question 39) This question relates to helping the average church member understand to some degree what a person who struggles with same-sex attraction or with homosexuality is dealing with. The majority of strugglers (86%) and church members (77%) answered above the midpoint, indicating that the sermons in these churches do equip people with a proper understanding of the

homosexual struggle. It was interesting that two strugglers answered “poorly” (2), compared to eight church members. Even though the majority of respondents believed that the sermons were equipping, a small number of strugglers and members did not agree. Overall, the author expected that the church members would rate this area on the higher end of the scale, but not expecting the strugglers to be higher.

Each of these questions centered on whether the church is actively recruiting and equipping volunteers for ministry to the homosexual strugglers through sermons and teaching events. Both groups surveyed communicated that through the sermons and teaching events the church was actively recruiting people for this vital ministry. Although it was expected that the church members would score higher than the strugglers, the responses did meet the expectation for why these churches are effective in recruiting and equipping volunteers to minister to strugglers (Fig. 13).

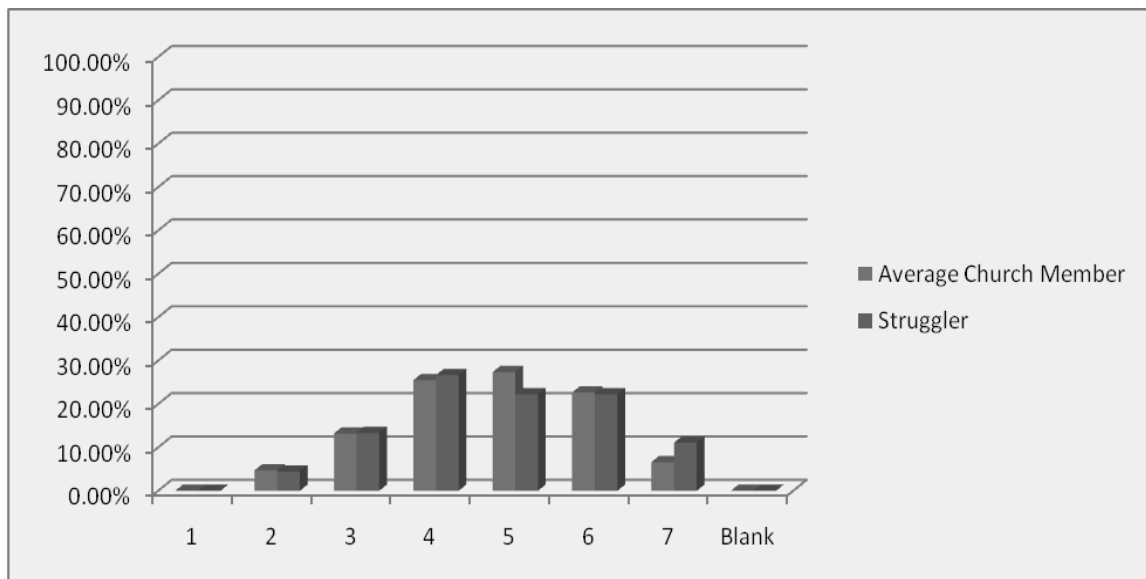


Figure 13. Percentages Of Responses Related To The Sermons And Teaching Events Recruiting And Equipping Volunteers.

When measuring the data results from this set of questions (Questions 31, 35, 39), a *t*-test was applied, measuring for the significance of differences between average members and strugglers for average scores regarding the sermons and teaching events recruiting and equipping volunteers (Table 13). There is not a significant difference ($t = -0.30$, $df = 20$, $p > .05$, one-tailed test) between the average pretest scores (mean = 4.69) and post-test scores (mean = 4.78). The expectation, however, was that the average church member scores would be higher; however, the *t*-test reports that statistically there is a not significant difference but the difference is that the struggler's scores were higher than the church members.

Table 13. *t*-test Of Responses Related To The Sermons And Teaching Events Recruiting And Equipping Volunteers.

<i>t</i> -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances between Average Members and Strugglers for average scores regarding the sermons and teaching events recruiting and equipping volunteers		
	<i>Average Member</i>	<i>Strugglers</i>
Mean	4.69	4.78
Variance	0.54	1.07
Observations	36	15
df	20	
t Stat	-0.30	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.38	

Although the *t*-test does statistically show that there is a significant difference, it was the opposite of what was expected. The learning objective was accomplished, however, in that the survey results from both the average church member and the male struggler show that the participating churches do recruit and equip new volunteers.

From a purely statistical perspective, the fourth hypothesis was not validated since it was expected that the church members' responses would be much higher than the

strugglers' responses. However, from a practical perspective, it can be said that from the data collected there is a great likelihood that the participating churches are effective because they do have a mission and vision that involves recruiting and training volunteers to minister to the male struggler. These churches are fairly active in recruiting volunteers through public announcements, sermons and teaching events. They have also done an adequate job in providing training materials that assist the new volunteer in understanding the issues of the homosexual struggler so that as he discipled the struggler he has a better grasp of what his disciple is dealing with. The participating churches do provide change agents to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers. Churches that understand that God has given them a ministry to male homosexual strugglers will do well to equip volunteers for the task.

Although each of the hypotheses from a statistical perspective, was not validated, it can be gleaned from the survey results that the participating churches are indeed successful in their ministry to male homosexual strugglers. They are successful because they understand their biblical responsibility to minister to male strugglers and because they understand that before the Lord all people are equally valued, regardless of their sin or propensity to a particular sin. Everyone is equal in the need for God's grace and power, whether the sin is stealing or homosexual behavior.

These churches are successful because they possess a caring attitude of empathy toward the strugglers. The church members are also characterized by humility, with many regarding their own sin as greater than the strugglers' sin. The ability to move from a caring attitude to caring behaviors has assisted the selected churches in their

ministry as well. The members of the selected churches are engaged in the lives of the strugglers through listening, modeling biblical manhood, and allowing the strugglers to be a part of the total life of the congregation. Finally, the selected churches are effective because they are actively recruiting and educating new volunteers to meet the needs of the strugglers in their churches.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

What started out six years ago as a simple cry for help from an anonymous correspondent has turned into one of the most challenging adventures of my life. If someone had told me that I would one day write a doctoral dissertation on male homosexuality and the church, I would have laughed. Since those early emails, I have learned that there are many male strugglers in our churches. These are men who love God deeply but find themselves struggling with same-sex attractions that have haunted them for years. There are yet others who have believed the lie of the devil and the culture, venturing out experimentation with homosexual behaviors and relationships.

Over the years, I have talked with numerous men in my own congregation who are struggling with homosexual temptations and desires. I have discussed this topic with others in my own congregation who have children, siblings, relatives, and coworkers who are either struggling with this issue or have embraced homosexuality as their identity and lifestyle. We can no longer sit around thinking that we will not be affected. This issue has already affected our churches. Our culture, prompted by the pro-gay movement, will not stop pushing the gay agenda, even into the teachings and practices of our churches. This is not a subtle movement, it is an aggressive group looking to normalize what God has called sin and unhealthy. There are men in the congregations of our churches who have been influenced by this cultural pressure to embrace their homosexual identity as normal

and good. These men often struggle secretly with their sexual identity and the guilt associated with their temptations, desires and behaviors. They desire help, but often continue to struggle in secret.

Since the first encounter with my anonymous friend, a number of men have approached me regarding their personal struggles with same-sex attraction, temptations and behaviors. Some of these men, outside of my congregation, are well known in the Christian community; others are ordinary hard-working men in the community and part of local congregations. All have expressed uneasiness about seeking help from their churches or pastors, even though all are members of strong evangelical churches. Our churches have been faithful in holding the pattern of sound teaching, related to a biblical stance on homosexuality, yet there is a disconcert when we attempt to minister to strugglers.

In one of my early discussions with my anonymous friend, I asked him why he has kept this lifelong struggle to himself. He responded that he did not want to admit that the struggle was real. He was greatly embarrassed that, of all things to struggle with, he was struggling with being gay. Having grown up his entire life in strong evangelical churches, he had heard preaching and teaching from the Bible, yet as far back as he could remember he was attracted to men. His struggle has lasted several decades and has carried him to places and practices that he wishes now he could forget and undo.

One thing that he shared with me really made me think about this whole topic and actually prompted this project. He shared with me that being in the gay community felt safer than being in the church. In the gay community he felt he could be himself,

even though the whole time he was there he experienced guilt. However, in the church he felt guilt and condemnation. The thought of people in the church knowing about his struggle was worse than the guilt he felt while being in the gay community. “Coming out” to get help from the church in his mind would forever label him as a freak. Although the church should deal with homosexuality as a sin, Christians also need to remember the person caught in the sin. Homosexuality is the enemy not the person.

The whole idea of the church not being a safe place sparked this project. How can the church take a strong stand against homosexuality and yet still be a place of safety for the struggler who desires to be delivered from this struggle? In the initial stages of research, two writers influenced my thinking the most and sent me on the incredible journey. Chad Thompson’s book, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would*¹ challenged me to see the homosexual struggle from the struggler’s perspective. Thompson’s ideas influenced me to look beyond (not over) the sin and see the struggler’s heart. I began to understand that the men with whom I was working possessed a deep love for the Lord but were living with unwanted desires and attractions. Thompson helped me understand that homosexual temptation is no different from heterosexual temptation. This allowed me to see the homosexual struggle on the same level as any other sin, including unbiblical heterosexual struggles. Newton Malony’s 2001 article, A Practical Theology of Welcoming² gave me the final encouragement and structure for this project. His article

¹ Chad W. Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004).

² H. Newton Malony, “A Practical Theology of “Welcoming”,” *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 3, no. 3-4 (2001).

forced me to think beyond the responsibility to protect the sacred moral stands of the Scripture and moved me to practical ideas of how the church can both take a strong moral stand and yet minister to the male homosexual struggler. I began to ask, as I researched, what would make the church a safe place for strugglers? Maloney's article lays a great foundation for establishing the church as a safe environment (but not an enabling one) – a place for the struggler to begin opening his life to those who are willing to assist him to wholeness and holiness.

In our American culture, we have become accustomed to trying to change cultural norms through political means. If we want to change the cultural trend regarding abortion, we support pro-life candidates and pro-life legislation. In our desire to protect heterosexual marriages and the traditional family, we have also supported political candidates and legislation promoting biblical views. This is good, but this is not the starting place or the ending place for changing our culture or preserving life and biblical morals. Politics will never change a person's heart, even though laws and candidates can be effective. We can (and should) jump into the political arena and be highly involved, but the world will never be changed by politics alone. Whenever God wanted to intervene and change a culture, He did so in an incarnational manner. Jesus got personally involved in the daily lives of the people He desired to reach. We will never change a struggler's heart through political means no matter how fervently we preach from the pulpits or street corners of America. We will only be effective when we are incarnationally (personally and intimately) involved with those we are trying to reach – when we take the time to get to know a struggler, listen to his story, and love him right where he is, in his

sin or struggle. God desires and has the ability to change hearts, and it will happen in a healthy and safe environment. Why can't the church be that place? Why *isn't* the church that place?

The church has been faithful in preaching against the sin of homosexuality and but quite silent in assisting homosexual strugglers out of the sin. My research has taught me that homosexuality is more than just a sin; for those trapped in its grasp, it is also an identity. Many strugglers have never chosen to participate in homosexual behavior and never would, yet the church can be just as condemning of those who struggle with same-sex temptations.

The church needs to begin to be proactive in helping these men, rather than reacting negatively to those trapped by same-sex attractions and homosexuality. Far too many Christians react to this issue rather than respond. I was teaching recently on Jesus' healing of the leper from Mark 1:40-45. We were discussing the idea that Jesus welcomed this desperate man as he approached, even touching him in order to heal him. I brought up the application of the passage and suggested that we have a growing number in our churches today who are struggling with same-sex attractions and unwanted homosexual desires and behaviors. I suggested that as Jesus welcomed the leper, the church should be a safe and welcoming place for those who struggle. There were several in the class who reacted, thinking that I was suggesting that we allow people with this struggle to join our church while enabling them to continue to act and live as they please. This is an example of how believers sometimes react, rather than respond to homosexuals or even to the suggestion that the church be open to welcoming homosexual strugglers. If

the church is going to have an impact upon the male strugglers in our congregations, we need to make sure that we create a safe and welcoming environment for strugglers of all types.

The greatest discouragement that I faced during my research was in trying to find churches that are actively involved in working with strugglers in general. I found numerous para-church groups such as Exodus International, which focus almost exclusively on helping men and women come out of homosexuality. The number of churches involved in this sort of ministry was extremely small, and usually they partnered with a counseling center or organization outside the local church. Most churches refer strugglers to private counselors or to support groups outside the local church. This was disappointing, since I believe that the church can be a powerful influence in helping strugglers in their spiritual growth. In his book, *How People Change*³, Dr. Tedd Tripp spends an entire chapter discussing how spiritual growth is a community project. There are a number of benefits to the church being involved in the transformation of the homosexual struggler. God designed the church for the task of helping people come to faith in Christ and overcoming life dominating-sin or temptations (Gal 6:1-2). The church must continue to be vocal regarding the moral principles of Scripture, but it needs to step up and take action to assist the strugglers in their midst.

³ Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008). Chapter 5 is dedicated to this topic, p. 73-90.

As a result of much research, and the influence of Malony's writings⁴ I wanted to research churches, not para-church organizations that are effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers. The purpose of this research is to determine whether the response of selected churches toward the male homosexual strugglers within their doors is in line with their biblical responsibilities. My assumption was that the selected churches were effective because they were welcoming, safe places for strugglers desiring to process through their unwanted attractions, temptations and behaviors.

I believed that the best way to discover if the selected churches were a place of safety for male homosexual strugglers was to administer a survey in the selected churches. The survey would not center on the homosexual strugglers but rather on the biblical beliefs, attitudes, actions, and overall efforts of the church itself. The church people would be the focus of the research tool from their perspective and from that of the strugglers. The survey questions centered on the church's beliefs, attitudes, and actions, as well as on the members' involvement with male strugglers in their congregations. Two groups were surveyed – strugglers and regular church members – as to how the church was ministering to male strugglers.

Analysis of the Hypotheses

My first hypothesis was that the selected churches are effective because they understand their biblical responsibility toward the male homosexual strugglers in their congregations. The questions were centered on several learning objectives related to the

⁴ Malony, "A Practical Theology of "Welcoming"."

responsibility of the churches to be safe places for all types of strugglers, the fact that everyone is the object of God's affection, and the conviction that God desires to transform all people regardless of their propensity to sin. These three learning objectives can be summarized by the idea that all people are equal in God's sight, each person needs a safe place to process through his struggles, each person needs to understand that he is the object of God's affection, and each person needs to know and believe that God desires to transform his life into the very image of Jesus, regardless of his sin or propensity to sin. I set out to discover whether the selected churches understand that they have a biblical responsibility to all believers to be a place of safety and to welcoming to male homosexual strugglers.

The responses from both groups related to their church being a place of safety were extremely positive. Both the strugglers and the church members were in agreement that their church has established itself biblically as a safe place for strugglers. Interestingly enough, the strugglers were more positive in their answers than the church members were. This indicates that the strugglers who participated in the survey felt that their church was a safe place for them to process through issues related to their sexual strugglers.

The participants' responses related to whether their churches viewed strugglers as equal and valued objects of God's affection were also positive; the strugglers indicated that the churches did value and treat them as equal objects of God's affection. The church members' responses were a little lower, but still on the higher end of the scale. Strugglers were not being treated as a lower class of Christian, but as anyone

else struggling with a life-dominating sin would be treated. Those struggling with same-sex attractions or homosexuality were not treated as “untouchables.” The slightly lower scores from the church members may indicate that the church is still a work in progress and that not everyone had come to a proper biblical position on this issue. The most encouraging aspect of these responses is that the strugglers, who are often not valued as objects of God’s affection, were overwhelmingly positive about how the selected churches value and treat them. This element alone should be a great encouragement to them as they work through their struggle.

The survey also revealed that the selected churches were committed to seeing strugglers delivered, changed, and transformed into the image of Christ. The majority of responses from both groups indicate that these churches are highly committed to the change process for the strugglers. The church’s commitment to strugglers, accompanied by a belief that God desires to bring about transformation in each person, brings hope for the struggler. Many strugglers have fought their feelings and temptations for most of their lives. For them to find a church home where people truly believe that God can and will transform the lives of strugglers, is an incredible injection of hope and purpose.

As a result of these responses, it is safe to conclude that one reason why the participating churches are effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers is that they understand their biblical responsibility toward these men. They demonstrate this by creating a safe environment and by welcoming strugglers as objects of God’s affection. At the same time, these churches they provide hope through their belief that God desires

to transform strugglers into the image of Christ, regardless of their struggle or propensity to sin.

The second hypothesis was that the selected churches are effective because they possess the caring attitude needed to minister to male homosexual strugglers. Both groups were surveyed to determine if the members of the selected churches demonstrated a heartfelt compassion for the struggler, a need for God's grace in their own lives, and a positive outlook for life change for the struggler. These three learning objectives were centered on the idea of empathy. Were the selected churches effective because they possessed genuine empathy for the male homosexual strugglers?

The participants agreed that their churches possessed a heartfelt compassion for the struggler. The strugglers responded emphatically that their churches did really care about them and show compassion for them. Empathy is not having pity on someone, but rather caring enough about a person to be moved to action on his behalf. This is a vital element in ministering effectively to male strugglers.

One of the most interesting aspects of the survey related to this second learning objective. I wanted to learn how church members viewed their own struggles with sin compared to others' struggles with homosexual temptations and behaviors. Based upon my research, I believe that in most evangelical churches same-sex attraction and homosexuality would be regarded one of the worst sins a person could commit. I was hoping to find that the selected churches were different. What I found was startling. Overall, the strugglers responded that the members of their churches understood that their own personal sin was equal to the sin of homosexuality. The church members actually

rated their personal sin as equal to or greater than the sin of homosexuality. This was an incredible find. The church members were not viewing homosexuality as a separate category of sin that was worse than all others, were treating homosexuality as equal to, or of lesser in degree, than the sin in their own lives. This is an incredible attitude of humility. The members of the selected churches possess a great perspective of God's view of sin in general. All sin is a violation of God's character and holiness (Jas 4:12; Rom 3:10-12). Every man falls short of God's glory and standard (Rom 3:23; Heb 12:14); we all need God's grace, regardless of what our sin, or propensity to sin may be (Eph 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14). With a correct perspective of personal sin, it should be no surprise that the strugglers in these churches feel safe. Empathy begins with a correct view of personal sin compared to God's holiness, not compared to another fallen person.

Both groups agreed that the selected churches possessed a positive outlook for life change for homosexual struggler. The participants communicated by their responses that their church believed that there is great hope for the struggler to see his life transformed by God's truth and power, that God has a purpose and plan for each person regardless of a person's propensity to a particular sin, and that God has provided everything anyone needs for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3-4).

As a result of the responses received from both groups, it is safe to say that the selected churches are effective in some measure because they do possess a caring attitude of heartfelt compassion, humility, and hope for the struggler's transformation. Empathy is a key component to a welcoming, safe and successful ministry to male homosexual strugglers.

My third hypothesis was that the selected churches demonstrate caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers. Both groups were surveyed to determine if the selected churches demonstrated caring actions that were the result of a caring attitude. Among the many things that could have been evaluated, I selected the following factors: a willingness to listen to a struggler's story; the involvement of a variety of people in the caring process; the involvement of heterosexual men in discipling and counseling; and a genuine effort to integrate the struggler into the total program of the church. I believed that all of these behaviors were vital ways to demonstrate caring behavior to the struggler.

Of the four caring behaviors included in the survey, a willingness to listen to a struggler's story is probably the most difficult. Listening does demonstrate caring, but it is also a frightening endeavor that can violate the listener's innocence through exposure to the details of a struggler's private life. Even so, it is a vital part of assisting strugglers through the many valleys sexual battle. Both groups surveyed indicated that church members were gracious and willing to listen. From the strugglers' perspective, the members of the selected churches were more than willing to patiently listen to the strugglers' stories, including the dirty details, in a way that demonstrated genuine care and concern for them. The church members were also open to listening and understanding when strugglers experienced a temporary or prolonged relapse.

Having a variety of people involved with the homosexual strugglers would also demonstrate caring and is also helpful in assisting the struggler along the journey to wholeness and holiness. Caring actions are demonstrated by having people engaged in

the lives of the strugglers. Overall, both groups were not overwhelmingly positive in saying that there was a variety of people engaged in the ministry to strugglers. As mentioned earlier, many church ministries refer strugglers to counselors outside the church for assistance. Yet, the selected churches are doing effective work with strugglers to some measure because they are getting a variety of church members involved in the struggler's life and journey. However, when asked about the number of heterosexuals involved in the ministry to strugglers there was an increase in the number of positive responses. As literature review indicates, it is extremely healthy and helpful to have heterosexual men involved in discipling and counseling the male strugglers, and I expected the number of heterosexual men involved with strugglers in these selected churches to be much higher. I do consider the involvement of heterosexual men, even at current levels, to be one reason for the churches' success, but, it is an area where I would like to see more growth.

Overall, both groups surveyed agreed that strugglers were welcomed and included as a normal part of the church body. All strugglers were encouraged to participate in the activities and ministries of the church, giving them a feeling of belonging and acceptance. Acceptance into the total church is just another simple way to demonstrate caring toward strugglers, many of whom have lived on the outside of Christian circles far too long, fearing rejection yet longing for help from the church.

Overall, the participants agreed that their churches demonstrate caring behavior toward the male homosexual strugglers in their churches by actively and patiently listening to their stories in an effort to assist them through their struggle to

holiness. There are male heterosexuals working and walking alongside the strugglers in each of the participating churches. There is also a sense of belonging that each of the churches provides, by allowing strugglers to be a normal part of the congregation. Each church responded that there were a variety of people involved in the ministry to male strugglers but overall percentages were lower than expected. This is an area where the participating churches could improve.

As a result of the responses received from both groups, it is safe to say that one more reason why the selected churches are effective is that they do demonstrate caring behavior toward male homosexual strugglers. This is demonstrated by their willingness to listen, willingness to extend acceptance, and willingness to involve a variety of people – especially male heterosexuals – in the details of the strugglers’ lives. Having hands-on involvement with the strugglers provides the engagement needed to assist these men to a place of healing, wholeness and, most importantly, holiness.

My final hypothesis is that the selected churches have established change agents to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers. This hypothesis was the most difficult to assess, for two reasons. First, there is a dearth of research from the field of psychology as a result of the ‘Big Chill’⁵ beginning with the decision of the APA in 1973 to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders. Second, there is a vast ignorance among evangelical Christians about homosexuality

⁵ Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). 421-2.

While there simply is not a plethora of good material available to help the average believer understand the strugglers' battle, there are resources available. I wanted to learn if the selected churches were successful because they had resources available for church members who desired to assist strugglers. Unfortunately, few believers look for materials related to homosexuality unless God has caused their paths to cross with someone who is struggling. Therefore, many do not prepare for this type of ministry until they come face to face with a struggler. Nonetheless, the responses to the survey were encouraging in that the churches (according to the strugglers) had made certain resources available for those who were helping them. However, church members who took the survey were not as confident in their answers.

My hope was that I would find that the selected churches were preparing people for this important ministry. Both groups were asked if the church had a vision and mission that involved recruiting volunteers to disciple and counsel male homosexual strugglers. The strugglers responded that the church did have a mission of recruitment; the church members were not quite as certain. Although both groups responded in the affirmative overall, there were quite a few who responded in the negative. If the churches did have a mission and vision to recruit volunteers, it was not evident to some in their congregations.

The respondents were asked if the churches were actively recruiting volunteers. The responses indicated that there is some recruitment, but it is not as active as I had expected. It was encouraging, however, to see that there was some level of public

recruitment in each of the churches. I believe the selected churches could improve in this area.

As a result of the responses received from both groups, it is safe to say that contributing to the effectiveness of the selected churches is the fact that they do have change agents in place to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers. They do have a vision and mission to recruit volunteers, they do have resources available trainees, and they do actively recruit volunteers. Although each of these areas received positive scores from the strugglers and church members, there is still room for growth and improvement. Overall, the scores give plenty of credence to my assertion that effective churches have change agents to prepare their people to minister to male homosexual strugglers.

General Conclusions

This study has led me to the conclusion that a successful and effective ministry to male homosexuals is possible for any local church. As our culture continues to move away from the Judeo-Christian ethic to a post Christian world view, the church will see a growing number of men – Christian men – who struggle with same-sex attractions or homosexual behaviors. The church should continue to stand firm against sin in its preaching, teaching, and practice of the truth related to homosexuality. However, the church will have the opportunity – and the challenge – of ministering to an increasing number of men who struggle with homosexual desires.

The project has been centered on the church rather than on the male homosexual strugglers as I have attempted to determine what makes the selected

churches effective in their ministry. Having worked with several male strugglers during my years of ministry, I kept hearing this theme in regard to the local church: “The church is not a safe place for me to be open about my struggle.” This was quite foreign to my thinking. I believed that the safest place for someone to struggle through any sin or addiction ought to be the church. Yet upon further discussion and evaluation, I began to understand, from the strugglers’ perspective, that the church does treat this sin in a very different way. We, the evangelical church, need to rethink our approach to those who have been ensnared by same-sex attractions or by homosexual behavior. Our theology may be biblically sound regarding homosexuality, yet our practical theology has lagged far behind. This project investigated whether the selected churches’ caring, safe environments were what made them so effective.

I learned that safe churches are also effective because of the biblical foundations that they have established throughout their ministry. Safe churches exhibit, in practical ways that every believer is equal in God’s eyes, regardless of their sin or propensity to a certain sin. The equality of believers as the objects of God’s affection is one of the foundational aspects of a safe and effective ministry of any type, but it is a critical element in the selected churches. The idea of equality is also demonstrated in an understanding throughout the church that God desires to bring about life transformation for every Christian by changing desires and behaviors, thus conforming believers into the image of Christ. Safe and effective churches for male homosexual strugglers begin with an understanding of their responsibility to be a place of safety for all sinners, within the context of biblical truths. Safe and effective churches communicate equality by

welcoming strugglers, treating them as objects of God's affection, and communicating His desire to bring about life change. These elements provide the struggler with a sense of understanding, safety and hope.

Secondly, I learned that effective churches are safe places for the struggler because of the caring attitude present among the membership. A caring attitude can be summarized by the word *empathy* – a visual, genuine, heartfelt, compassion that is directed toward those who seem to be incapable of helping themselves. It is demonstrated best in those who see themselves as Paul did, “I am the worst [sinner]” (1Tim 1:5). The participating churches possess a spirit of humility that communicates that they have an understanding of their personal need for God's grace, and this is recognized as significant by the strugglers. The members believe that their sin needs and the same grace from God as that of the strugglers, this communicates to the struggler that their sin or struggle is one of many that requires God's gracious intervention.

Another aspect of this caring attitude is exhibited to the struggler as hope. The effective churches possess an unadulterated attitude of hope – a hope that believes that God has provided everything needed for life and godliness through a relationship with Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:3-4). The church members believe that there is certain hope that God has the ability and desire to bring about life change in every individual regardless of their sin or situation. These people are personally experiencing God's transforming power and grace in their own lives, and they possess the same positive outlook for every struggler who is willing to submit to God's plan and purpose for his life.

Combine empathy, humility, and hope, and the result is a group of caring people who have the ability to welcome male homosexual strugglers into a place of safety that provides a great environment for life change. These elements were present in the participating churches, and they contributed to the churches' ability to be effective in their ministry to the male homosexual strugglers in their congregations.

Next, I learned that effective churches are safe places for the struggler because of the caring behavior that is demonstrated by the church members. It is one thing to have a solid understanding of one's biblical responsibility and to possess a caring attitude toward those who are struggling, but it is quite another to demonstrate caring actions. The participating churches demonstrated caring behavior in a variety of ways. First, they were engaged in relationship with the strugglers. They were willing to listen to the details and the depth of the struggler's battle in order to understand and assist them in their journey out of same-sex attraction or homosexual behavior. The listening was not followed by condemnation because the members entered into the discussion on equal ground, not as fellow homosexual strugglers but as fellow sinners.

The participating churches also demonstrated caring behavior by having a variety of people involved in ministering to the struggler. I have encountered several ministries that have recruited ex-gays to be counselors for those who are making their way out of the homosexual struggle or lifestyle. This approach has been met by some level of success, because these individuals understand the struggle from a personal level. However, there must be a variety of people involved in this ministry, particularly heterosexual men who are secure in their heterosexuality. These men can model healthy

male-to-male relationships and biblical manhood while building a deep, yet healthy relationship with the struggler. Male strugglers also need to be a real part of the congregation not a separate ministry of the church. The more inclusion they experience, the more accepted they will feel. This does not give them license to continue in their sin, but it does provide them with a level of accountability and with the knowledge that they are a valuable part of the mission of the church. This also contributes to the welcoming and inviting environment that can be the foundation for an effective ministry.

Finally, I learned that it is of critical importance for the church to be active in the recruitment and training of volunteers. A ministry that is effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers has a mission statement that involves recruiting and training volunteers for this ministry. The survey participants communicated that their church did have a mission statement that included ministering to the strugglers in their congregations. The churches were also active in recruiting volunteers through regular sermons, teaching ministry, and literature. The mission of the church in this area started with the senior pastor and the leadership of the church.

The participants also communicated that each church provided training resources to assist in counseling and discipling those who desired help in leaving or working through homosexual desires, temptations and behaviors. Nonetheless, I learned that this is one area that needed more work. I am not certain that anyone can be adequately trained to minister to a male homosexual struggler just by reading materials. The best equipping is done through on-the-job-training – always frightening, but effective. If the seasoned counselors and disciplers could use their expertise to train

others, the ministry workforce could be doubled. This should be an area of growth for the participating churches and a recommendation for those looking to start this critical ministry.

Implications for My Future Ministry

It has been almost three years since I suggested this topic to Dr. Reed at Dallas Theological Seminary. I still remember his reaction as if it were yesterday, “Wow! I don’t think there is much that has been done in this area.” We spent about an hour discussing the topic – not just how I came up with it, but more important, why? He warned me several times of the difficulties that I could face, and stated specifically that I was about to walk into the enemy’s territory. I have had several encounters with the enemy since that initial conversation, and each time I have been forced to re-evaluate my motivations and my commitment. Every time I have run into an obstacle or encountered the enemy, however, I have been able to rest in the power of Jesus’ name and the comfort of His Word. My strength was renewed with each encounter with the God of heaven. The bottom line for me is that we have men who are struggling with unwanted desires and behaviors, and it is my biblical responsibility to do all that I can to rescue them from the entanglements of sin, the lies of the devil, and the influence of the world. God has provided the way of hope through a relationship with Jesus Christ. We cannot and must not ignore the male homosexual strugglers when they are crying out desperately for the church to assist them. The church needs to rise to the occasion and meet its biblical responsibility. From my research, I have learned that if a church is going to be effective in reaching the male homosexual strugglers that are present in their congregation, then

the church must build its ministry on a solid foundation of biblical equality, empathy, engagement, and education. Although I am already aware of several male strugglers in my church, I am certain that there are more than the handful of men who have been transparent with me and have sought my assistance. Once a purposeful ministry to strugglers is launched I am certain that the number of identified strugglers will grow.

My first step in applying my findings in my ministry will be to apply the survey questionnaire to three separate groups in our congregation. I will privately ask the strugglers I am acquainted with in our congregation to take the survey in order to help us understand their experiences at our church. The goal will be to discover if they believe our church is a place of safety. I will also ask a variety of faithful people in our congregation to take the survey, preferably those with whom I have not had discussions related to my research. It will be good to find out from them whether they believe our church is a place of safety for strugglers. Then I will have the pastoral staff and key leaders take the survey, to gain their perspective on where they believe our congregation stands in terms of being a safe place for strugglers.

Our senior pastor, with the assistance of his staff, will need to lead the charge into this area of ministry, because the congregation will follow the leadership of the pastor. I think it is safe to say that the church will reflect what the pastor and his staff believe and practice. This will be a great opportunity for all three groups to participate in a healthy evaluation of where our church is in relationship to being a safe and welcoming place for male homosexual strugglers as well as strugglers of all types. Hearing from each of these distinct groups will give us a good idea of how welcoming our church is for

those who battle with unwanted same-sex attractions and homosexuality. At that point, we will have a clear idea of where we are and what we will need to address.

I will then lead an open and honest evaluation to determine what steps will need to be taken to move our church into a position to minister to strugglers. The results of the surveys will help determine where we are presently and what areas will need focus or development. The results of my research project have been clear in that effective churches have a culture of welcoming and safety while holding firmly to biblical morality. Applying the surveys to our congregation will give us insight regarding where we need to start to build a culture of welcoming and safety.

Once we have determined our present situation as a church, I will suggest several series of sermons to help establish a biblical basis for assisting sinners of all types, including those who struggle with homosexuality. First of all, a series on the “Theology of Welcoming” would help to the church’s responsibility to minister to all people, regardless of their sin or their propensity to sin. I would suggest passages such as Mark 1:40-45 (Jesus healing the leper), John 4 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well), and Mark 2:13-17 (Jesus calling Levi the tax collector to be a follower). Each of these passages shows Jesus working with the most unlikely and unlovable people. He demonstrated by His actions that they are welcome and safe with him. He challenged Levi and the Samaritan woman to follow Him and to leave their present state of sinfulness. He displayed a heart of compassion that moved Him to respond to their real needs. Throughout His ministry, He taught and modeled for His disciples the importance

of ministry to all who were willing to follow, even those who were considered untouchable or unreachable.

I would follow this with another sermon series on the “Theology of Hope.” Paul addressed the believers in Corinth because of their sin and carnality. He described a group of people that will not inherit the kingdom of God, – including fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves and swindlers – and He followed this with a profound statement of hope “and this is what some of you were” (1Cor 6:9-11). A sermon series related to this perspective of hope would greatly encourage the male homosexual strugglers but would also biblically motivate the congregation to fulfill its potential ministry. This series could address issues such as the real possibility of change, the nature of addictions, acceptance versus enabling, spiritual growth as a community project, neutralizing the severity of selected sins, elements of life transformation, and how to break stubborn habits. This series would provide hope for the struggler and perspective for those who will minister to the struggler.

A third sermon series could be entitled “Understanding Biblical Manhood.” This would provide a platform for (a) teaching dads the importance of their role in training their sons and (b) educating the congregation about the negative effects of missing male role models on certain men. It is vital to communicate the importance of positive gender role models for the children and youth in our churches and communities. I would encourage my church to lead the charge by training and equipping our men to model biblical manhood and masculinity. Same-sex role models are critical in the development process of our children. By being proactive in our preaching, teaching and

mentoring we can prevent at least some boys or young men from going down this path while rescuing others who have lost their way and found themselves entangled in homosexuality.

Each sermon series would give the pastor opportunities to address various aspects of the homosexual struggle in the context of each passage or issue. As he educates the church and builds a biblical foundation for reaching and ministering to strugglers, he has a great opportunity to recruit volunteers who are willing to come alongside a struggler and serve in this ministry. I would venture to say that almost everyone in our congregation knows of at least one struggler or homosexual. Personal connections should make recruitment of volunteers easier.

My main responsibility will be to advise the church throughout this process, provide training for ministry leaders, and personally recruit, train, and mentor volunteers to counsel and disciple strugglers. As a second-chair leader, my task has always been, and in this case will continue to be, the implementation of the senior pastor's ministry vision and mission. My main objective will be to advise, direct, and educate the senior pastor and the pastoral staff in developing a culture of welcoming for all strugglers, whether homosexual or not. Once the staff sees the need, resulting from our church surveys, and begins to develop a strategy to change the church culture to a more welcoming environment, it will be my task to train our people for the hard work of assisting strugglers.

The task of changing the culture of the church will not happen overnight. It is going to require time, effort and practice. The sermon series will build the biblical

foundation for effective ministry, but there will still be a need to constantly monitor the thoughts and attitudes of the congregation. It will be my responsibility to ensure that the vision is taught to, and caught by the adult leaders, teachers, and disciplers.

I will develop training courses to educate volunteers regarding the issues of same-sex attraction and homosexuality. There are various presuppositions and prejudices that volunteers may have that will need to be addressed with facts and biblical principles. The training that is offered will need to complement and yet enhance what has been covered in the sermon series. Numerous issues will need to be addressed in the training classes, such as the Bible and homosexuality; the difference between same-sex attractions and homosexual behavior; possible causes of homosexual attractions; how to counsel and disciple strugglers; the needs of strugglers; and the goals for strugglers.

To complement the training courses, I will develop a resource list and a library for disciplers and counselors. The library will include such items as journal articles; testimonies of those who have triumphed (by God's grace) over same-sex attractions and behaviors; and books, DVDs, and videos describing the battle and how best to minister to and disciple strugglers.

Our church is committed to biblical counseling and discipleship, and we rarely refer any counseling situations out to professionals. We believe that the Bible is sufficient for "life and godliness" (2Pet 1:3), through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Over the years we have watched God radically change the lives of His people through discipleship counseling, so this will be the approach that we will implement with strugglers. I would plan to provide individual counseling for each struggler, as opposed to group counseling.

This requires more time, yet it helps the struggler process through his particular issues and behaviors. I Two strugglers are presently meeting with me for counseling and are also under the care of godly men in our congregation, openly working through their issues.

I will begin in the near future to place strugglers into a men's discipleship group so that godly heterosexual men can model biblical manhood and build personal relationships with the struggler. I think that in most cases, the men in the discipleship group will need to know about the strugglers' issues so that they can openly welcome and love these men through the discipleship process. There will be other situations where the struggler's will remain private yet the benefits of being in this heterosexual men's group will be extremely healthy. I will work to encourage and assist the struggler to reveal his inner battle so that the group can openly assist him in his journey to holiness while they model biblical manhood.

In truth, there is much to be done in my church, and I am just beginning to think through the ramifications of ministering to the struggler. I have been enriched by the friendship of the male strugglers I have been helping, and I am eager to challenge the church to grow in its love and care for them. I am convinced that our people are ready to grow in this area, because they have risen to the task every time they have been challenged over the years. We are in a good position to become a model church given the time to develop and become a leader in this ministry.

I have listed numerous steps that I will take in the near future, and yet there are also some things that I will not do and others that I recommend we cease doing if we

are going to be effective in ministering to male homosexual strugglers. For example, I do not recommend a sermon series on the Bible and homosexuality. Although I take a strong biblical stand regarding homosexuality as a sin, I do not want to bring condemnation upon the male strugglers in my church who have condemned themselves already. They are not struggling with whether homosexuality is right or wrong; they already live with the reality that what they battle every day is not in agreement with the Scriptures, they live with the associated guilt. I think that the biblical stance on homosexuality can be brought into the other sermon series (the ones I have recommended) in a caring and loving fashion.

I recommend avoiding judgmental statements and jokes about homosexuality in any context. These statements do not communicate a caring attitude or caring behavior toward homosexual strugglers. We do not make light of other sins or struggles. We must remember the people who are caught up in this horrible sin and do all that is possible to love them to a healthy place of growth.

Our church has a vibrant community action committee that keeps us informed on political issues that could affect our religious freedoms. The pro-gay movement is extremely active in the realm of politics, and there are numerous pieces of legislation that will be presented in the coming years that could greatly affect our freedoms. I recommend that the church remain involved in fighting these measures, but with this caveat: When these issues are being addressed, they should be followed with a message of hope that change is possible for the homosexual struggler. If there is an overemphasis

on any side of this issue, it should be on the side of communicating the possibility of hope and change for the homosexual struggler.

As our church develops a ministry for homosexual strugglers, we will need to be careful that we treat homosexuality as just one of many life-dominating sins. I recommend that homosexuality be treated as a targeted type of sin, in that we are intentionally targeting those who struggle. The consequences of homosexuality may be different from other sins, and it may take longer to be freed from the roots that have entangled the person's life, but it is not a greater sin than any other. I do not recommend that we advertise that we are going to start a recovery ministry for homosexual strugglers. This communicates that we are separating the strugglers into a unique group apart from the total body of the church. I do not recommend starting a strugglers' recovery group. What male strugglers need most is to be around spiritually mature, heterosexual men. Several of the men that I am presently working with have been participants in religious-based support or recovery groups. These groups have functioned as a form of accountability, but all the strugglers I have worked with have reported that they stopped going to these groups because they were not moving beyond the struggle. These types of groups may have a tendency to foster story-sharing rather than spiritual growth and accountability. Real growth will take place with heterosexual men as everyone walks the journey of discipleship.

Implications for Others Ministries

Many pastors are surprised to learn that there are male strugglers in their congregations; there are others who may not want to know or even admit that there is an

issue. My recommendation to pastors and other readers alike is this: Do not assume that the men in evangelical congregations are all heterosexual. I think it is safe to assume that there is at least one male in each congregation who struggles privately with same-sex temptations or with homosexual behaviors. We can no longer ignore the fact that there may be male homosexual strugglers in our ministries. We must also admit that these men often struggle privately because the church may not be a welcoming and safe place for them to struggle.

Second, churches must seriously think about their role in ministering to strugglers. It is very easy for the church to refer these men to professional counseling or to a para-church ministry. But by going this route, these men will likely miss the benefit of ministry from the entire body. Spiritual growth is a community project that ought not to be abdicated to others outside the church. I understand that some pastors may be overwhelmed with the responsibilities of ministry, but same-sex attractions and homosexuality are not psychological problems; they are spiritual problems. Discipleship is the task of the church, not of hired professionals. The most secure place for sinners to gain victory is in the context of other sinners who are living out God's grace every day.

After steps one and two have taken place, I recommend using my survey at your own church. The survey will provide a snapshot picture of your congregation regarding welcoming and safety, and not just for male homosexual strugglers. It will shed light on the culture of welcoming and safety in your congregation for any type of struggler.

If a church discovers that there are indeed male strugglers in its congregation, a mission statement from the senior pastor is essential to communicate that strugglers are welcome. A mission statement conveys the direction in which the congregation is headed and who is welcome to join the mission. The senior pastor should communicate the breadth and scope of the church's vision. This will give strugglers hope that they are welcome and that they can receive help in their journey to holiness.

The greatest recommendation that I can make to other ministries is to be committed to biblical discipleship that encompasses counseling all people through the Scriptures. Male strugglers need heterosexual men who will walk with them through life while providing accountability, discipleship and mentoring. Getting men to think biblically will, in turn, generate biblical actions. Build relationships with the strugglers so that you are engaged with them in their lives. Discipleship is the method Jesus used, the impact of the twelve disciples He chose is still being felt today.

I am putting the above steps into practice in my own church. We will start with the survey used in this project and then develop and cast a vision based upon the mission of our church, making sure that it includes ministry to homosexual strugglers as well as other strugglers. Preaching through several sermon series will build a biblical foundation for welcoming willing strugglers to process through their struggle biblically. We will then recruit and train volunteers while incorporating training materials and resources for them. Purposefully planting strugglers into male heterosexual discipleship groups or relationships will assist moving the struggler to biblical wholeness.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Large Scale Study of Welcoming Churches

The results of this study demonstrate the need for a large-scale study of churches that are actively ministering to male strugglers. The findings of this study are incredible; yet having the same results from a larger sample would give more credence to the present findings and would reinforce the value of this ministry approach. In this larger study I would recommend surveying the pastoral staff and leaders of churches.

Everything rises and falls on leadership. I personally believe that the selected churches in my research are effective largely because the pastors are leading the way by modeling equality, empathy, engagement, and education in their congregations. Surveying the church leadership would give a broader picture of what makes churches safe and welcoming while adding new and valuable insights into how to effectively minister to male homosexual strugglers.

The inclusion of personal interviews from strugglers, church members, and pastors would provide more detail as to how various churches have helped individual strugglers. After reading each survey in my own research, I was left with other questions about each individual's experience and perspective. Personal interviews with each struggler would allow follow-up questions that would fill in the details of each struggler's experience. In addition, a larger study with interviews could provide valuable insight into how each struggler became a struggler and could create a useful source of information for counseling purposes. However, conducting interviews would be challenging for a number of reasons. Many men still struggle in private, with only a few

trusted friends and family being aware of their sexual issue. Others just do not want to be labeled as a struggler, so they wrestle with keeping their battle private. Trust concerns are also an issue for many men. These are legitimate reasons why interviews are so difficult to procure. A creative solution will need to be found but the results would be greatly beneficial.

My research has mainly focused upon male strugglers, but a larger study could also include female strugglers⁹ and how the church is ministering to them. This separate study would certainly produce different results as well as different challenges.

General Study of Strugglers' Attitudes and Church Experiences

I have learned through my reading and research that most of the work with homosexual strugglers is being done by para-church organizations such as *Exodus International*. I am extremely grateful for these ministries, and I believe that there is a wealth of information yet to be compiled from those who have sought help from these ministries rather than from the church. I am certain that some strugglers have not looked to the church because of fear of being found out, others because of bad experiences with a church, and probably others who were simply referred to these ministries by their church. Research on this information would give us a better idea of how to make church ministries welcoming, safe, and effective. However, care must be taken in order to guarantee privacy, weed out those who are not believers (for them church would not even

⁹ Jeanette Howard, *Out of Egypt* (Tunbridge Wells, Great Britain: Monarch, 1991). This is an excellent resource that gives great insight into the female struggle with homosexuality. This book is a good starting place for this research.

be an option), and eliminate those who are not really serious about fleeing the homosexual lifestyle.

Recruitment of Churches to a Homosexual Strugglers' Ministry

There is an urgent need to find and train evangelical churches for this ministry, and there is an equally great need for materials to use. There are resources on the causes of homosexuality, how to counsel a homosexual struggler, how to treat a struggler, the medical dangers of homosexuality, and the biblical hermeneutical debates on homosexuality, yet, there is very little on how a church can minister to a homosexual struggler. This is an area that needs research and development. For churches to be able to go to a website, order a book, or even hold seminars would be invaluable. Harvest USA¹⁰ is one of the para-church ministries that is attempting to reach out to local churches in the effort to train and equip them to minister to those struggling with sexual addictions, including homosexuality. Other para-church organizations could give invaluable service by recruiting churches for this ministry, helping to develop programs for churches, and providing training. The experience that these organizations have in working with strugglers would shorten the process for many pastors and churches desperately seeking direction in establishing safe and welcoming environments for strugglers seeking the church's help.

¹⁰ www.harvestusa.org

Study Comparing Results of Para-church Ministry to Local Church Ministry

A study comparing the impact of para-church ministries to that of effective local church ministries could give insights on how best to minister to homosexual strugglers. I am of the opinion that God intends His church to be the best place for sinners of all types to receive assistance in pursuing healing, wholeness and holiness. However, at this point the majority of ministry being done in this arena is being done by para-church groups with very little connection to the local church. I believe that a study that is able to compare these organizations with effective local church ministries would provide us with some worthwhile information. We may discover that the church is the best place for this type of ministry, or maybe the para-church ministries, or maybe a healthy partnership. Whatever, the result, it would be good at the very least to bring both groups together in order to work and develop the best possible ministry to impact the struggler.

Compilation and Centralization of Resources

One of the most significant things that can be done to assist individuals, organizations, and churches would be the compilation of resources for counseling and discipling homosexual strugglers. There are a variety of websites that list resources, but I found them to be cumbersome and limited to the average church member or pastor. There needs to be a central website or book that lists resources by topic for those ministering to strugglers. The typical layperson will not take the time to search through websites or databases for information related to the person he or she is assisting. A centralized and searchable collection by topic, with abstracts would expedite the research process for

churches, pastors and volunteers. This compilation would need to include a collection of discipleship models that have been used in working with strugglers.

Development of Discipleship Models for Working with Strugglers

In 2000, Dr. David Crum completed his doctoral dissertation entitled *A Discippler's Approach for Ministering to People who Struggle with Homosexuality*,¹¹ which provided us with a working model of heterosexual men ministering to and discipling men who struggle with homosexuality. Michael Saia in his book *Counseling a Homosexual*¹² provides a variety of counseling tips along with biblical principles in moving strugglers towards discipleship and accountability. Both of these resources are great tools, but there is much left to do in providing clear and detailed direction for discipling strugglers. A variety of discipleship models still need to be developed – models that will work in the context of the local church, for clergy and laity alike.

Research into Mentoring of Male Strugglers by Heterosexual Men

More needs to be learned about the possible impact of heterosexual men mentoring and discipling strugglers. The selected churches in my research indicated that there were some heterosexual men who were involved with strugglers; however, this was an area that received average marks at best. The para-church model has ex-gay or ex-strugglers working with those who want out of homosexuality. If a failure to bond with a

¹¹ David Crum, "A Discippler's Approach For Ministering to People Who Struggle With Homosexuality" (DMIN Thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 2000).

¹² Michael R. Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual: A Compassionate and Biblical Guide for Pastors and Counselors as well as Non-Professionals and Families* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1988).

positive male role models is indeed a factor in homosexual desires (as Moberly¹³, Nicolosi¹⁴, Satinover¹⁵ and others suggest), it seems logical that studies need to be done on the recruitment, training, and evaluation of heterosexual men involved in ministry to strugglers. The biblical concept of mature believers mentoring those new to the faith supports this idea as well. Such research could easily be done through the para-church ministries as well as through the churches actively ministering to strugglers.

Scientific Research by Christian Psychologists and Psychiatrists

I mentioned in chapter 2 that the APA's subversive decision in 1973 to remove homosexuality from the *DSM* has led to virtual silence – Gagnon's¹⁶ Big Chill – in the area of sexual reorientation. Why research something that is no longer considered an illness? From a biblical and Christian perspective, however, homosexuality is considered a deviation from God's moral will. Christian psychologists and psychiatrists have a professional and a biblical obligation to assist those who desire to live godly lives. Even in the secular realm, if men and women desire to be freed from unwanted sexual desires and temptations, psychologists and psychiatrists have an obligation to assist those who desire change. Regardless of the decision of the APA or the pressures that may arise,

¹³ Elizabeth R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1983; reprint, 1996).

¹⁴ Joseph Nicolosi, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1991; reprint, 1997).

¹⁵ Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and The Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996).

¹⁶ Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). 421-2.

then, there is a need for Christians in the field to get involved. The contribution that Jones and Yarhouse have made in their groundbreaking study, *Ex-gays*¹⁷ is an example of what could be done on a much larger scale in this particular arena. There must be a movement among Christian scholars and researchers that can counter the lies and political agenda of the pro-gay movement. While the secular world of psychology continues to search for a “gay gene”, Christians in the field of psychology and psychiatry could, and should, be producing scientifically valid studies bringing scientific support to biblical claims.

I am convinced that the day will come when a number of male homosexual strugglers will read afresh 1 Corinthians 6:11 and find its fulfillment in their own lives, as they discover that they are free from homosexuality, having been washed, sanctified, and justified ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.’¹⁸ It is with this hope and love that I have endeavored upon this project. I am more convinced than ever regarding the purpose for which God has established His church.

“The church must not shirk its duty to affect the costly work of reconciliation that liberates persons from bondage to a sinful self. It is not a kindness for a parent to allow a child to play with a scorpion or touch a hot radiator; nor is it kindness for the church to give its blessing to forms of sexual expression that, as Paul notes, degrades the body created by God. The church should reject the notion that the only alternatives are to affirm homosexual behavior or to hate and harass homosexuals. Rather, the church must affirm a third option: to love the homosexual by humbly providing the needed support, comfort, and guidance to encourage the homosexual not to surrender to homosexual passions.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Stanton L. Jones, Yarhouse, Mark A., *Ex-gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Crum, “A Disciple’s Approach For Ministering to People Who Struggle With Homosexuality”. 112.

¹⁹ Gagnon, 485.

The research of this project has demonstrated that effective churches can affect this costly work in the lives of strugglers by living out her biblical responsibility in practical ways. The church must adopt an attitude of equality that communicates that each and every person is equally valuable in God's eyes regardless of their sin or propensity to sin. There are no degrees of sin. Scripture teaches that all sin is a violation of God's holiness. Based upon the principle of equality every individual should be approached and treated with great empathy regardless of how vile their sin maybe from a human perspective. Each person seeking deliverance from sin or temptation needs to experience the empathy and compassion of Christ through the ministry of His church. Equality and empathy are best demonstrated through believers being engaged in the lives of strugglers. Personal investment in the lives of strugglers demonstrates caring action that moves strugglers along in their spiritual journey and deliverance from life dominating temptations and behaviors. Lastly, this great work is brought about by education and recruitment of volunteers to minister to strugglers. Ministry will not happen without proper education and training. Churches must educate believers on how to minister to male strugglers in their realm of influence.

APPENDIX A

RESPONDENT'S INFORMED CONSENT

A survey of 'First Church' relating to the welcoming of men who struggle with same-sex attraction and/or homosexuality.

Thank you for participating in this research. For the purpose of my research, I would define a struggler as, a male who is experiencing same-sex attractions or involved with homosexual behavior but is seeking and striving to bring this area of his life under the control of the Holy Spirit through biblical means. Often times, the struggler is the focus of research projects. This researcher desires to make the church the primary focus as he seeks to find information that would assist churches to biblically minister to the struggler. The information that you provide is critical in preparing churches for ministry to male homosexual or same-sex strugglers. Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Respondent's Informed Consent

I understand that my answers on this survey will be kept in strict confidence. I recognize that this is a survey on the topic of the church and its behavior toward male homosexual or same-sex strugglers, who are seeking to bring their sexual temptations and/or behaviors under the control of the Holy Spirit through biblical means. I understand that I may revoke my informed consent and discontinue participating at any time during the completion of this survey without being required to give an explanation. I consent to completing this survey.

Signed _____

Date _____

Printed name: _____

Personal History

Age: _____

How long have you been a follower of Jesus? _____

How long have you been at your church? _____

How long (years) has your church been assisting you in working through your struggle?

1 year or less	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years or more
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How often do you attend Hope Community Church apart from group meetings?

1	2	3	4	5
never	rarely	somewhat	moderately	always

APPENDIX B

STRUGGLER'S SURVEY

After each question please circle the number that best indicates your response.

Diagnostic Questions:

1. How connected are you at your church?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally unconnected

Totally connected

2. As a struggler, to what level do you feel that your church is a safe place for you to acknowledge and process through your sexual issues?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unsafe

Extremely safe

3. As a struggler, to what level do you feel that the people of your church demonstrate a heart of compassion for you.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Uncomfortable with me

Involved with me

4. To what degree have individuals (besides a pastor or counselor) at your church been willing to listen to your story including the dirty details, in a way that demonstrates genuine care and concern?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling

Extremely willing

5. How clear is your church's mission statement relating to assisting and moving people to assist homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unclear

Extremely clear

6. To what level do you feel that your church would welcome you after a momentary or prolonged relapse?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unsafe

Extremely safe

7. To what degree is Heritage Baptist Church different from other churches in regards to a caring attitude for those who struggle with homosexual attractions or behaviors?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less caring More caring

8. To what degree have individuals at Heritage Baptist Church been willing to listen and walk with strugglers after a temporary or extended relapse?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling Extremely willing

9. How effective are the pulpit announcements, bulletins, program announcements, training courses in recruiting people to assist homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely nonexistent Extremely effective

10. To what level do you feel that strugglers are welcome at Heritage Baptist Church as followers of Jesus Christ, although their personal struggle is with same-sex sin/temptations

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwelcome Extremely welcome

11. To what degree do the people at Heritage Baptist Church really care about strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Uncomfortable with me Deeply care about me

12. How eager and willing are the people at Heritage Baptist Church to listen, hear and understand the personal story of the struggler in order to walk with them through their struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unwilling Extremely willing

13. How committed is Heritage Baptist Church to the recruitment and training of heterosexual men to walk with strugglers through their journey?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely uncommitted Extremely committed

14. To what extent does the printed materials and announcements communicate that Heritage Baptist Church is a place of safety for strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Extremely well

15. To what level do you feel that Heritage Baptist Church believes that strugglers are the object of God's affection regardless of their past or present sexual struggles?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Weak belief

Strong belief

16. To what level do the people at Heritage Baptist Church see their need for God's intervention regarding their own struggles with sin?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less than my sin

Greater than my sin

17. How involved are the people (apart from counselors and pastoral staff) at Heritage Baptist Church in strugglers life and growth process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Highly uninvolved

Highly involved

18. How effective has Heritage Baptist Church been in training people to minister to homosexual strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely ineffective

Extremely effective

19. To what level does Heritage Baptist Church treat strugglers equally as believers who are pursuing Christ?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unequal

Extremely equal

20. When you look at the general overall attitude of people at Heritage Baptist Church toward sin, where would they rate homosexual struggle and same-sex attractions as compared to other sin(s)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Greatest sin

Less than other sins

36. Looking at the available resources (support groups, discipleship groups, reading and studying materials, willing church members, etc.) that Heritage Baptist Church offers to strugglers, to what level do you believe that ‘1st church’ is committed to their transformation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Highly uncommitted Highly committed

37. From your perspective, to what level do the people at Heritage Baptist Church believe that God has provided everything we need for life transformation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Nonexistent Absolute certainty

38. How well does Heritage Baptist Church do in providing strugglers with willing and active role models of biblical masculinity?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 No role models Countless role models

39. How well do the sermons and teachings at Heritage Baptist Church equip people with a proper understanding of the homosexual strugglers’ needs?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Extremely poorly Extremely well

40. How patient are the people at Heritage Baptist Church with strugglers as they have begun processing through their struggle?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Extremely impatient Extremely patient

41. To what extent do the sermons communicate that Heritage Baptist Church is a place of safety for strugglers?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Not at all Extremely well

42. To what degree do you feel that Heritage Baptist Church is family for the struggler?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Not at all Completely

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